

Children in Scotland

1 December 2008

Sara Lurie
Director
The Fostering Network
Ingram House
2nd Floor
227 Ingram Street
Glasgow
G1 1DA

Dear Ms Lurie,

Consultation on Allegations Protocol for Scotland

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Protocol*. It is clearly the product of thorough and extensive work and will provide a useful basis for local authorities in developing their own procedures. Children in Scotland welcomes the *Protocol* and recognises the value of devising clear and consistent approaches in this highly sensitive area of activity.

The few points on which we would add a comment are, as follows:

Q 1 We believe that 'guidance' or 'practice guidance' would be a more appropriate term than 'protocol', as there may well be local variations in implementation.

Q 5a We think it would be particularly important to get a full contextual picture of the child's current circumstances. Consulting with other professionals, such as teachers, should be an explicit expectation. The nature of recent contact with the child's own family would also be important.

Q 7 This would be good practice. It will, however, be important to take account of responses from agencies that are likely to be directly involved about the resource implications of adhering to these timescales.

Q 9 Responsibilities should be consistent with the authority's procedures in relation to any other child protection investigation.

Q 11 Carers should have an equivalent level of representation as staff in a similar situation. The equivalent of trade union representation should be considered.

Q 12 It would be desirable to have an overview (at least at authority level) of the incidence and outcomes, as well as evaluating each individual case.

We were not clear to what extent young people themselves had been involved in the preparation of the *Protocol*. If this has not happened thus far, then we would encourage it to happen now. It is both good practice – and in keeping with the Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – for a meaningful consultation/participation process to occur. Our experience is that it is well worth the time and effort to hear and heed children and young people’s views about their relevant experiences and their suggestions/advice.

I hope this is helpful. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

MARION MACLEOD
Senior Policy and Parliamentary Officer

Children in Scotland is Scotland’s national agency for organisations and professionals working with and for children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies and services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society. Children in Scotland represents over 470 members, including 90% of Scottish Local Authorities, all major voluntary, statutory and private children’s agencies, professional organisations, as well as many other smaller community groups and children’s services. It is linked with similar agencies in other parts of the UK and the European Union.

The work of Children in Scotland encompasses extensive information, policy, research and practice development programmes. The agency works closely with MSPs, the Scottish Government, local authorities and practitioners It services a number of groups such as: the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Children and Young People (with YouthLink Scotland) and the National Voluntary Children’s Forum. Children in Scotland also hosts Enquire - the national advice service for additional support for learning, and Resolve:ASL, Scotland’s largest independent education mediation service.