

# Scottish Association of Children's Panels

## 111<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2008 10.00am – 15.00pm

Enterprise House, Stirling

**The initial part of the day was taken up by looking at 'Strengthening for the Future', the consultation document on the reform of the Children's Hearing System, and formulating the response of the SACP.**

### 111.1 Sederunt and Apologies

M. Easton(Highland), A. Lee(W. Dumbartonshire), A. McGroarty(Glasgow E), G.Reoch(Glasgow SE), M.Gaughan(Glasgow S), A.Philp(Aberdeen City), D.Stalker(N. Ayrshire), A.McGerr(Inverclyde), J.Noble(Argyll& Bute)

**Apologies:** W.Milne(Angus), M. Kirk(Fife), H. Davidson(Dundee), G. Adamson(Borders)

### 111.2 Minutes of Previous Meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2008

Proposed: George Reoch

Seconded: Aileen Philp

### 111.3 Matters Arising

110.4 Tom Philliben did reply, but the issues are ongoing, and hopefully feedback from the original enquiries will ensue.

### 111.4 Correspondence

Tom Philliben would like details of where Reporters have NOT gone into the Hearing Room. It was unclear from our last minutes where this had happened or who had brought it up.

In reply to **110.6 (3)** Tom Philliben said that guidelines suggest that 3 scheduled hearings +1 business meeting + emergencies were what panel members should expect at any one time.

Discussion ensued, pointing out that where a case has a family with multiple children, this can already lead to a hearing session over-running from a morning into an afternoon, and this has implications for panel members who have to take time off work. In several areas it seems that where more than 3 cases occur, a separate panel is arranged.

Roy McGiveny had been contacted to clarify the position with the new rep from Dundee, as Heather Davidson had also expressed interest. Heather will be the new rep.

There had been two responses on the website from Panel members. G. Reoch dealt with one, which was a matter of reassurance for a fairly new panel member.

A.McGroarty dealt with the other, where a PM was looking for clarification as to what the term 'corporate parenting' meant, having encountered it in a conference report.

For children who are 'looked after', the Local Authority is the 'Corporate Parent', and not only Social Work department, but ALL Local Authority employees, should be pro-active in trying to help these children.

It was thought good that panel members were using the website in these ways, but certainly for the first enquiry, it was pointed out by D.Stalker that a 'buddy system'

would have been a better way of dealing with such a query, had such a system existed in the enquirer's local area. It seems that buddy systems do not exist in all areas, and this was thought a pity.

Two letters had been received on the topic of the changes to the constitution at the last AGM and subsequent resignation, **a)** one from the panel members in Aberdeenshire, and **b)** one from the chair of N. Ayrshire on behalf of N. Ayrshire Panel Members.

After some discussion, it was agreed that a letter would be sent in reply to **a)**, asking Aberdeenshire to reconsider their decision not to send a rep. to SACP, and expressing our regret at Mary's decision to resign, particularly at this time of change, when Panel Members need as much representation as possible. It was hoped that in the meantime, Aberdeenshire would use the website for information. It was suggested that a follow-up letter would be sent in 6 months time.

In reply to **b)**, a letter would be sent, recognising the concerns expressed, and a willingness to address them, as well as acknowledging the value we place on their decision to continue to send a rep. to SACP meetings.

Open debate was seen as a good thing, when opposing views can be aired and examined.

### 111.5 Chair's Report

A. Lee attended a meeting of Children Law UK on August 20<sup>th</sup>. The organisation is now a Sub-Committee of TACT, and has a new CEO, and has opened a Scottish office in Edinburgh. They are now looking more holistically at the child, rather than viewing it as just an 'offending' child.

D. Stalker asked what advantage there was to the Hearing System in being involved with Children Law UK. It was pointed out that they get as much benefit from the us as *vice versa*, as they come and look at our system to see how we run things. They look to us for ideas to improve their own system. England is setting up its own 'panels', and are interested in the fact that some of our panel members are also trainers. Guernsey has now taken on a form of our system, Northern Ireland is also moving towards it, and England & Wales are moving towards utilising some of the best bits of our system. It was felt that we could also learn from Children Law UK. If it was necessary, TACT would step in to help with funding to keep our attendance at Children Law UK.

Further conferences will be in February – 'Children in Care and Offending', and in London in April – 'Youth Court System'.

A. Lee and A. McGroarty attended a Network 100 Meeting on March 26<sup>th</sup>. The minutes of this meeting will go on our website once they have been approved in October.

**Recruitment** was an issue discussed.

SACP discussion highlighted that the recruitment DVD did not seem to be available from the Training Unit when requested by N. Ayrshire.

There is concern in Glasgow because so many new members are required, that not many applicants are rejected. CPAC training is now focussing on who should be weeded out, and to make sure that a realistic expectation of what is required of a serving panel member (in terms of time commitment) is being given to applicants. It was suggested that the Area Chair should be involved at the initial application stage to help vet the applicants, something done in N. Ayrshire, but not universally. SACP were reminded that the Training Unit has packs for local in-service training, available on request.

**Improvement** – an update on Change Projects:

Frequency of review hearings – this is being tested in 5 areas - report due in November.

Continuity of panel members - already tested – due for completion in September

Panel Rota management - a main contractor Real-time and CAS (current provider of CHARM software) has been appointed

Legal Representatives – research has been commissioned – final report due in September

Website Forum – in place on the website since January . Some panel members need a reminder of their ‘login’ details.

IT Solutions - in local areas trials are being conducted with laptops for the writing of reasons. Evaluation trials to be held in January.

The Training Unit was looking at more e-learning, but this has not progressed yet.

More flexibility in the timing of hearings was discussed- and the fact that the majority of evening hearings were cancelled due to non-attendance by Reporters.

(The Scottish Executive is promoting evening hearings, but Reporters keep cancelling them - Angela McGroarty would like figures from areas to feed back – details please to Ann Lee.)

Any comments to go back to Network 100 need to be e-mailed to Ann Lee before October 13<sup>th</sup>.

Network 100 needs to stay around to put flesh on the bones of the proposed reforms!

#### **111.6 Website Secretary’s Report**

Only 2 conference reports still to go on to the website. There has been a dearth of conferences recently. Ann Lee to send in minutes of the Mental Health conference.

Trying to set up a ‘button’ to allow users to go directly to the Network 100 minutes. Quiz from the Training Unit is still to go in.

Margaret Easton to update the member list.

It was suggested that we need a ‘Forum Page’ for members to post comments, and ask questions.

The news page needs to be updated – it might be possible to put the consultation on. Margaret Easton to get Hayden to send an Invoice, and send George Reoch an updated member list.

#### **111.7 Treasurer’s Report**

We got the grant in one back payment (in August )plus monthly payments – this month’s is late. The sum is a lot less than last year, but if we need more, we can ask. We do not want to have a lot in the kitty at the end of the year (May), as has happened before.

#### **111.8 Conferences**

A list of conferences is to go on the website, so that if any panel member wants to go, they have the opportunity as long as they clear it with the treasurer and write a report.

The ‘**Children in Scotland**’ membership is paid, which entitles us to the lowest rate for conferences – the invoice can be sent straight to Margaret Gaughan.

6 – 7 November Annual Conference in St Andrews, Fife

SASO regularly holds conferences - free - (with cups of tea and sandwiches!):

all in Pitt St, Glasgow

06.11.08 ‘Age of Criminal Responsibility’

02.10.08 ‘Sex between 13-15year olds should be Decriminalised?’

04.12.08 ‘Future of the Children’s Hearing System’

11.05.09 Annual Conference - ‘Women and Children in Criminal Justice’

14 – 16 November **National School** in Dunblane Hydro ‘Abuse and Beyond’

The SACP stall needs to be manned, so 2 reps required. The SACP information sheets will be distributed.

#### **111.9 A.O.C.B**

**111.10 Points for Feedback**

- 1) **Encouragement to respond to the Consultation Document.  
SACP has responded – the response to go on our website in due course.**
- 2) **‘Holding the Line’ is coming – being modified by the Training Unit, for the web**
- 3) **Further meeting of Network 100 on 15.10. 08**
- 4) **Panel members to be reminded that if there is no ‘buddy ‘system in their area, they can use SACP website to ask questions or advice.**
- 5) **Cancellation of Evening Hearings – figures to Ann before 13<sup>th</sup> October**

**111. 11 D.O.N.M.**

**Saturday, December 6, 2008 - Millenium Hotel, Glasgow, - 10.00am**