

Parliamentary Reception by the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care(SIRCC)/ Association of Directors of Social Work(ADSW) at Scottish Parliament on 16th April 2008.

Attended by approx 30 + including

Adam Ingram
Robert Brown
Robin Harper, All MSP'S

Richard Simpson, from SIRCC welcomed everyone and reminded us that Looked After Children are not doing as well as they could or should be doing in e.g.

1. Health
2. Educational attainment

Sector now facing new problems of families affected by drug abuse.

Bernadette Docherty – Told us that we need to make a fundamental step change in child care.

- We need to look at the opportunities provided for children in care
- Need to have confident, achieving and inspirational child care staff
- Residential care staff are amongst the most poorly paid and poorly qualified; there is a need to raise their morale and status, and they need to know what we expect of them

What do children need to be successful?

They need:-

- Positive support and encouragement; to build self esteem.
- Staff to talk to, without judging them - to make them feel valued.

Jane Davidson – Director of SIRCC - Reassured us that there has been significant progress in the Residential Care Sector.

Scotland is the only country which has a professional registration for childcare workers and advocacy organisations for support for children in care.

Scotland provides specialist education and training for children in the residential care sector.

Although allegations of past abuse, many positives are found in residential child care.

Many challenges in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children in residential care as

- There are more children in care
- They are younger than before
- They also contain sibling groups

Staff are keen to turn things around:

Needs:- Corporate parenting agenda,

Fundamental review of staff pay and conditions, look at what skill mix is needed for workers in residential childcare.

Look at what works in residential childcare.

Need research to back up anecdotal evidence.

Adam Ingram – Minister for Children and Families

The Minister referred us to the briefing paper previously prepared and emphasised the importance of :

1. Registration.
2. The need to improve pay and conditions for all involved staff.
3. Need a collective focus to improve the outcomes for the Child.
4. Ongoing monitoring of the child whilst in care.
5. Ongoing care during transition, either back to family or to independent living.
6. Single outcomes agreement.

The big question is “How do we achieve a supply of Residential care workers who can cater for the needs of all children?”

We need to enhance the capacity of the workforce and improve leadership within this sector.

We must make a difference to children who come into care, and to do that, we must make a difference to the staff that care for them.

Most participants were from the Social Work/Childcare Sector, with Valerie Cox and myself from the Children Hearing’s System. I felt it was a good opportunity to raise the profile of Scottish Association of Children Panels, as a representative of panel members - several people asked if we are still able to recruit panel members!

Steven Paterson, SIRCC, will be Director, whilst Jennifer is on maternity leave, and is very willing to come and talk to us about his organisation and the training that they do.

In all, a very worthwhile and informative evening, with good networking opportunities and awareness- raising of panel members interest in what happens, and what is being done to improve outcomes for children and young people in a residential care setting

Ann Lee -SACP