



# Annual Report 2006-07

[www.sacp.org.uk](http://www.sacp.org.uk)

## Chair's Report

Another year has flown by. I cannot believe how quickly the time has passed since I sat down to write last year's report. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we lead such busy lives that it might appear easier to carry on doing things the way that they have always been done; they are familiar to us and change can be challenging to contemplate!

Change however, has been an ongoing trend in the Annual Report of the SACP and this year is no exception. Referrals to the Children's Reporter have increased dramatically in recent years and although the Children's Hearings System has continued to address the needs and deeds of children and young people, reform is needed in the whole system of children's services so that all children get help when they need it and get the best start in life.

We began this year awaiting the next consultation paper in the Getting It Right For Every Child programme. While the consultation – the draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill - ran from Christmas until the end of March it was disappointing that so few areas held meetings to discuss and debate the proposed changes (although everyone was encouraged to complete their own response). There is a wealth of experience amongst panel members and I am sure many would have welcomed the opportunity to debate the issues.

Communications with panel members has long been an issue for the SACP. This year however, has seen an increase in the number of active representatives attending our meetings, mainly thanks to the endeavours of our hard working membership secretary, Mary Fawcett. We will continue our efforts to make contact with panel members in all areas. In agreement with the four Training Unit organisers all newly trained panel members have an SACP new member pack.

Our database continues to grow and if you have not yet completed a form there is one at the end of this report. We continue our efforts to strengthen our communication with all panel members using e-mail, and the internet and we have also developed our own SACP website – [www.sacp.org.uk](http://www.sacp.org.uk) where you will find details of your local representative, minutes of our meetings and reports from conferences attended.

SACP continues to meet at the SCRA headquarters in Stirling and we are very grateful to the Reporter's administration for allowing us to use their premises. This enables SACP to continue to meet in a central location. We have met there six times this year and on one occasion we had a very able speaker who gave us some insight into the problems of children with autistic spectrum disorders and some hints on how best to manage their hearing.

There has also been correspondence with SCRA and a meeting with Tom Philliben, Director of Reporter Operations, to discuss issues raised by panel members in the course of this year. The principal topics for discussion have been the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and the preparation afforded young people brought to hearings on offence grounds; the need for the retention of local hearing centres; children with autistic spectrum disorders and the advisability of going ahead with a hearing in the absence of an up to date social background report.

We have also been in communication with the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) about the problems experienced by some panel members when requesting time off work to attend hearings and asked for more support for panel members who find themselves in this position. We have also raised the issue of panel members who are in dispute with their local area organisation. At present, the Children's Hearings Advisory Committee (CPAC) is the mediating authority in disagreements of this nature.

In order to ascertain the extent of the problem of young people on a supervision requirement without an allocated social worker, we have contacted each local authority – most of whom responded promptly. The overall picture indicated that most have an allocated social worker but there remain some areas where there are significant problems.

Our continued membership of Children law UK allows us to promote and raise the profile of our unique Children's Hearing System nationally. I have attended 2 meetings, the AGM and a conference on your behalf and remain grateful to SEED for their continuing support to enable me to attend these meetings. I have also attended the CPAC National Seminar – the 3R's – Roles, Relationships and Retention on your behalf where the two principal speakers, Alan Miller – consultant in child law and youth justice and Archie Stoddart – Shelter's Scottish Director gave us much food for thought and discussion. Representatives have also attended three conferences and the AGM of the Scottish Association for the Study of Offending (SASO) as well as the National School and several other conferences relevant to the work of panel members. Through feedback at Council meetings and reports on the website we continue to contribute to informed debate on topical issues. We have responded to relevant consultations including the recent draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill.

Finally I wish to express my appreciation to my SACP colleagues for their support in, what for me, has been a very difficult year, their help and enthusiasm has never wavered. There will - for certain – be more challenges and change ahead for the Children's Hearings System but if we continue to focus on the needs and best interests of the child and retain the principles of Kilbrandon, we will provide services for children in Scotland fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Ann Lee, Chair, May 2007

## Receipts and payments account - Year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007

	2007	2006
	£	£
Receipts:		
Grant Funding Scottish Executive	8,000	4700
Contribution towards meals	<u>234</u>	<u>48</u>
Total receipts for Year	<u>8,234</u>	<u>4,748</u>
Payments:		
Secretarial	3,819	2,571
General	719	482
Travel and Conference Fees	3,337	2,801
Subscriptions	75	-
Independent Examiner's Fee	<u>294</u>	<u>282</u>
Total Payments for Year	<u>8,244</u>	<u>6,316</u>
Net (Payments) for Year	(10)	(1,388)
Cash and Bank balances at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2006	<u>742</u>	<u>2,130</u>
Cash and Bank balances at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2007	<u>732</u>	<u>742</u>

## Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007

### Monetary Assets:

Bank Current Account	<u>£732</u>
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### Other Assets:

#### Held for use by the Association:

Toshiba 1800-712 laptop	(cost £1,199 July 2002)
HP D135 printer	(cost £399 July 2002)
Inspiron S160 laptop	(cost £711 November 2004)
Epson CX3200 printer	(cost £80 August 2004)
HP All in 1 printer	(cost £147 August 2006)

## **Independent Examiner's Statement.**

In the course of our examination, no matter has come to our attention

1. which gives us reasonable cause to believe that in any material aspect the requirement :

- To keep accounting records in accordance with the Association's constitution
- To prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the Association's constitution

Have not been met, or

2. to which, in our opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Johnston & Co, Chartered Accountants, Independent Examiners,  
New Custom House, Register Street, Bo'ness, West Lothian, EH51 9AE

A full copy of the accounts can be obtained from the Association's  
Treasurer, Linda Benton.

## Press Secretary Report

In my rather grand sounding role as press secretary of the SACP part of my remit is to review press coverage of the Children's Hearings System. Sticking to the old adage that "good news is no news" the press, once again, tells us forcefully that society is going to hell in a handcart and that young people in particular are a scourge and a menace. Therefore the past year has seen a continuation of what can best be described as the "bad press" towards young people with various reports suggesting that we are awash with knife carrying, drug taking thugs who are beyond societal control with the inevitable gloomy headlines – **Boy, 11 on knife rap** (Daily Record 23/06/06), **Blow to war on neds as serial crime rate rises by 10%** (The Herald 11/07/06), **Girls turning to laddish crime** (The Herald 16/09/06) **Children commit one quarter of race incidents as toll rises** (The Herald 28/03/07) etc.

Adding to this doom and gloom, however, it has to be added that the majority of children referred to the Children's Hearings System are victims with more than four children a day in Scotland calling a national helpline for advice and help regarding sexual abuse, mostly at the hands of family and friends, **Abuse children left "worthless, trapped, numb and ashamed"** (Herald 02/03/07).

Amongst all the negative (and fear inducing?) rhetoric it is sometimes hard to remember that the vast majority of children in Scotland are doing fine!!!

Elsewhere, the perennial accusations of the Children's panel as being "too soft" were apparent in headlines such as **Anger as joyriders walk free, Children's Panel failing in its task** (Edinburgh Evening News 18/01/07 and 20/01/07 resp). The continuing friction between local authorities and the police on the one hand and the Scottish Executive on the other regarding implementing the Anti Social Behaviour legislation was also still making news – **Senior policeman hits back at ministers over ASBO use** (The Scotsman 08/07/06). In many ways it is not so much "Groundhog Day" as "Groundhog Year"!!

Finally, the SACP launched it's new website back in November giving full details of area representatives, conference reports on a wide variety of subjects relevant to panel members and information about the SACP – it's structure and back - ground. Please take the opportunity to visit it at [www.sacp.org.uk](http://www.sacp.org.uk). and if you have any issues of concern/interest please contact us through the website or contact your local representative.

George Reoch, April 2007

## SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S PANELS

If you would like to be contacted from time to time with information of common interest to panel members or be notified regarding the activities of the above group, please supply your contact details.

Name:.....

Address:.....

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Postcode:.....

e:mail:.....

Panel Area:.....

Signature:.....

Please give completed forms to your SACP representative or send to:

Mr Barry McGugan, 29 Carnoustie Avenue, Gourock PA 19 1HF

Or E-mail [bmcgugan@sacp.gov.uk](mailto:bmcgugan@sacp.gov.uk)

Many thanks.

This information will not be shared with any other group.