

Scottish Association of Children's Panels

109th Council Meeting

Saturday 19th April 2008, 10.00am – 15.00pm

Enterprise House, Stirling

109.1 Sederunt and Apologies

M. Easton (Highland), G.Reoch (Glasgow 5), M. Fawcett (Aberdeenshire), A. McGroarty (Glasgow 3), A. Lee (W. Dumbartonshire), G.Adamson (Borders), M.Gaughan (Glasgow 4), A.Philp(Aberdeen City), S.McMenemy (N.Ayrshire), J.Noble (Argyll & Bute), D.Stalker (Chairmen's Rep)

Apologies: K.Perfect (East Dumbartonshire), P.Maynard (Dumfries & Galloway), B.Burke (Midlothian), M.Stenhouse (Clackmannanshire), S.Panton (S.Lanarkshire), A.MacLeod (Western Isles), L.Benton (N.Lanarkshire), W.Milne (Angus), B. McGugan (Inverclyde), M.Kirk (Fife).

If you cannot attend, please try and arrange for someone else to come from your area in your place.

109.2 Minutes of previous meeting

Proposed: Margaret Gaughan Seconded: Aileen Philp

109.3 Matters Arising

a) Gordon Watt has expressed willingness to attend SACP meetings more regularly if this is wished.

b) Feedback re 28 reps dismissed following failure to complete Parenting Order training. M. Fawcett has spoken with Alex Salmond, who has passed concerns to Fiona Hyslop. It was agreed that it is important to look at why this happened and how similar situations can be avoided in future. The situation also highlights the need for a proper appeals/complaints procedure in new system.

c) As yet there has been no response with regard to the problem of local authorities refusal to pay expenses for reps attending SACP meetings. There was agreement about the unacceptability of this situation, given that local authorities have been allocated additional funds this year to support panel members' training and expenses. This was announced by Adam Ingram at 2007 National School. In addition there is annual funding for representatives to attend several meetings per year. Information concerning current difficulties has been passed to Gordon Watt.

d) The need for panel members to claim expenses for attending hearings and training was agreed, North Ayrshire now has expenses claims forms on line which seems to be popular with local panel members.

109.4 Correspondence

a) Netta Maclver has been appointed as new principal reporter

b) Scottish Institute for Residential Care and ASDW organised a parliamentary reception to which SACP was invited.

c) A trainee panel member contacted SACP to highlight a problem encountered when employed by a local authority. The person wished to train as a panel member but was told that this would only be possible if they attended training and hearings during evenings and Saturdays only. Now that the person has changed employer they have been able to complete

panel member training. Mary Fawcett will send a summary of this and similar cases to Ann Lee and Angela McGroarty so that it can be raised at Network 100.

109.5 Chairman's Report

- 1) SIRCC/ASDW Reception. There was interest in ease of recruitment of new panel members. Presentations highlighted the additional problems of LAC children and the need to improve resources and opportunities. Residential care staff are amongst the most poorly paid in the sector.

However Scotland is only country to have professional register for child care workers. There is a need for the best level of care for children who are already very disadvantaged and who are coming into the system in increasing numbers, at a younger age and in sibling groups. Both corporate parenting responsibility and research are needed. Adam Ingram's presentation echoed these views and also stressed the need for ongoing support for these children post-16.

- 2) Children Law UK / TACT meeting 11th April.

Children Law UK had been contracted by the Ministry of Justice to deliver training prior to the introduction in April, of the Public Law Outline and Statutory Guidance.

This aims to reduce unnecessary delays in care proceedings, and put the child at the centre, and promote better inter agency working and cooperation. Training has gone well in spite of a principal member of the organising team being off sick.

The organisation had already decided this year to concentrate on Youth Justice, in particular the relationships between Offending Behaviour / Children in Care or Children who, once they had come into care, then began to offend.

Northern Ireland has recently seen the launch of the single Court to deal with Offending and Care matters.

There is an intention for members of an advisory group to visit Germany and Scotland to see examples of how they deal with the whole child for Offending and Care / Protection.

Conference proposals ;-

- 1) Joint conference with Community Care, early next year to look at Children in Care / Criminalisation of Children in care, in particular, raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years, more in line with other European Countries.
- 2) Hoping to run separate conferences in Scotland and Northern Ireland next year.

CLUK / TACT is planning to set up an office in Edinburgh and is keen to maintain representation from Scotland and Northern Ireland as they are both so far down the road that others wish to follow.

- 3) Ann Lee will attend the CPAC conference 8-9 May

109.6 Network 100

Minutes of the first meeting were distributed. These will be included on the SACP website. Based on these minutes, concern was expressed that panel members could feel more distant from the support structure and less able to make their voice heard if local panel organisation becomes less of a focus under the revamped organisation.

Ann Lee and Angela McGroarty also reported back on the 2nd meeting. The meeting asked them to enquire at the next meeting :

- Where the replacement for CHARM is being trialled

- How the use of laptops in hearings is being evaluated. The feedback appears to have been largely positive, which does not seem to reflect current views of panel members using laptops. If laptops are not used, decisions and reasons are being sent out handwritten, which does not seem to meet with the stated intention of SCRA (in a letter in September 2008) that use of laptops should not mean using panel members to do the work of administrative staff. A letter will also be sent to SCRA.

Forthcoming consultation process. It is Important that panel members are aware of and participate in consultation groups about reform of system.

109.7 Annual Report

Ann Lee will contact printer. Art Is an Option offer a good price and have the art already available. We will also order the same quantity of business cards as before and enquire about the cost of self-adhesive envelopes. If possible, reports and envelopes to be delivered to Victoria Quay. Ann will also check that arrangements for distribution can be repeated this year. Reports: Chair, Press Secretary, treasurer. Annual accounts are with the chartered accountants.

109.8 GIRFEC

Margaret Easton, Ann Lee and Susan McMenemy had all attended roadshows. Margaret Gaughan is due to attend one in Glasgow. The impression was that there is still a lack of practical information available and a lack of clarity in the use of the Integrated Assessment Framework and in the allocation of the role of the Lead professional. The IAF is being piloted in part of North Ayrshire but reports appear to be longer and less clear as a result. There is also some concern that the process of referral to the Reporter, even by the Lead Professional, is becoming less direct.

Materials used on the day were promised to participants but have yet to be sent out.

109.9 Press Secretary's Report

Main press topics:

- 1) Riot in St mary's Kenmure has led to a shortage of secure accomodation. One girl had to be placed in the south of England.
- 2) Kinship carers. Many missing out in Glasgow due to LA error. If Kinship Carer in receipt of other benefits they may not get the allowance payable to kinship carers.
- 3) Anger Man courses for young people in Scotland are being rolled out.

Website. Front page has been re-vamped. George Reoch has rewritten the text of "About Us".

Network 100 minutes will go on website and GIRFEC roadshow information will be added to site once the information is sent to those who attended.

109.10 Treasurer's report

This year a larger sum than normal (£2228) is being carried forward as we have not paid for the annual report and AGM in advance.

Equipment check: the Secretary has a laptop & printer; the Chairman has a laptop.

109.11 Membership Secretary

Mary Fawcett summarised the decision of the Freedom of Information inquiry. FOI expressed concern at the lack of voluntary cooperation between organisations supposedly working together. He could not find in favour of SACP's request because it would have meant releasing panel members' names to public. LAs involved were criticised about their lack of cooperation. Following a discussion with Mary Fawcett, Gerry McEneaney said he would meet with Ann Lee.

There are ongoing problems with expenses. North Ayrshire Chair and Representative both stated that membership of SACP is of value for panel members. There is finance available to CPAC to fund travel expenses for at least four meetings a year. CPAC are to be approached re representation and expenses.

There is a problem in Glasgow where representatives cannot distribute SACP newsletter now.

109.12 Issues from panel members

1) Preparation of children for taking part in hearings appears very uneven and risks putting the children at a disadvantage. Experience seems to show that hearings where children have had contact with children's rights officer are much more positive.

Confidentiality is an issue in allocating responsibility for preparation. There may also be a lack of awareness of what is involved in a hearing among other adults who could possibly prepare the child. It was felt that someone from the Reporter's office may be the most appropriate person to have responsibility.

2) It was felt that panel members have a lack of involvement in consultation, which is unsatisfactory when major issues are being discussed. Need to raise awareness of consultation meetings.

109.13 AGM 14th June 2008

M. Easton to confirm booking with Macdonald Resort in Aviemore. If this is not possible, Pitlochry will be booked.

109.14 Constitution

Proposed amendments to the constitution will be put to the vote at the AGM. These were put forward partly as a reflection of current practice, since there has been little call for an Executive, and partly to meet the current situation where the system of support for panel members is being reviewed and the current chair and vice chair are already involved in this process, which is due to be completed in less than 2 years. The basic changes would be:

- 1) Scrap Executive but retain Officials
- 2) Post holders who have been in post for 4 years have the option to stand again, to be re-elected on yearly basis.

A 2/3 majority in favour will be needed for these amendments to be adopted. A copy of the constitution showing these proposed changes will be sent out with these minutes.

109.15 AOCB

Susan McMenemy is to become Chair for North Ayrshire. David Stalker is likely to be rep for SACP in partnership with another NA panel member. Gordon Adamson is also having to resign due to other commitments.

New member packs all went out.

FEEDBACK

New principal reporter

Laptops

Feedback - GIRFEC, Network100 & ChildLawUK

Time off for hearings