

Ros is Cromba Fòram Sgìreil Sheirbheis na Cloinne

ROSS & CROMARTY AREA CHILDREN'S SERVICE FORUM

Core

Tuesday 23rd January, 2007
1 pm – 3 pm

Strathpeffer Community Centre

PRESENT:	Maureen Keough (Chair)	Area Children's Service Manager
	Graham MacKenzie	Rector, Dingwall Academy
	Ian Goode	Childcare & Family Resource Officer
	Catherine Zawalnyski	Professional Adviser for Children & Families
	Charles Stephen	Integration Manager
	Bob Cameron	Area Manager
	Val Steele	Senior Education Officer
APOLOGIES:	Shirley Stevenson	Head Teacher, Culbokie Primary
	Alison Phimister	Assistant General Manger, MHCHP
IN ATTENDANCE:	Maggie Tytler	Administrative Assistant

2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD – 28 November 2006 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Surestart Budget – any underspend has already been identified and should not be committed for other purposes.• ACSF Budgets – to go on next agenda (27th February 2007). At the moment looks likely to be on target – Charles to confirm.• Children's Service Worker post – recruitment for Easter Ross has gone ahead – position to be filled up to 31st March 2007.
3.	HIGHLAND FAMILY RESOURCE ALLIANCE – Val Steele <p>Val has not completed her report – this will be circulated to the group when finished. Val informed the group that she was the Education Representative as well as the Area Education Representative.</p> <p>There are to be extended meetings for a wider audience.</p> <p>A recent meeting with Donnie and Bill looked at developing childcare pilot projects. Looking at joined up working between primary, secondary and pre school.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Val to send completed report to Maggie for circulation.• Charles and Val to organise a meeting regarding pupil support staff.
4.	CHILDCARE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE – Ian Goode

In Dingwall, full day nursery provision is being developed by a second private provider with a third still proposed. The existing Nursery facility has been commissioned by the Local Authority to provide pre school education and the second which is due to open in April has requested to become commissioned. A meeting between education and local members is to be held to discuss the need for pre school education places in the community the impact on other providers and the budget available. Private providers are only commissioned to provide Pre school places for children attending their facility for full day care.

Ian has undertaken to provide a discussion document to include some statistical analysis, on the projected impact of the additional pre school places in the Dingwall community.

Early Years – two voluntary sector pre school providers Resolis under 5's and Culbokie Playgroup are due to cease providing the pre school service in June 2006 and there is a requirement to ensure the transfer of staff from the Voluntary Sector to Local Authority.

Action

Val to investigate arrangements for transfer of personnel with Elaine Barrie (Personnel Manager).

There is a Community Regeneration project being proposed in Seaboard looking at childcare and out of school care based around the Seaboard Playgroup. The project is looking for match funding from the CC+FR Partnership and the Working for Families Initiative. Ian thought the project would be valuable to the whole community – as a support to families initiative which will be looking at employing local staff to deliver the After school club. Ian is organising a recruitment day to be held in February in Balintore with Direct Childcare and other agencies.

Cromarty Action for Young People is being supported by CALA. CALA are looking at ways of reducing the deficit. A similar model of support is being looked at for the Toy Box. There will need to be discussion regarding the future of the Toy Box relating to pre school education and wrap around childcare because of a plan to approach the Lottery for funding for a new facility.

Surestart – Ian, Maggie Callachan (Senior Family Liaison Officer) and Alison Horner (Senior Family Liaison Officer) met to look at liaison referrals, accessing resources – Ian to write up a report which will focus on delivering training on Liaison Group Referral form and the process of referral. Ian was unsure when best to have training - now or when the new areas are in place. It was noted that Health have not been involved in the planning stage although Health Visitors are involved at Liaison Group level. Maureen suggested inviting SFLO's from S & L and Lochaber to planning meeting and possibly reps from Health. Catherine wanted to know if there is to be a review of liaison arrangements and look at the effectiveness of meetings. Charles indicated that it is up to each area to look at how the process is working. Previously a group had met, consisting of Maureen, Charles, Ian, SFLO's and their Managers. Catherine would like this group to meet again to enable issues to be dealt with as they arise. Charles suggested waiting until after Friday when there is to be a Joint Committee Seminar re GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child).

Catherine was concerned that there has been delays in referrals being dealt with. The SFLO's are aware of this issue and are addressing it.

The group agreed to wait till after the GIRFEC Seminar and follow up approximately March and invite a member of Lochaber ACSF.

Action

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles to discuss invitation with Pol McClelland (Area Children's Manager). • Charles to alert SFLO to issues relating to functions of the Liaison Groups.
5.	<p>PARENTING UPDATE – Catherine Zawalnyski/Ian Goode</p> <p>Catherine has had no recent involvement with the Sub Group. She suggested involving someone who would be more hands on and be more local.</p> <p>Time out for Teenagers Course in Gairloch which is being run by Positive Parenting, starts 30th January.</p> <p>There has been some discussion with Autism Outreach Education Service about the Early Bird Programme. This is a positive step to help improve communication and future developments.</p> <p>Alan Richards has compiled a lottery application to request funding for five years for a parenting project which aims to reach families who have been unable to engage.</p> <p>Healthways are still delivering Courses in Balintore and Dingwall and there will be a Webster Stratton course in Cromarty soon.</p> <p>Charles recognised the work the Parenting Sub Group have been doing and pointed out that Joy Barton (Family Learning Co-ordinator) has been an asset. Ian pointed out that funding for Joy's post runs out in August 2007.</p>
6.	<p>JOINT COMMITTEE SEMINAR-GIRFEC - All</p> <p>There is to be a Joint Committee Seminar regarding GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) Implementation Programme. It is principally for members of the Joint Committee, managers and practitioners in the Inverness area and South East CHP, and strategic managers and other key staff from across the authority.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles to attend and feedback information to the group. • Graham to pass on feedback from the seminar to secondary schools in the area.
7.	<p>PRESENTATION TO RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT GROUP – Charles Stephen</p> <p>It has been noted that recent application to RPG have slipped. The following basic principles should be followed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications should only come to RPG where Area Service Managers believe there is a strong case for an out of authority or ISS/ISMS placement, or where there are significant issues that would benefit from senior management involvement and consideration (eg a parent's placing request, or a possible contrary view from a Children's Hearing). • There must be clear evidence that the application is being made by Area Service Managers, and applications that do not evidence local consensus are likely to be sent back for further discussion. • Applications must be supported by a report that includes the assessment and intended plan with appropriate options, addressing social care, health and educational issues. While this may require investigation of the viability of potential placements, this investigation should not imply that any placement

	<p>will take place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeslots at the RPG will now only be granted by the previous Friday, and on receipt of the report. Any late reports will only be accepted in extra-ordinary circumstances, and by agreement with the chair of the RPG. • Applications should be presented at the RPG by both social workers and educational psychologists, with other specialist staff where appropriate. Where such staff are not present, the discussion may be postponed. It is the case manager's responsibility to organise this representation. <p>There has been feedback from staff locally that the Caseworking Sub Group have been very helpful in assisting with the completion of referral forms.</p> <p>It was noted that the Educational Psychologist must be involved with all cases where education is presenting a case – this should be done at a Liaison Group. Cases will not be considered for RPG for out of authority placement if the Educational Psychologist has not been included. It was suggested that a foot note should be entered on the referral form to this end.</p>
8.	<p>FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE – Charles Stephen</p> <p>Charles pointed out to the group that funding for this pilot project is about to run out. The rate of enquiry is less than 3 per month with the rate of referral less than 1 per month. Families and professionals who have gone through the process have found it a positive experience. There has not been an external evaluation at present.</p> <p>Presentations from the Family Group Conference team were rolled out to approximately 250 professionals across all agencies to raise awareness of the project.</p> <p>Charles informed the group if the use of the service does not increase it is likely to be discontinued in 6 months.</p>
9.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Maureen draw the groups attention to a recent publication 'Extraordinary Lives'. http://www.swia.gov.uk/swia/files/B41614%20LAC.pdf (1.60mb) It looks at the positive steps which can be taken to improve the future for looked after children and young people.</p> <p>Attached is a short resume of this document. <i>See appendix 1</i></p>
10.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>27 February 2007</p> <p>1 pm – 4 pm</p> <p>Boardroom, Maywood</p>

Extraordinary lives – published by SWIA in 2006

Review has six key messages:

- Looked After children can overcome adversity in childhood and lead successful adult lives.
- Too many adults have low expectation of what Looked After children can achieve. Children and adults can do well when they are well cared for.
- Relationship with skilled adults can help Looked After children and young people develop successfully.
- Children and young people Looked After away from home need stability and the chance to put down roots. Being moved frequently from one care setting to another is damaging and often restricts their access to education and health care.
- Tackling disadvantage and discrimination still experienced by many Looked After children requires planning at every level in a Local Authority and between them and their partners in delivering Children's Services. Champions are needed to make sure Local Authorities and their partners provide the best possible care.
- Developing an understanding of what children and young people think about services intended to help them supports effective engagement and long term service planning.

Rural Disadvantage:

Children and young people living in rural and remote areas are represented in all types of care settings. Becoming Looked After can have particular implications for them e.g. Plans to sustain them in their own community can be hampered by limited resources and placements a long way from home.

For children with disabilities living in remote communities are disadvantaged, as a short break can mean a long journey and high cost.

Safe

Getting the balance between safety and risk taking is difficult for any parent. People who care for Looked After children have additional matters to consider e.g. birth parents wishes, legal status etc. Difficult to balance these with allowing the children to lead as ordinary a childhood as possible

Key issues:

- Need for us to date guidance on overnight stays.
- Need for up to date training and materials for staff working with children who have been sexually abused.
- Need to develop a national strategy on allocation and priority, funding, and support for young people in and leaving secure care.
- Need for accreditation and quality assurance for specialist programmes.
- Young people are concerned about appropriate and safe restraint.

Nurturing

Stresses the importance of promoting the development of resilience for children who have experienced separation, dependent on positive relationships which give them a sense of belonging and attachment.

To achieve this must reduce turnover in staffing, placement moves, and changes of Social Worker and prioritise direct work with children.

Links with birth parents, regular school attendance, friends and social networks all create stability. Suggested new Permanence Order will provide a means of securing a child's placement without breaking previous connections.

Widespread frustration among young people about the support available after leaving care. Often contact with residential staff and foster carers ceases.

Key issues

- Need to create greater stability in the residential childcare workforce.
- Need to make sure staff have time and training in making thorough assessments and care planning.
- Need to make sure all leaving care are supported whilst they continue to need support.
- Assessing the impact of current arrangements.
- Make post adoption support available to all adoptive families.
- Make sure ex Looked After children in prison receive support while in custody and on release.

Health and Active

The cause of poor health outcomes for this group is their history of unmet need prior to being accommodated, compounded by the lack of systems to adapt to a mobile population. Some Childrens 'hidden' disabilities may be disadvantaged if their condition is not identified when they become Looked After.

Children in residential care (with disrupted backgrounds) likely to self harm, misuse drugs and show signs of depression. This highlights the need for therapeutic resources for them.

One study found primary age children Looked After away from home five times more likely to have mental health problems. Many front line health professionals have not received training on mental health issues in relation to young people and self harming. Role of Looked After children nurses strongly commended.

Key issues:

- Monitoring health outcomes for Looked After children up to the age of 21.
- Making sure all health professionals have some mental health input and specifically in relation to young people and self harm.
- Putting in place more specialist resources for all children and young people who have been abused, including those sexually abused.
- Encouraging CHPS to better co-ordinate health services for Looked After children.

Achieving

Educational outcomes for Looked After children remain poor in comparison with other children. Progress has been made but slow! Suggests quality of educational provision in residential special schools shows significant weaknesses. Must recognise pupils will often have experienced major disruptions in their education.

Report Learning with Care (HMIE + SWSI 2001) sets out what can be done to help them achieve their potential. Key factors identified as the learning environment, family and home circumstances, health and social and environmental factors. Suggests must be given urgent priority by Senior Educational personnel working with Social Work.

Key issues:

- Demonstrating that meeting the needs of Looked After children is the concern of the Local Authority as a whole.

- Developing incentives to recruit and retain teachers with appropriate qualifications to work in day and residential schools for pupils with SEBD.
- Supporting and developing the role of LAC designated teachers.
- Reporting on ethnicity of Looked After children and tackling racism in schools.
- Identifying what is currently working within school to support Looked After children (both at home and accommodated).
- Developing a shared understanding between Teachers, Social Workers and Health Professionals of one another's roles.

Respected and Responsible

Recognises genuine involvement of children and young people in decision making is complex and hard to achieve.

Consulting children is time consuming: Must ensure they are properly understood many barriers and pressures inhibiting the process, audits of case records suggests two thirds of case records do not clearly identify and record children's views.

Role of kinship carers significant. Suggest that there is a need for a shared working definition of what this means and standard approach to assessment, support and financial assistance.

Key issues:

- Improving practices for responding to challenging behaviour by young people in care homes.
- Need for a national definition of a child being Looked After in kinship care.
- Improving consistency in the assessment of kinship carers between Local Authorities,
- Ensuring kinship carers are paid enough to properly support children in their care.

Included

Role of elected members to make sure that the interests of children come first and should do their utmost to ensure the children in public care get a good start in life (Government response to Children's Safeguard Review 1998).

May respondents considered corporate parenting not sufficiently understood or applied in Scotland.

All residential care workers required to hold HNC plan level 3 SVQ. Suggests in Scotland as a whole 60% of staff have not achieved this (one third working towards qualification).

Many reports have identified the need for foster carers to be adequately trained and supported in recognition of their changing and increasingly demanding role.

Current trends suggest the demand for foster carers will continue to grow (responses to parental drug misuse and increasing use of shared care arrangements).

Information about quality and effectiveness of services to support families is lacking. Review conducted in 2002 (growing support Scottish Executive) identified some key messages. Multi-level and multi-method approaches have most impact, well structured nurseries and family centres can make long term benefits, intensive visiting most effective and input needed for months if not years.

The increasing influence of parental drug misuse must be recognised and responded to.

The Utting Report (DOH 1997) identified privately fostered children as some of the most vulnerable and least supported children living away from home although not within the scope of this review this group are highlighted as in need of safety and protection.

Key issues

- Working in residential child care needs to be made an attractive career option.
- Progress must be speeded up towards a well trained and qualified residential care workforce.
- More foster carers needed to be recruited as well as better supporting existing carers.
- More carers from minority communities and different faiths needs.
- Incentives needed to encourage the establishment of flexible shared care arrangements.
- More needs to be known about what works in helping children return home.
- Young people carers and parents must be included in decision making.

- Greater investment in young people is needed to help them become successful adults.

Conclusion – The single most important thing that will improve the futures of Scotland’s Looked After children is for Local Authorities to focus and improve their corporate parenting skills

Recommendations based on this conclusion:

All Chief Executives should make an annual report to their Council on the outcomes achieved for Looked After children.

Consideration should be given to appointing a Senior Manager with specific responsibility for Looked After children throughout the Authority at a strategic level.