

Scottish Association of Children's Panels

122nd Council Meeting

Saturday, 13th November 2010, Millenium Hotel, George Square, Glasgow

122.1 Sederunt

David Stalker (N Ayrshire); Kay Kelly (N Lanarkshire); John Smith (Inverclyde); Ann Lee (W Dumbartonshire); Roy McGivney (Dundee); Allan Martin (Angus); George Reoch (Glasgow SE) Margaret Easton (Highland); Margaret Gaughan (Glasgow South); Angela McGroarty (Glasgow E)

Apologies

Mary Kirk (Fife); Jennifer Ferguson (Argyll & Bute); Stephen Panton (S Lanarkshire); Alan Corbett (E Ayrshire)

122.2 Record of previous meeting. Accepted. Prop. R. McGivney Sec. M. Gaughan

122.3 Matters Arising.

1) A. McGroarty has new email address. This was circulated to reps.

2) 121.6 a. The nature and extent of Buddy schemes to support new panel members is inconsistent across the system.

b. Concern at the level of knowledge and understanding of the hearings system among social workers appears widespread. Pressure to end a supervision requirement before age 16 is noticeable, as is the misconception that the hearing's job is to rubber-stamp an existing plan without examining alternatives.

c. The quality of information provided to the hearing was discussed and there was a general concern that the quality of reports does not appear to have improved. The variety of reporting formats is an issue for training as panel members are being trained using one format but dealing with a different one in practice. The extent to which a multi-agency plan is available is variable and where it exists it does not yet seem to be delivering the improved quality of information intended by GIRFEC.

122.4 Correspondence

Patrick Molloy, one of the representatives from North Lanarkshire has tendered his resignation due to pressure of commitments.

122.5 Chair's Report

The Chair has attended meetings related to the new bill and has had discussions with Scottish Government about the identification of a regular venue for SACP meetings and the problems of expenses for SACP representatives. These discussions have yet to be finalised.

122.6 Children's Hearings Bill

Stage 3 of the bill will be on 24th November. Amendments 71-74 passed at stage 2 are a great cause for concern among a majority of panel members consulted. It was agreed that a letter be sent to ELLC and to MSPs expressing the concerns relating to the effect of these amendments on the

independence and impartiality of hearings and on the delivery of consistent levels of training and support for panel members.

Discussion of further papers produced by Scottish Government relating to qualifications of a National Convener and legal advice to hearings.

General concern expressed that the voice of the child seems lost in the course of discussions around ASTs, National Convener etc.

Both the Strategic Planning Board and the Implementation Working Group are scheduled to meet mid-December. Two meetings of the IWG were cancelled due to pressure of preparing the bill for stage 3. Comments on any aspects of the bill to A. McGroarty or M. Easton.

122.7 Issues raised by Panel members

- 1) Some new panel members are finding it difficult to resist pressure (from other panel members) to go through with a hearing despite the late arrival of reports
- 2) There is a concern that there is an increase in the number of occasions where a child is excused from all or part of a hearing in circumstances other than those permitted by law, purely for the convenience of the adults.

122.8 Treasurer's report

Due to a change in the timing of payments from Scottish Government there has been a lack of funds since the last meeting. However there are now sufficient funds available to allow some attendance at conferences. There is still uncertainty about the cost of accommodation for meetings which will not be resolved until further discussion with Scottish Government.

122.9 Conferences

Several conferences relevant to panel members were discussed. Any panel member wishing to attend one must contact Margaret Gaughan regarding funding. Any panel member attending a conference must produce a report for inclusion on the SACP website.

25th November – GIRFEC (Children in Scotland; Stirling) M. Easton to attend

1st December – Shaping Lives (Children in Scotland; Edinburgh)

2nd December – Gang Culture (Glasgow)

2nd December – Impact of parental substance abuse on children in education (Glasgow)

7th December – In the best interests of the child (Roy McGivney to attend)

SASO meetings (at Pitt Street Police Headquarters)

3rd February – Shaken Baby (Dr Neil Stoodley, Frenchey Hospital, Bristol)

3rd March – Hearing System : Implications for Practice – Malcolm Schafer

122.10 Website

Website was fully updated prior to the meeting. Although H. Gleed has moved to Wales it was agreed to have him continue as webmaster.

122.11 Next meetings

Saturday 5th February; Saturday 30th April; Saturday 18th June (AGM)

Venue : Glasgow Millenium Hotel (unless otherwise informed)

122.12 Points for Feedback

- Discussion points from Children's Hearings (Scotland) bill.
- If panel members wish to feed back their views they can do so via the SACP website.

- Conferences