

INVERNESS AREA CHILDREN'S SERVICES FORUM

MONDAY 5th December – 9.30 am
CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE - INVERNESS

PRESENT:

Gillian McCreath	Councillor, Children's Champion, HC
Kate Birch (Chair)	Area Children's Services Manager, HC SW
Neil Campbell	Resource Manager, HC SW
Ian Kyle	Acting Head Teacher, Beauly Primary School, HC ECS
Iver Forsyth	Day Centre Manager, HC Housing
Colin Macaulay	Integration Manager, HC ICS
Alison Clark	Researcher, Integrated Children's Services, HC ICS
Jean-Pierre Sieczkarek	LSM SE Highland CHP – Inverness & Nairn NHS
Sue Roddick	Senior Family Liaison Officer, HC SW
Susan Dudgeon	Acting Area Educational Psychologist, HC ECS
Linsey Webster	Childcare & Family Resource Officer, HC SW
Mairi Morrison	Team Manager, HC SW
Calum MacSween	Rector, Charleston Academy HC ECS
John Bruce	Senior Education Officer, HC ECS
Kay Ballantyne	Administrative Assistant, HC ICS

In

Attendance: Malina MacDonald Play Development Officer, HC ECS

APOLOGIES:

Elaine Fetherston	Drug Development Officer, NHS
Douglas Wilby	Area Community Learning & Leisure Manager, HC ECS
Murray Cochran	Area Housing Manager, HC Housing
Wendy Allman	Area Team Manager, Inverness East HC SW

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES – Kate welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.</p> <p>2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12th September 2005 were agreed.</p> <p>3. Matters arising: These items are included on today's agenda.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">i. Autism Development – Colin had spoken with Simon Webster and arranged for him and Marlyn Campbell to attend the next meeting. Simon has been working with Marlyn and Dolina to improve transition arrangements.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">ii. Children affected by Disability – Neil pointed out that this ties in with autism development. Marlyn will highlight what has been achieved by the previous subgroup and talk about the Crisis Intervention Service – a joint project with Social Work, SS for Autism and Clinical Psychology. She will present a proposal and look at the viability of forming a subgroup to cover transition planning.</p>	<p>CM</p>

- Kate mentioned the Disability Change Fund – No ACSF bids had been submitted to date for this one off opportunity. This fund has traditionally been accessed by adult services. Colin had previously suggested that funding might be used to accurately map and predict future age/stage needs of all children affected by disability. Neil agreed to speak to Jonathan Turner and Andrew Stevenson.

- iii. **Behaviour & Truancy – new funding** – John Bruce reported that funding for next year indicates a substantial increase over this year's figure. It is likely that this money will be assigned in the New Year and it is hoped that it will cover Children's Services Workers posts in Millburn and Charleston Academies – to be confirmed.

- iv. **Integrated Assessment Framework** – Colin reported that proposals are currently running with the Scottish Executive to "pathfind" the Integrated Assessment Framework and "Getting it Right for Every Child" (GIRFEC). A Paper was due to go to JCCYP which has been rescheduled for next Friday, with the suggestion that Inverness may be the chosen area. It was likely that the pathfinders would attract additional support from the Scottish Executive. Kate gave her full backing – particularly in view of the fact that Inverness now had 4 Senior Family Liaison Officers in post, who are covering 4 'patches'.

- v. **Child Protection – Local Action Plan** – It was agreed that Linda MacLennan or Penni Rowe would be invited to the February meeting to discuss the SWS Action Plan. John Bruce reported that Laurence Young is the designated Child Protection Officer for Education.

- vi. **Migrant Worker Families** –
 - Colin had circulated an extract showing the evolving picture pan Highland. The numbers of migrant worker families had grown from 90 in 2001 to 675 in 2004 leading to a big change in dynamics. Colin has been in touch with Chief Inspector Ian Cox who had pointed out that there are issues around e.g. driving law / carrying of knives legislation / age of consent / alcohol consumption etc. Ian will be pulling together a forum to discuss these issues. Also to be considered are housing, access to health services, schools and so on, and the ability to source English classes. It was reported that pan Highland there are currently 560 pupils speaking 58 different languages with an additional language team of only 2.5 full time posts. John felt that a Council wide initiative should address these issues.
 - John expressed concern that there may be duplication of meetings/information. It was noted that the Education service is arranging a seminar in the Spring to look at the same issues. Mairi Morrison reported that it's really hard to get information at present and that there needs to be some sort of strategic policy. Iver felt that Housing need a clearer understanding of what is required. Other groups involved in these issues are Highland and Islands Enterprise, Voluntary and self help groups.
 - Colin would ensure that Carron McDiarmid and Rosemary MacKinnon were aware of Ian Cox's group.

- vii. **Sexual Health and Relationships** – Sexual Health and Relationships

NC/JT/AS

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CM

Small Grants Scheme being disbursed via the CHPs. It was agreed that the Child Protection Action Plan and Sexual Health Strategy could be considered together at the next ACSF meeting.

4. Drug & Alcohol Forum Update: Elaine Fetherston sent her apologies. Colin reported that he has been trying to forge connections.

- i. **IDAF Action plan & small Bids Scheme** - Elaine had circulated the Action Plan and details of a small bids scheme.
- ii. **IDAF-IACSF Action on Under-Age Drinking** – There is a proposal for focusing on underage drinking in Inverness over the course of next year. Colin reported that, nationally, the numbers of young people drinking has doubled and the proposal was looking to reduce aspects of crime and increase preventative input. If the IDAF agree to these proposals, the contribution will be £1750 from the IACSF budget next year. This was agreed in principle.

CM

5. Youth Justice:

- Kate reported that the Youth Action Team is now fully staffed. The proposal to appoint an additional permanent Senior Social Worker for the Inverness Area Team has not yet passed through Resources Committee. Increasingly, the YAT are case holding. Kate Birch and Joyce Gartshore are writing a protocol regarding case holding and the transferring of information from one part of the service to another. Sometimes there are too many people involved. This will help YAT to work with Area Social Work Teams. Persistent offenders figure reduced this year. More information will hopefully be presented to the next meeting. In Highland, there is currently 1 persistent offender who is tagged. This appears to be working quite well. There are also a few young people on ISS – however, evaluation of this scheme will take some time.

JG

6. Housing Update:

- **Care Leavers** – Kate emphasised that this is still an issue. There is no clear well defined process for forward planning. Mairi reported that the greatest problem relates to young people coming out of residential care. Neil cautioned that any system to be developed would have to account for the fact that some young people might not want to be forced into accommodation just because somewhere has become available. There is a special responsibility towards these young people and we need processes to cover this. Iver stressed that housing is very limited with regard to resources. Social Work and Housing to continue interacting; involve Liaison Groups
- **Young Tenants** - Iver reported that provision of supported accommodation has increased slightly. This has been targeted towards those presenting as homeless. However, the difficulty remains in managing temporary unsuitable accommodation. There are 60 temporary furnished accommodation addresses – but this is still not sufficient. The Scottish Executive is reviewing categories for priority need. In the wider context, the duty regarding stock transfer remains

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MC/IF

with the Local authority. It is sometimes difficult to forecast as there is a tendency for people to cross areas.

- **Homelessness** - The Homelessness problem continues to grow.

7. **Non Attendance – Short-Life Working Group**

This item will be discussed in more detail at the Governance Meeting to follow. However -

- It was reported that 3 sub-meetings will take place. The first of a short series was held last week and proved to be a useful start. It was agreed that there is a wide ranging problem and the challenge is how to target it most appropriately. Calum thought the meetings were well timed. Resources are required to target the few. Schools under pressure to increase the stats for reading/writing etc and young people are clearly not going to acquire these skills if they are not attending. It is important to identify who is vulnerable and to be clear about underlying reasons. Currently there is a lack of resources e.g. to re-instate the sort of non-attendance officer that had previously been employed. Kate thought that Liaison Groups should be aware of these kids. It is difficult to identify them from Phoenix, as there was no consistent method for logging absences.

8. **Inverness Childcare & Family Resource Update:**

- **Early Years Review** – Linsey Webster reported that the meeting held last Monday was attended by local Councillors and members of the Childcare Partnership. Funding issues had been discussed and the result is that there will have to be some joining up of provision in Inverness to meet reduced funding targets. There is a requirement to save approximately £100K in the Inverness Area – not easy in the short term. Parents want early years provision with wrap around care. Private sector provision has increased by about 40% and Councillor Gillian McCreath felt that Highland Council should have some input regarding where they locate – possibly through Planning.
- **SureStart Review** – Colin reported that these service developments are relatively new.
 - There is a need for early years liaison arrangements. There are now four Senior Family Liaison Officers in post in the Inverness Area, one of which is funded from SureStart. This is of tremendous benefit regarding the Early Years Workers.
 - Colin asked Jean-Pierre about the role of Health Visitors. He replied that a new Acting Professional Lead Nurse for the Inverness Health Visitor Team is in post and she will be putting forward a proposed new structure by Christmas. It was stressed that it is important to ensure that the children's side is covered. It was agreed that the SFLOs should build relationships with the Health Visitors.
- **Parenting Development** – Alan Richards is now in post as Coordinator. There is a big agenda and it is a time limited post –until

SFLOs/HV

June 2007. Anyone with any information regarding other parenting programmes in the area is invited to get in touch with Alan. Colin would invite Alan to update us at the next meeting.

ALL

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- **Merkinch Family Centre** – Gillian reported that the Manager post for the Merkinch Family Centre has passed through Resources Committee. The post will be advertised in the New Year. Linsey had prepared a poster to be put up in Merkinch Area. It is hoped that the Centre will be open by October 2006. Neil was concerned about the provision of facilities for children with disabilities. Linsey replied that no special arrangements were being made at present, apart from a designated quiet area. As integration is the aim, this issue needs to be addressed. It was agreed that this will be raised at the next Family Support Working Group.

LW/CM

9. Play in Highland:

- Malina Macdonald gave a presentation covering an Overview of Play in the Highlands. A Play Strategy for Highland is being written. The current Play Policy is available on the Play page of the HC website. <http://www.highland.gov.uk/cx/policies/playpolicy.doc>
- “TOPTOTS and TOPSTART” - 36 staff will be trained and they will cascade this training. To date this has been very well received and we are currently ahead of schedule.
- Clarification is required on what constitutes an outdoor play area.
- £800,000 ring fenced funding is available from TECS to improve and upgrade play areas.
- Big Lottery Fund – waiting for information. Looking for 3 year funding for play.

Malina reported that a visit to Scandinavia had taken place and many of the practices observed there were being adopted in Highland. E.g. less formalised play time when the kids are outside. More encouragement for outside play in less than ideal weather conditions.

Gillian asked whether Play had been taken into account in the design of new schools.

- Malina reported that Play have been involved with Grounds for Learning etc. regarding what is appropriate in a school playground.
- TEC services are responsible for maintenance and will conduct a play forum to establish best practice.
- Would like to see more innovation and more invention in the playgrounds but there are always the issues of risk assessment and possible litigation.
- Gillian suggested getting this message across to Community Groups.

It was acknowledged that Play is a huge subject. Colin commented that positive changes are taking place and that the risk element is coming back. Need to win hearts and minds of parents.

Colin enquired about the scale of funding from NOF. Malina reported that £155M had been allocated to England but the figures for Scotland were not known. She agreed to e-mail out an update in the next few weeks.

10. **AOCB:**

Mental Health Seminar 12th December: As well as the National Director of HeadsUpScotland, this will include local input from various contributors. It was suggested that a future seminar might focus on perinatal and school issues. Training priorities would be determined at the seminar.

CM

Charging policies within schools. Gillian asked whether there was a 'standard' which covered charging policies within schools. John replied that there was no set policy it was more a question of style and tone and that it was at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

Merkinch After School Club currently has no Committee. Linsey reported that the Play Leader needs support. Mairi emphasised that the Club is vital for Merkinch and there has been a great deal of commitment over the years giving huge support to very vulnerable children. Management possibilities put forward were:

- GROOVE
- Merkinch Family Centre Manager

ALL

It was agreed that the Club should be moved towards Care Commission approval and it was acknowledge that this issue should be addressed urgently. Ideas to Linsey Webster please.

11. **Dates of Next Meetings: Agreed**

Forum Meetings (9:30am – Lunchtime) CR2

- 6th February
- 8th May
- 11th September
- 4th December

Network Seminars (Full Day) Chamber

- 20th February Youth Work/Strategy?
- 22nd May IAF/ASL/Liaison
- 4th September Mental Health
- 11th December Suggestions? E-mails to Colin