

Annual Report

2004 - 2005



Scottish Association
of Children's Panels

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Annual Report 2004-05



Chairman's Report

Change and uncertainty continue to be a common trend in SACP annual reports, perhaps with hindsight, I underestimated the impact that leading the organisation would have on my life. The learning curve has progressed steeply but it has been a worthwhile challenge.

The Children's Hearing System has already had to accommodate a number of challenges in recent years, as the service has evolved in an attempt to address the changing needs of the most vulnerable children in our society.

The introduction of Anti Social Behaviour Orders, ISMS and Parenting Orders present new challenges both to panel members and resources.

The completion of phase 1 of the review of the Children's Hearing System confirms the desire to continue the principles of Kilbrandon and maintain a child centred focus which deals with welfare and offending in the same arena, whilst preserving the role of the generalist volunteer panel member, with extra training to enable all to deal with specialist cases.

Communication, or the lack of it, with panel members remains an issue in some areas through lack of representation. We have a dwindling number of active representatives from the panel areas and numbers attending our meetings have been variable but meetings have provided an excellent forum for debate and exchange of information on a wide range of issues.

We have responded to as many appropriate consultation documents as possible including –

- Anti Social Behaviour Orders
- Draft Guidance on local Authority Accountability
- Draft Guidance on Parent Orders
- Draft Guidance on Children Protection Committees

Our Business plan submitted to the Scottish Executive last year has been reassessed and performance indicators addressed. Communication and our ability to reach all panel members remains our greatest difficulty. We have continued to make great efforts to improve communications using e-mail, internet and extranet in order to reach a wider audience.

As your representatives, we have continued to attend relevant conferences and through formalised feedback to the SACP at council meetings & to panel members via the extranet, we continue to provide up to date information which contributes to informed debate on changes in the system affecting children and families in today's society.

We continue, as an association, to be represented as a member of Children's Law UK. I have attended 3 meetings and the AGM on your behalf and I am grateful to S.E.E.D for their continuing support to enable me to attend these meetings. They provide a useful forum for exchanging information on Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare systems throughout the UK and other countries. The Chairman and Chief Executive have already visited Northern Ireland and will visit Scotland in May.

Finally I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to my colleagues on the Executive & Council for their support and enthusiasm during a demanding and difficult year.

Challenges and change are inevitable in the coming year but I am confident that the Children's Hearings System and its volunteer panel members have the ability to face up to the challenges and go forward in a positive frame of mind to make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable in our society.



Ann Lee
April 2005

Conference Report

The SACP conference diary is now set up on computer and is updated regularly so that area reps can plan ahead for conferences that have local and national relevance. Conferences are organised by the Scottish Executive often in conjunction with local authorities and charities working in child welfare such as Children in Scotland, Children First, Barnardos, Child Law UK, the Association for Child and Adolescent Health and Father's First. The conferences cover a wide spectrum of areas relevant to those working in child welfare. Reports on the conferences attended are presented at Council meetings and are also posted on the Children's Panel extranet website for Panel Members to access. This enables members to enhance their knowledge and understanding nationwide.

Gill Bayfield, Conference Co-ordinator
April 2005

Press Secretary Report

In my role as Press Secretary for the SACP I have been asked to write a few words for the Annual Report. I suppose, therefore, I should begin by explaining a little bit about what my function actually is.

My duties fall into two (perhaps soon three) categories. Firstly, on behalf of the SACP I monitor coverage of the Children's Hearing system in the Scottish press. This could be done by purchasing a copy of every Scottish newspaper every day and perusing them for articles on the Hearing system which I then would cut out and keep. Alternatively, it could be done by going on-line to the electronic versions of these same newspapers every once and a while and using the 'search' facility. Mmm, difficult choice!

My second function is to ensure that the minutes of SACP Council meetings and reports of conferences attended by SACP representatives are placed on the Children's Hearings website. Please note that while a membership list and a copy of the Annual Report are to be found on the public part of the website (<http://www.childrenshearingsscotland.gov.uk>) it is necessary to then go into the password protected Extranet section of the website for the conference reports and minutes of meetings. All panel members can get their password from the Scottish Executive if they do not already have one.

The press coverage of the Hearing system is, for the most part, negative. Articles and letters regularly appear which condemn panel members as – at best - naive do-gooders who have rings run around them by the vast army of street-wise thugs besieging society or as placemen and women who merely rubber stamp decisions made by social workers. So now you know! There are the odd honourable exceptions where articles supporting the system and giving a more realistic assessment appear but these are a minority. The more realistic side of things is, of course, that the majority of children in Scotland are doing fine and the majority of children who come before a panel are victims not offenders.

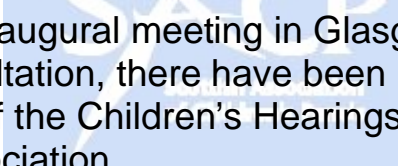
However, the negative outlook of much of the press was redressed somewhat in 2004 by the response to the Scottish Executive review of the Children's Hearing system. The review was welcomed by both critics and supporters of the Hearing system and it was interesting to note that the overwhelming view from the press and from the public alike was that although the system required updating (and more resources!) the basic ethos of Kilbrandon should remain. It seems that, as ever, things are only appreciated once there is a risk of losing them.

It remains to be seen what the press coverage will be as the review moves into Phase 2.

I mentioned at the start that my duties may soon be embracing a third category. The SACP has a need to become more pro-active and from time to time the organisation might endeavour to release statements to the press on issues of concern to panel members (and hopefully at the same time put the system in a more positive light). Getting the press to pay any attention is of course a different matter. After all good news is often no news.

George Reoch
April 2005

Secretary Report

The logo for the Scottish Association of Children's Panel (SACP) is a blue square containing the letters 'SACP' in white, with a white swoosh or arc above the letters.

Since the SACP had its inaugural meeting in Glasgow in May 1977, following a national consultation, there have been many changes for us all not only as members of the Children's Hearings System but within the framework of the Association.

During the past three years the majority of our meetings have been held by courtesy of SCRA, at their Headquarters in Ochil House, Stirling. We are indebted to SCRA for their continued assistance in providing the accommodation and duly record our appreciation in this report. This central venue has proved popular with representatives, especially those travelling from the Highlands, Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish borders as well as those living closer to the central belt.

All area representatives from Scotland are invited to SACP Council meetings whilst Executive meetings are held primarily for office bearers. Both Council and Executive meetings are held on a Saturday about six times a year and areas not currently represented are most welcome to attend the meetings. Our AGM's are held at different venues each year with Perth being chosen in 2004.

Being Secretary of the Association for the past three years has provided me with the opportunity to meet and exchange views with both Panel Members outwith my own area and Scottish executive and other voluntary organisations. This experience with fellow SACP representatives has been enlightening especially in our common aim to work together in the best interests of children. May I thank all those

with whom I have worked during these recent years. Let us all look forward to the continuing progress of the Children's Hearings System.

Marilyn Stenhouse
April 2005

Treasurer's Report

Following on from last year's report, our Three Year Business Plan, with suggested amendments and observations, has been resubmitted to the Scottish Executive. We have since been invited to apply for this year's funding.

Receipts and payments account

Year to 31st March 2005



Receipts:

	2005 £	2004 £
Grant Funding Scottish Executive	6,336	6,174
Contribution towards meals	<u>204</u>	<u>562</u>
 Total receipts for Year	 <u>6,540</u>	 <u>6,736</u>

Payments:

Secretarial	2,423	2,285
General	617	406
Travel and Conference Fees	3,899	1,734
Subscriptions	75	250
Independent Examiner's Fee	282	270
Equipment	<u>791</u>	-
Total Payments for Year	<u>8,087</u>	<u>4,945</u>
 Net (Payments) for Year	 (1,547)	 (1,791)
 Cash and Bank balances at 31 st March 2004	 3,677	 1,886

This is an extract from the Full Account. A copy of the Full Account is available from Linda Benton, Treasurer.

