

Gwen Smith
Scottish Government
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Victoria Quay
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Dear Ms Smith,

THE ROLE OF THE REGISTERED SOCIAL WORKER IN CONTRIBUTING TO BETTER OUTCOMES FOR SCOTLAND: GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation document. Children in Scotland represents over 450 public, voluntary and independent sector organisations working with children, young people and their families. We wish to highlight some issues that we believe are important.

1. The document appears to concentrate on the role of the social worker in statutory decision-making. This is not necessarily consistent with achieving best outcomes. It is also questionable whether the law in respect of children actually specifies the role of the social worker quite so explicitly. If the intention of the document is to reinforce good practice, then the potential contribution of social work with children and families extends well beyond the activities described.
2. We are concerned that provision of preventive support and interventions designed to achieve positive and sustainable change with vulnerable children and their families are not mentioned. Social work intervention with children as outlined here is restricted to situations where there is actual, or serious potential for, harm. Rising demand for children's service may have created a situation where support to less immediately-endangered children and their families has become increasingly limited. However, there is no doubt that better outcomes are far more likely to result from prevention and early intervention by social workers (among other professionals) than waiting until a child has already been subjected to damaging experiences.

3. The role of social work in implementing the general duty to promote social welfare (Section 12 (1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968) is not addressed in the document.

We are happy to clarify or elaborate on any of these points. Please contact me should you wish further information.

Yours sincerely,

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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 more than 450 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 Europe.

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. services groups such as the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Children and Young People (with YouthLink Scotland). In addition, Children in Scotland hosts Enquire - the national advice service for additional support for learning, and Resolve: ASL, Scotland's largest independent education mediation service.