

Scottish Association of Children's Panels

114th Council Meeting

Saturday 25th April, 2009 10.00am – 2.30pm

Enterprise House, Sprinkerse Business Park, Stirling

114.1 Sederunt :

A.Lee (W. Dunbartonshire), A. McGroarty (Glasgow 3), G.Reoch (Glasgow 5), M. Gaughan (Glasgow 4), I. MacDonald (N. Ayrshire), A.McGerr ((Inverclyde), J. Noble (Argyll& Bute), R. McGivney (Dundee), L. Taylor (Angus), A. Philp (Aberdeen City)

Apologies:

G. Adamson(Borders), B. Burke (Midlothian), M. Easton(Highland), M. Kirk (Fife), Patrick Malloy (? Lanarkshire)

114.2 Record of Previous Meeting of 28th February, 2009

Minor changes were made to the record:

113.8 A project is to be run for the next 2 years regarding children *who go into care and go on to offend (eg. assault staff)*. Reports to be forwarded re this. (*the project is taking place in England*).

The record was adopted after these minor changes.

Proposed: M Gaughan Seconded: R McGivney

114.3 Matters Arising

113.4 1. The meeting went ahead in March. (see 114.7)

113.5 Evening Hearings:

Dundee - twice weekly

N. Ayrshire - two per month

Glasgow are down to one per fortnight – they are rota-ed but most are cancelled, and will go ahead only if required. Can still be cancelled even if members have received the papers.

W.Dunbartonshire - have a rota of people to do emergency hearings.

Other areas hold no evening hearings at all.

One of the problems seems to be that social workers do not get paid or time off in lieu for attending hearings in the evenings, so the only SW available will be the duty SW.

113.6 New member packs have gone out to the universities for distribution to new panel members. They are *now being looked for* as part of the information to be distributed. From the web, new members look on SACP as a support, even when a buddy system is operating for them.

114.4 Correspondence

The Chair had been in touch with the secretary who unfortunately could not be present but there has been little correspondence since the last meeting.

A. Philp read a letter from Aberdeen City Council announcing a review of member expenses, and stating a reduced flat rate of 40p / mile from May 1. Discussion indicated that this was not universal, although several areas seemed to be doing it. It

had come up at the Chairmen's Group meeting too, and apparently one area had argued successfully for the re-instatement of the previous rates. It was thought that such a scheme would have a particularly adverse affect on rural members should it become common practice and could affect retaining panel members, and it was also strongly felt that re-imburement should be uniform throughout the country and not subject to the whim of councils. It was decided to bring the matter up with Denise Swanson when she attended later.

114.5 Issues raised by panel members:

Apparently SCRA are trying to combine all the Ayrshires by holding hearings in Kilmarnock and closing centres elsewhere. Not all panel members drive, and not all the reporters in the area were happy about the changes. There is not always direct transport available from previous centres to Kilmarnock. It was thought this move was against the kilbrandon ethos of the system of holding hearings in local areas, and would also be detrimental to families and professionals attending. A letter expressing concern should be sent to Tom Philliben with a copy to Denise Swanson.

There was a discussion on late panel papers; it was felt that being presented with reports at the hearing presented problems not only for panel members but for families, who were often less inclined to admit to being unable to assimilate information quickly under stressful circumstances, and who may have needed the option of taking legal advice before the hearing. Ideally the allocated social worker should go over reports with the family, but apparently it is no-one's duty to prepare a family for the first hearing. Supplementary reports should come in time to conform to the 3-day rule, and not be presented at the hearing. National Standards apply, stating that a hearing should only go ahead when a report is submitted on the day if –

- a) an order is about to lapse
- b) a warrant is about to expire
- c) a place of safety warrant is required

There was discussion as to how different areas dealt with the issue of 'chairing', and panel members' willingness to chair (or not!)

Panel member support: in some areas panel members feel they are not supported by their chairs when specific issues crop up, which then goes against the panel members when the CPAC are considering their re-appointment.

In some areas, there are several councillors as CPAC members, and things are very political.

Our conclusion was that SACP cannot support concerns of members individually, but as a body, we can bring up issues with relevant agencies and establish principles.

114.6 AGM

Will be held in Aviemore on June 6th with the next meeting starting at 10.00am., followed by the AGM after lunch.

Accommodation – the rates were mentioned in the previous record.

Election of office bearers:

- the posts of Chair, Vice-chair, & Minutes Secretary are up for election.
- The present Secretary (Margaret Easton) and Treasurer (Margaret Gaughan) are willing to stay in post

It was clarified that the post of Press Secretary is now defunct, and that George Reoch looks after the website on an *ad hoc* basis.

114.7 Chair's Report

The meeting between the Scottish Government (rep. -Denise Swanson), CPAC & Chairs Group on the Review developments postponed from February, happened on March 19 –20, but there was still *no* ministerial statement. There had been 260 quite diverse responses to the consultation. There was disquiet amongst those present about panel members giving up their time only to find on the day at 6.00pm that the

information available was very much curtailed. There was a discussion *re* certain elements of the system and how things should go during the transition ; what is the definition of 'local'? The reporters have reservations; problems with the 'firewalls' and it has been decided that any advice given should be recorded, and whether or not the panel member(s) took the advice. There was discussion as to how, in the current economic climate, with redundancies happening, this could cause difficulties in the retention of panel members. While it was a useful week-end for promoting the SACP, it was really just 'passing the time'

The CPAC seminar has now been postponed until September because the responses had not been forthcoming on the future structure of the hearing system and the CPAC's role in it.

Highland panel members have been invited to discuss the proposed changes with Denise Swanson and Adam Ingram at the beginning of May.

Children in Scotland website: they are looking for feedback on the proposed Criminal Justice and Licensing Bill (Scotland) who are looking at raising the age of criminal responsibility. The Annual Conference is in East Kilbride on November 5-6. One member pointed out that we need more effective early intervention to prevent habits forming (eg. shoplifting). Social Work and Police will have to look at which grounds to refer children on if the age of responsibility rises to 12 as has been suggested.

114.8 Website

The website is almost up to date – just waiting for a wee group of things to go on. The reps. List has been up-dated and redone – there is now a link to click to your own rep. (which goes to George's e-mail as the point of contact, and he disseminates the mail)

The website vanished for a month – a problem with the web host, now resolved – a new web host at a cost of £45 to set things up again. Haydn (Gleed) sends an invoice every so often. There should be no problem about capacity. There is now a post box. Any other ideas are welcome.

The database never got off the ground and has been superseded by the website. The new site is very user-friendly. We can keep conference reports on indefinitely and archive them. Anyone can use the site – no password is required. Baroness Sloss's report is still to go on.

114.9 Treasurer's Report

At the end of the financial year we had approximately £120 left after paying all the expenses. Everything is off to the accountant at the moment with a mini-statement. We must look at the finances of lunch – more was paid out than was taken in, so either we need to look at how we do it number-wise, attendance-wise, or look for an alternative supplier. We will look at this in detail at the next meeting.

The Annual reports have still to be paid for, and it was suggested we get a few more printed this year to have on our stall at the National School.

It was suggested we have an advert for the website on the back page.

114.10 Conferences

Aileen Philp put out leaflets about various conferences coming up, with a list of same.

Ann Lee attended the 'You Can't Choose Your Parents' conference in Edinburgh, in April, delivered by Kate Cairns, report pending. Apparently the adult brain kicks in at age 25! (later in men, said some cynic!!)

Joyce Noble attended the 'Future of Child Protection in Scotland' conference in Edinburgh in March – report now with George for the website.

Angela mentioned the availability of Bereavement counselling at Yorkhill for young children as useful information.

114.11 Children's Hearing System Review

Denise Swanson was to come and give us up-to-date information.
She did not attend.

114.12 A.O.C.B.

There was discussion about putting the feed-back points on the website prior to the record of the meeting being ratified, to keep panel members abreast of what we are doing.

Joyce Noble thanked members for their support and friendship over the years she has been involved with SACP – she has decided not to seek re-appointment in May and will be leaving the system.

114.13 Points for Feedback:

- 1) Expenses – the cutting of rates in Aberdeen**
- 2) Closure of Hearing Rooms**
- 3) Panel Member support**
- 4) New proposed date for the ministerial announcement**
- 5) Refusal to chair**

114.14 Date of Next Meeting: -

AGM - Saturday June 6, in Aviemore at 10.00am

114.13 - Date of Next meeting & AGM: Saturday 6th June in Aviemore

