

NETWORK 100 MEETING

MONDAY 10 DECEMBER 2007

Attendees

Richard Peacock (Scottish Safeguarders Association) (SSA)
Eddie McConnell (Scottish Children's Reporter Administration) (SCRA)
Ann Lee (Scottish Association of Children's Panels) (SACP)
Angela McGroarty (Scottish Association of Children's Panels) (SACP)
Allison Cosgrove (Children's Panel Advisory Group) (CPAG)
Gavin McGregor (Children's Panel Advisory Group) (CPAG)
Gill McBride (Children's Panel Chairmans Group) (CPCG)
Val Cox (Scottish Government) (SG)
Olivia McLeod (Scottish Government) (SG)
Gordon Watt (Scottish Government) (SG)
Shona May (Scottish Government) (SG)

Apologies

Margaret Easton (Scottish Association of Children's Panels) (SACP)
Douglas Bulloch (SCRA)
Tom Philliben (SCRA) (NB: Joined the meeting in the latter stages)
Margaret Burt (SSA)
Gerard McEneaney (Children's Panel Chairmans Group) (CPCG)

1. Introductions and apologies

Val Cox gave a general introduction about the need for the Network 100 group. She acknowledged the many different groups that make up the Children's Hearings System and the wealth of knowledge and experience represented on the group.

Val also set out the expectations for N100 which will act as a conduit with members engaging with the individuals they represent who will have views on the system as it stands and how it should be in the future.

2. Role of the Group

Remit

Agreed as set out in the paper circulated prior to meeting

Frequency

Agreed that N100 will meet four times over a twelve month period with flexibility to adjust as needed depending on how the role and remit of the group develops.

Membership

Agreed that

- Membership should include the groups already represented
- in the light of the new Concordat, an invitation should be extended to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) to put forward a representative
- wider membership, such as Health or ADSW, should be guided according to issues arising
- CPAG to be allowed an additional place

3. Reform of the Children's Hearings System

Gordon Watt provided an update on the current policy direction and some of the reform agenda projects currently underway or in hand which will help improve the system in the short term without the need for legislation. The programme of work to be delivered fell into three strands of activity:

Here and now – there was a need to maintain the core aspects of the system as it stands now such as annual national recruitment, training arrangements while looking for ways to improve.

Improvement Projects - A number of developments had been consulted upon which would not require primary legislation. These included the development of e-learning, a review of the Legal Representation Grant scheme, improved continuity of panel members between hearings, the development of a new panel member rota management system and the issue of training and panel member expenses. All of these and other projects were being taken forward. More detailed information on the projects was provided in a separate paper.

Joint Working

Minister wants to see more joined-up working which builds on the many ad hoc arrangements which currently exist and which would allow more flexible deployment of panel members across neighbouring authority areas. It was expected that a new way of joint working could lead to the establishment of joint CPACs being established in most if not all of the mainland areas. In order to help facilitate this agenda it had been agreed in the context of the recent spending round that £1.5 million of additional funding should be provided by the Scottish Government to local councils.

Structural reform

In response to a question from Gavin MacGregor, Gordon Watt assured the group that the concept of developing a National Body had not been dismissed. However, it was recognised this would probably need primary legislation and as such should be viewed as a possible medium to long term development.

Discussion followed around the advantages and disadvantages of what was being proposed, particularly in relation to training, funding, leadership and territorial boundaries. The main difficulty was seen to be the 32 different approaches/experiences across the country. The group agreed that a national body would help alleviate some of these problems.

Communicating the messages

A useful discussion followed about how to share the messages and keep the different parts of the system informed about developments. The point was made that panel members are now getting disillusioned that nothing is actually changing. In other words there is a lot of talk but no action, despite consulting over the past few years. Lots of panel members have stopped listening

It was agreed that a message articulating the change needed to come from the Scottish Government. The group considered options for communicating such as the website and the Communicator. Discussion ranged around the purpose, distribution and the need for communication to be meaningful. It was noted that there would be a need to ensure the correct mechanisms were in place and used effectively.

The various options included

- using email updates
- developing a network mechanism
- quarterly newsletter
- access to Extranet with secure log-in
- letters

Action

- Refresh website and access to it
- Give more consideration to our communication strategy.

Timescales

Individual projects have own timescales but aim to have majority concluded by Autumn 2008

Joint CPACs effective by summer 2009 – to go to Ministers after discussion with CoSLA about the key principles

Further announcements on joint working and reform expected at the end of January/beginning February

4. Flu Pandemic Planning

Gordon Watt had circulated a paper which nobody appeared to have received. It was explained that the Children's Hearings system needed to have a contingency plan in order to manage risks and to make decisions on what has to be maintained in the event of, for example, a flu pandemic.

Val Cox asked members to go away and think about the implications, to consider scenarios and how they could be managed.

SCRA already doing some work on Continuity Planning but that this can only be taken so far.

Action

- SCRA will circulate their paper for information only
- Clerks to find out what Emergency Planning Officers are doing
- Gordon Watt will circulate the missing Scottish Government paper

5. AOB

Eddie McConnell asked if this could be a forum for discussing wider Youth Justice Policy issues that impact on Children's Hearings processes and procedures, and for exploring options. In addition it could test out developing policy thinking and different groups could contribute.

There was general agreement that there would be value in that but that careful consideration must be given to agenda items.

6. Date of next meeting

Date of next meeting was not agreed at the time but will be **Wednesday 26th March**

Group requested that they are provided with a heads up on what The Scottish Government agenda items are likely to be and that there should be an opportunity for members to feed in.

CYPSC: Workforce & Capacity Issues

March 2008