

NATIONAL VOLUNTARY CHILDREN'S FORUM MINUTES OF MEETING

Draft

The Belford Menzies Hotel, Edinburgh, 29 March 2004

Present:	Karen Bain	Down Syndrome Scotland
	Joanne Crone	Scottish Executive
	Mary Dallas	RNIB Scotland
	May Fong	Homestart UK
	Elena Groll	Scottish Executive
	Douglas Hamilton	Barnardo's Scotland
	Helen Hunter	Children 1st
	Romy Langeland	Aberlour Childcare Trust
	Janet Law	Scottish Out of School Care Network
	Eleanor Manson	Scottish Executive
	Cathy McCulloch	The Children's Parliament
	Laura McFadzen	Capability Scotland
	Robert McGeachy	Youthlink
	Monica McGeever	RNIB Scotland
	Ian McLaughlan	Scottish Pre-School Play Association
	Maggie McTernan	Shelter Scotland
	Gerry O'Hara	Children 1st
	Judy Panton	Family Fund
	Neil Rennick	Scottish Executive
	Sarah Smith	Scottish Executive (Co-Chair)
	Fiona Strachan	Adoption UK Scotland
	Margaret Tod	Scottish Executive
	Neil Todd	Contact A Family Scotland
	Jennifer Turpie	Children in Scotland (Co-Chair)
	Juliet Wilson	National Playbus Association

Apologies:	Susan Elsley	Save the Children
	Ellen Finlayson	Sargent Cancer Care for Children
	Anna Robinson	Autism in Scotland
	Sue Ross	Tourettes Scotland
	Janet Sanders	Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum

Welcome and Introductions

1. **Sarah Smith** welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Apologies

2. It was agreed that the apologies would be recorded in the Minute.

Minute of Previous Meeting

3. The Minute of the meeting on 6 October 2003 was accepted as a true record.

Matters Arising

4. **Janet Law** asked how could the information relating to the Child Protection Reform be communicated better and how would the information pertaining to the Standards and Charter be disseminated to the voluntary sector. There was also a question of how the inspection process would impact on the sector. **Sarah Smith** reported that the Charter and Standards had been launched on 22 March and the first roll out of information had gone to those at a senior managerial level. Further dissemination would follow, including through Childcare Partnerships and Child Protection Committees. **Sarah Smith** suggested that this could be a topic for discussion at a future meeting.

5. If anyone had not received a copy of the documents they should contact Margaret Tod (Margaret.tod@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) on 0131 244 7024 who would arrange for a copy to be sent.

Topic for discussion

Children's Services Planning

6. **Neil Rennick** gave a presentation which outlined the work undertaken in the Integrated Children's Services Branch, within Children and Families Division. He explained the background and the policy agenda that led to integrated services and the need for planning of these services. **A copy of Neil's presentation is attached for information.**

7. **Romy Langeland** welcomed the idea of integration. She felt, however, that there was a need for the Scottish Executive to re-iterate the role that the voluntary sector plays in the planning of services and to make reference to the joint commissioning of services. **Neil Rennick** agreed that the voluntary sector's role was key. He explained that the revised guidance, which would be issued in June, would capture all strands including setting budgets etc. and would ensure that planners thought laterally to draw together targeted services but also thought broadly at the spectrum of issues involved. He also said it would be useful to identify examples of local joint planning fora where engagement between the statutory and voluntary sectors was working well. **Romy Langeland** also suggested that Children's Services Plans should mention specific groups of children in need. **Neil Rennick** agreed there should be mention of specific groups. Part of the challenge would be to ensure that broader plans, covering both universal and targeted services, did not reduce the emphasis on closing the gap for children with additional needs, but ensured that all children received excellent services appropriate to their individual needs.

8. **Fiona Strachan** asked how agencies could feed in their comments. **Neil Rennick** reported that a letter would issue shortly setting out the proposed approach and that responses would be welcomed. The intention was that the planning guidance should form part of an on-going dialogue.

9. **Helen Hunter** recognised the increasing role played by the voluntary sector but also that there was a need for an investment at a resource level to enable them to play their part in the planning structure. **Neil Rennick** reported that the resources from the Changing Children's Services Fund (CCSF) had been used in some areas for this and that another key challenge was how the agencies fed into this process.

10. **Douglas Hamilton** reported that the Children (Scotland) Act had been in place for almost 10 years and that the voluntary sector had plans to mark the anniversary. He asked if there was a national picture of how Children's Services Plans had worked. **Neil Rennick** reported that there were different approaches in different areas but that they had moved much more towards joint planning. Work to analyse what had been successful and to identify lessons learned would be taken forward beyond June.

11. **Neil Todd** commented that parents and young people should be invited to participate, rather than just be consulted, on the planning around Children's Services Plans. This would involve the need for training and information dissemination and addressing the barriers e.g. transport. **Neil Rennick** confirmed that lessons had been learned from previous planning exercises and that community involvement led to better co-ordination.

12. **Ian McLaughlan** commented that the Childcare Partnerships had a role to play in engaging in the process. **Neil Rennick** agreed the importance of links and that the Childcare Partnerships were well placed to act as a conduit but may need to broaden their focus. **Elena Groll** confirmed that this issue would be addressed in the finalised version of the Integrated Early Years Strategy.

13. **Douglas Hamilton** asked if the Scottish Executive knew, both in regard to local authorities individually and the situation as a whole in Scotland, the percentage of Changing Children's Services Fund (CCSF) monies that went to the voluntary sector. **Neil Rennick** confirmed that the CCSF's intent was to change programmes to encourage integration amongst partners. It would, therefore, be very difficult to identify what was going to the voluntary sector alone as voluntary organisations were contributing in different ways to these change programmes. **Jennifer Turpie** thanked Neil for his presentation.

10th Anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family

14. **Elena Groll** reported that this year had been identified as the 10th Anniversary of the UN International Year of the Family. The Scottish Executive had been in discussion with colleagues from the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) on how to celebrate the year. They recognised that it was not just for Government to respond alone but were seeking to work together with representatives from the voluntary sector to shape a Scottish response. A discussion paper and 3 questions had been circulated and attendees were asked to discuss, at their tables, the questions and report back their comments. It was explained that no resources had been allocated for this over and above the additional money that had gone into the voluntary sector through the Unified Fund. It would, therefore, be useful to think about building on current plans or re-badging to draw ideas together into a coherent package.

15. After discussion, the three tables reported that focussing on a Scottish context they would like to

- see better involvement of children and families in the planning processes
- compare Scottish families to their International counterparts
- have a brand for conferences, newsletters etc.
- have a website including a diary of events
- link into the national parenting strategy being taken forward by the consortium led by Children 1st
- recognise the diversity of family life
- address work – life balance

Overall it was agreed that the Scottish Executive should have a co-ordinating role to raise awareness of the year. **A copy of the discussion paper and the full responses is attached for information.**

16. **Elena Groll** concluded that the response papers would be taken away and used to inform thinking for the way forward. She also invited nominations from 2 or 3 people who would like to be involved in a steering group to take this forward. Subsequently this was arranged with **Helen Hunter**, Children 1st; **May Fong**, Homestart; and **Laura McFadzen**, Capability Scotland.

Any Other Business

17. **Jennifer Turpie** reported that **Sarah Smith** was leaving Children and Families Division to take up a new post in the Strategy and Delivery Unit. She thanked Sarah for all of the work she had done and wished her well for the future.

Date of Next Meeting

18. **Action Point:** The Forum secretariat would liaise with Children in Scotland to find a suitable date for the next meeting in September / October. It was agreed that the Deputy Minister for Education and Young people would be invited to attend. Subsequently the date for the next meeting has been agreed as **Monday 4 October 2004.**