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Honours 'for children's hearings system'

TWO LONG SERVING CHILDREN'S PANEL CHAIRS WERE MADE MBEs in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in recognition of their service to the children's hearings system.

George Anderson, Chair, Falkirk Children's Panel and CPCG Chair, and John Anderson, Chair, City of Edinburgh Children's Panel and CPCG Deputy Chair said the honours reflected the invaluable work carried out by panel members across Scotland.

George said: "It is great honour for me personally, but it is really recognition of the system as a whole.

"Panel members and chairs dedicate a great deal of time and effort into bringing about positive change for young people. I know that for me, the biggest satisfaction is still sitting in a hearing and contributing towards making a difference to some young person's future."

John said: "I am absolutely delighted, although the honour reflects the hard work of a great many people. I have received tremendous support from those around me in both my Edinburgh and national roles.

"More than anything else, this is an opportunity to acknowledge the good work that is achieved by children's hearings system, often without public recognition."

George and John both became panel members in 1992. They were appointed panel chairs in 2000 and CPCG office bearers in 2003.

➤ The honours were announced in June and award ceremonies are due to be held at either Buckingham Palace or the Palace of Holyroodhouse.

Deputy Education Minister launches 2005 panel recruitment campaign



by **Sandie Simpson**
Policy Manager,
Children's Hearings Branch

THE 2005 CHILDREN'S PANEL recruitment campaign has again achieved an excellent response.

The campaign is now drawing to a close and already it has exceeded last year's result of over 3,000 calls to the recruitment hotline.

It shows that people from across Scotland's communities are continuing to come forward to help children and young people at risk.

And it means that the Scottish Executive is well on course to meeting its target of 600 new panel members across Scotland.

Deputy Education Minister Robert Brown launched the 2005 children's panel recruitment campaign at a gathering of CPAC and panel members at Glasgow City Chambers.

Mr Brown said that ministers were looking to recruit around 600 new panel members: "This year's campaign comes at an exciting time for the children's hearings system.

"The proposals in the consultation document, *Getting it right for every child*, will lead to changes in children's services. The key and crucial impact of these changes will be improved outcomes for children.

"Our vision is for co-ordinated activity, based on the needs of the child. The skills, expertise and knowledge of our partners on the hearings system will help Scottish ministers ensure that the vision becomes a



Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, Robert Brown, at the campaign launch

reality for Scotland's vulnerable children and young people."

The minister said the work of children's panel members is central to securing a decent future for many young people.

"The children's panel plays an invaluable role in supporting children in Scotland who may have been abused, neglected, who live with drink or drug abusing parents, or who are in trouble at school or with the law.

"To continue this vital work we need around 600 people to join the thousands of willing volunteers who already make a real difference to the lives of children in Scotland by serving on their local children's panel."

➤ Robert Brown became Deputy Minister for Education and Young People

in June 2005. The first Liberal elected to Glasgow District Council in 1977, he became Scottish Liberal Democrat MSP for Glasgow in 1999. As policy vice-convenor of the party, he was one of the negotiators of the 2003 Partnership Agreement.

A solicitor by profession, Mr Brown was Depute Procurator Fiscal for Dumbarton from 1972 to 1974. The bulk of his career as a solicitor, however, has been as a partner with Ross Harper, Solicitors, in Rutherglen and Glasgow, where he specialised in medical negligence and family law.

Mr Brown is a graduate in Law from Aberdeen University. He is married with 2 children.

Changes and challenges



by **George Anderson**
Chair, Falkirk Children's Panel
Chair, CPCG

IN MY REGULAR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNICATOR I ALWAYS SEEM TO FIND myself making reference to change within the hearings system and the subsequent challenges that always arise during any period of change. Thankfully, from conversations with many panel members and panel chairs I get the firm impression that we are more than willing to accommodate change and face these new challenges.

Indeed, such is the pace of development within the system that it would feel strange to be commenting on stability. Stability is certainly not a term that could fairly be applied to current circumstances within the hearings system.

With the second phase of the review *Getting it right for every child* now well underway, stability is unlikely to be a term we will see a lot of in relation to the hearings system, at least in the immediate future. But it must be a major element of any long-term goal.

Even before the launch of Phase 1 of the review last year, many panel members were aware that some major changes might be on the way. What has perhaps surprised some is the breadth and scope of some of the proposals and the impact they are likely to have, not just on panel members, but on everyone associated with the hearings system and children's services. As panel members we were pleased that Phase 1 established that the fundamental principles of the system remained sound. Nevertheless, it did raise numerous, often quite complex, inter-related issues that now have to be considered.

Under the second phase of the review the future of our whole welfare and justice system for children and young people is now being forged. Across all the agencies interfacing with children, be they professional or voluntary, no one with any interest in the future of the system can afford not to be involved. The opportunity presented by the consultation *Getting it right for every child* to help inform and shape the future of the children's hearings system was too great to be missed. As panel members, I hope we all grasped the opportunity.



Contact

childrens.hearings@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Child protection - home and away

The Scottish Executive's audit and review report into child protection in Scotland, *It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright*, published in 2002, made 17 recommendations designed to ensure that every child in Scotland can live safely and reach their full potential. The recommendations included the importance of local Child Protection Committees and their scope, and the recording and sharing of information.

However, it all hinges on a joined-up approach in which children's hearings and panel members have a vital role. This streamlined approach to addressing the needs of children is also one of the underlying themes of the Executive's current consultation, *Getting it right for every child*.



by **John Anderson**
Chair, City of Edinburgh
Children's Panel and
Depute Chair, CPCG

SADLY, THE NEED TO PROTECT CHILDREN IS AN EVER-increasing world-wide problem. We are all too familiar with the dangers of the internet and the need for children to know and understand the risks and be constantly reminded of them. Regardless of where we live and whatever we do, we must all be alive at all times to keeping children safe and healthy. More than ever before, we as panel members have a pivotal role in this endeavour.

Last April, I was fortunate to take part in an Arion Study Visit to Hungary, funded by the European Union, looking at child protection. I spent a week in Miskolc, in northern Hungary, with participants from England, Germany, France, Sweden and Norway, visiting schools, children's homes, kindergartens, social work centres and establishments for young mothers and children.

It will come as no surprise that the issue of limited resources is also a world-wide problem, but it was interesting to see differences in emphasis and the way in which scarce funds are used.

One of the key differences between Hungary and the

UK/Scotland is the very wide definition of 'child protection'. The accepted definition in the UK would be confined to areas such as physical/sexual abuse or neglect and so forth, linked to recent tragedies and the raft of issues raised in Sir Michael Richard's inquiry into the Soham murders. However, the Hungarian model is much wider and addresses for example dyslexia and ADHD under the umbrella of 'protection'. This extends the philosophy of looking in a joined-up way at the whole child using the whole team and may be worthy of further examination.

Other facts also emerged from the Hungarian model:

- ▶ the Hungarian education system places great evidence on the kindergarten experience
- ▶ early intervention is considered key and a high status is given to educational psychologists playing a pro-active role within schools
- ▶ school meal provision was excellent with every child receiving a well-balanced 2 course lunch cooked on the premises. Children up to the age of 12 also receive a school breakfast and a piece of fruit in the afternoon.

I had the opportunity to meet a judge sitting in the Hungarian family court. The legal system is based on the Roman tradition and on joining the EU, Hungary signed up to the ECHR. It was interesting to hear at first hand the concerns about the rights of parents and particularly the right of the child to be heard in regard to compulsory measures of care. Very often such measures were imposed without agreement.

In Scotland, reformed local Child Protection Committees (CPCs) are the conduit through which key agencies (police, NHS Boards and local authorities) will discharge their responsibilities in regard to child protection. Ministers expect CPCs will:

- ▶ be led and owned by all agencies
- ▶ be clearly mandated with delegated authority for action
- ▶ undertake a range of core functions and activities with flexibility for local conditions.

CPCs will include in their membership the children's panel chair and will deliver their core functions and activities through a multi-agency agenda using a clear, co-ordinated approach.



More information

www.scotland.gov.uk/childprotection

Stability and security for children

The Scottish Executive has declared its support for the recommendations of the Adoption Policy Review Group following the second phase of the review of adoption policy, and its intention to implement the recommendations through legislation.

The second phase of the review explored issues from the need for adoption to who may adopt and contact with birth families. The Group also looked at court procedures, support services to families, access to information about adoption cases, and the role of the children's hearings system. The Group's recommendations can be viewed online at www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations.



by **Chrissie Urquhart**
Chair,
Angus Children's Panel

I THINK WE ARE ALL AGREED THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR ALL CHILDREN TO LIVE with their birth families and it is important that those who can't are provided with safe and stable permanent homes.

To this end, a major recommendation of the Group is that the children's hearings system is involved earlier in permanence cases. This would require the local authority informing the hearing of any plans for permanence at an earlier stage. A hearing should ask the local authority what its plans are regarding permanence planning if the child has been looked after away from home for a year - in other words at the first annual review.

At that hearing, panel members may advise parents of the need to make a commitment to the child and to co-operate with social work. Social work would then facilitate rehabilitation, but could 'twin track' rehabilitation plans with permanence plans should the parents fail to co-operate.

Good communication is essential if the interests of the child are to be protected and it is recommended that reports from the local authority adoption/permanence panel are standardised and improved. Hearings are not usually made aware of the discussion and

conclusion of the adoption/permanence panel and better communication will inform hearings of the consideration that has been given to the decision for permanence.

The Group decided that provisions for providing advice from the hearing to the court should be reviewed to make clear who has responsibility for each step and to allow the court to request updated advice from the hearing. It is recommended that the form is standardised to record clearly the advice from the hearing.

Where possible it is recommended that each hearing contains one member from a previous hearing throughout the progress of a permanence case through the hearings system. While this may at times present practical difficulties, it was recognised by the Group that in permanence cases, where it is likely that the child has a 'history' within the system, it is desirable to have some continuity of panel members.

Given that permanence by its very definition is for life, it is essential that panel members are equipped to understand the complexities of permanence and make an informed decision on behalf of the child. It is also important that key agencies understand each other's roles and responsibilities. The Group therefore recommends that there should be a nationally developed and quality assured joint training between key agencies, panel members, social work departments, safeguarders and others.

The purpose of the Group's recommendations is to provide stability and security for children who, for whatever reason, are unable to be cared for by their birth families. I have greatly enjoyed being able to represent panel members in this process and have welcomed the opportunity within the Group to 'tell it as it really is' for those on one side of the table at hearings.

Recruitment campaign wins Grand Prix award



by **Lynne Phillips**
Policy Officer,
Children's Hearings
Branch

CHILDREN'S HEARINGS BRANCH CELEBRATED THE success of the 2002-04 children's panel recruitment campaign in winning top prize in the Scottish Institute of Practitioners in Advertising Effectiveness Awards.

The Grand Prix award was presented to Mike Kemsley of Barkers Advertising at the IPA awards ceremony, held at Prestonfield House, Edinburgh. Mike and his colleagues at Barkers had worked closely over the three year campaign with our Publicity Working Group, which includes children's panel and CPAC representatives.

The Grand Prix is the top award in the bi-annual competition and is regarded as the most prestigious of all Scottish advertising awards. The winner is selected by an independent panel and each entry is judged on evidence of effectiveness.

The children's panel recruitment entry demonstrated that over three years the level of respondents to the campaign had maintained a threefold increase over previous years, using press and radio as well as local recruitment efforts.

Mike said: "The creative element of an advertising campaign is important, but it is only one factor.

"The knowledge and expertise of the Publicity Working Group, with its members from children's panels, CPACs and other partner organisations, was crucial in helping us develop the campaign and make sure the message was effective."



Current and former members of the Publicity Working Group: Back row (l to r) - Maureen Robertson (Chair, Glasgow CPAC), Sheena Leadbitter (former Chair, Dundee CPAC), Stephen Phillips (Chair, West Dunbartonshire Children's Panel), Maeve McDonald (former Chair, Glasgow CPAC). Front row (l to r) - Catherine Murphy (former Chair, N Lanarkshire CPAC), Sandie Simpson (Children's Hearings Branch), Mike Kemsley (Barkers Advertising), Joy Kinna (Chair, Fife CPAC)

The campaign beat entries from both the commercial and public sectors such as Coors, Standard Life, Scottish Blood Transfusion Service and National Trust for Scotland. It was the first time that a Scottish Executive campaign had received the Grand Prix award. The campaign also won one of two gold awards.

Mike added: "We were delighted with the high level of responses to the advertisements over the three years of the campaign.

"But it was local efforts that ensured that responses translated into a record number of actual appointments."

Learning lessons from fast track pilot

by **Craig Watson**

PANEL CHAIRS FROM THE FAST TRACK HEARINGS PILOT AREAS BELIEVE IMPORTANT lessons have been learned from the project.

An evaluation of the pilot project, published by the Scottish Executive in July, found that its effectiveness was 'not proven' in reducing levels of offending.

The reason was that while offending levels in the pilot areas were reduced, an even greater fall was recorded in three other comparison areas.

As a result, Justice Minister Cathy Jamieson announced that the pilot would not roll-out further and the experiment would end, as planned, at the end of September. She added that the £4.5m previously allocated to the project would be used to support progress towards national standards in all 32 local authorities.

However, the evaluation report did find that fast track hearings were successful in other ways, such as improving timescales, inter-agency working, and the quality of assessment and action plans.

Positive experience

Panels' which were involved in the pilots say it is important to take that positive experience forward.

David Stalker, North Ayrshire, says: "It certainly allowed us to turn around some young people who we did not think could be turned around. That was because of the resources put in place for fast track - that is the lesson we should take forward."

Fiona Mackenzie, Dundee, adds: "Panel members thought it made a huge difference in terms of the speed that children came to the hearing, the speed that grounds were given to them and also because they came with guaranteed services."

Aileen Hemming, Scottish Borders, says: "Panel members had joint training and regular liaison with the Youth Offending Service. This meant that they had a greater understanding of 'what works' with persistent young offenders and were able to make more informed decisions that resulted in generally better outcomes for the young people we dealt with through the pilot.

"Mentoring was a great success in the Borders and this highlighted the importance of 'engagement' and the difference that sustained input from a key worker can have on all aspects of young people's lives, often resulting in reduced offending."

The fast track pilot began in February 2003 in Dundee, East Lothian/Scottish Borders, and East Ayrshire/North Ayrshire/South Ayrshire. More than 300 young people were 'fast tracked' during the pilot project.

Additional funding was made available to each local authority involved, the police and SCRA.

Key objectives of the pilot were: faster timescales for hearings' decisions; more effective needs assessments and information; and guaranteed support for young people.



David Stalker, North Ayrshire: "resources are the key"



Fiona Mackenzie, Dundee: "speed made a difference"



Aileen Hemming, Scottish Borders: "training and liaison"

Meeting the national standards for justice services

by **Neill Mitchell**

Practice Reporter, SCRA

THE TIME IS FAST APPROACHING WHEN ALL OF US IN THE children's hearings system are to meet the national standards for Scotland's youth justice services.

Published in December 2002, the standards are to be met by next year. To support work to make sure that the standards can be met, panel chairs, representatives from some local authorities, children's hearings training officers and SCRA have been working together progressing plans for joint training.

This training will not only assist us all in meeting the standards but will also improve our response to those children who are involved in offending behaviour.

The plans have been particularly influenced by the experience of the fast track hearings pilots. In those pilot areas, the national standards applied in all cases where a child was identified as a 'persistent offender'.

The fast track pilots came to an end on 30 September. It is now for us all to meet the national standards by 2006 in all cases when a child is referred for offending behaviour. With a view to learning lessons from the fast track experience we brought together a group of panel chairs, local authority representatives and our authority reporters earlier this year.

Together that group produced a statement of core principles that should be central to the approach of the hearings system in its response to children who are offending persistently or at risk of doing so.

This statement builds on the national standards, and draws on lessons from research on what is effective in addressing offending by

References to core principles

1 A shared understanding of collective responsibility

The partners in the children's hearings system should accept responsibility

- (a) his/her level of offending and risk of re-offending is reduced to where there are no other issues
- (b) he/she is the subject of a disposal from the criminal justice system
- (c) he/she is over the age of 18 years (i.e. the maximum age for a child)

In addition, the following reasons should not be appropriate reasons for compulsory measures of supervision:

- the child or young person is not cooperating with the intervention
- the child or young person has entered (or is likely to enter) the criminal justice system
- the child or young person's age (unless approaching 18 years).

2 "Persistent offender" is defined as a child or young person who has been

3 Bradshaw, Paul (2005) *On The Right Track - A Study of Children and Youth*

National standards for Scotland's youth

National standards for Scotland's youth justice services are to be met by next year. A dedicated group of local children's panel chairs, local authority representatives and SCRA Reporters examined the lessons from the fast track experience. The group produced a statement of core principles building on the national standards and has now produced a template for local multi-agency training and is offering further assistance in delivering the training locally.

young people. It emphasises the need for quality assessments and the targeting of needs identified in those assessments.

Risk and need should be the guiding factor in deciding on the level of intervention required. We should all accept a continuing responsibility to children involved in persistent offending.

Prompt intervention by those working with the child and timely decision making are also crucial.

Having agreed on these core principles, the next task for our group was to consider how to take the message of the national standards and the lessons from the fast track pilots to a wider audience.

The multi-agency group has continued to meet over the summer, assisted by 2 children's hearings training officers and some panel chairs from outside the fast track authorities.

The group have produced a template of local multi-agency training in relation to the national standards, together with materials to assist in the delivery of the training. We have asked authority reporters, panel chairs and youth justice coordinators to meet to consider whether they can now plan the training locally.

Our national group will provide further assistance if that is required.

For more information regarding this proposed training, please contact your panel chair, authority reporter, youth justice co-ordinator or Neill Mitchell at the SCRA Practice Team. (neill.mitchell@scra.gsx.gov.uk).

Core principles

Through operating the fast track pilots since February 2003, panel members, local authority staff and reporters have identified the following as the essential features of the approach of the children's hearings system to those children and young people who are offending persistently, or who are at risk of doing so.

- ▶ A shared understanding of the collective responsibility of the children's hearings system towards children and young people who persistently offend¹.
- ▶ Strong inter-agency work, with the joint responsibility of all local authority departments, including education, health services and the Procurator Fiscal Service, at both a strategic and operational level.
- ▶ Quality assessment using standard assessment tools (YLS or ASSET), and interventions targeting needs identified in those assessments.
- ▶ Timely decision making in line with the national standards.
- ▶ Interventions with a child or young person graduated according to the level of risk and need - identification of a child or young person as a "persistent offender"² should be used as a basis for consideration of the need for intervention, not in itself a basis for action.
- ▶ A prompt response to offending by those working with the child or young person, enabled by the local sharing of information with the appropriate person in the local authority by the police.
- ▶ Services require to be retentive and persistent in their approach, with the worker/child relationship being of key importance. Research into the fast track pilots has shown that the engagement of the child or young person with the services is a crucial factor in their effectiveness³.
- ▶ To ensure a balance between case processing and the delivery of services, reporters and panel members should consider carefully when to request an updated assessment or an early review hearing respectively. All partners should work together to ensure an appropriate review process geared to the needs of the child or young person.
- ▶ Key partners to achieve an effective interface within each local authority area between the children's hearings system and the criminal justice system, with a view to ensuring the most appropriate intervention for the child or young person.
- ▶ The sharing of information to allow for the optimal planning of services to meet local needs of children and young people, their families and communities. This should include the sharing of youth crime trend information relating to areas, individuals, groups and risk factors.
- ▶ Local availability of a range of services that address the needs and behaviour of children and young people offending persistently or at risk of doing so.
- ▶ An opportunity to share and develop best practice within and between local authority areas.

 **More information**

neill.mitchell@scra.gsx.gov.uk

ty for continuing to address the needs and behaviour of a child or young person who offends until either:
such a level that neither compulsory measures of supervision nor voluntary intervention is required,

stem that addresses offending behaviour, where there are no other issues
young person to be the subject of a supervision requirement.

decisions (or recommendations) that a child or young person does not require, or no longer requires,

to address his/her offending

riminal justice process, but is not the subject of a disposal that addresses his/her offending behaviour

een referred to the Reporter on offence grounds on 5 or more occasions in a 6 month period.

ung People in the Fast Track Pilot, SCRA

Making - and keeping - promises

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People believes that her role is 'to keep the government and the country to its promises' to make life better for children and young people. Kathleen Marshall, the former Director of the Scottish Child Law Centre, aims to dispel misconceptions and myths about the rights of children and young people. Her strategic role is aimed at long-term influence and change.

by **Gordon Brown**
Communications Officer,
SCCYP!

SCOTLAND'S COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND Young People is determined to keep the government and the country to its promises to make life better for children and young people.

Kathleen Marshall was appointed in April 2004 and has spent the past 18 months travelling across Scotland, speaking and listening to people about the lives of children and young people, and what she might do to make things better for them.

Kathleen, a solicitor, was Director of the Scottish Child Law Centre from 1989 - 94 before working as a consultant for various universities and voluntary organisations, and for central and local government. She is also a Visiting Professor at Glasgow University's Centre for the Child & Society.

The Commissioner's basic remit is 'to promote and safeguards the rights of children and young people in Scotland', including all those under 18, and those up to 21 years of age who have at any time been in care or looked after by a local authority. The role focuses on law, policy and practice affecting groups of children and young people, rather than that of an individual ombudsman.

Kathleen says: "That sounds very dry, so I have adopted another way of explaining my role which I think makes it a bit clearer.

"I describe the rights of children, especially those set out in international documents such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as a set of promises made by our government, on our behalf, that they would do certain things to make life better for children and young people.

"My job is to keep the government and the country to its promises. That means that I must constantly remind them of what the promises are and what it will take to fulfil them."

Kathleen also sees one of her key roles as being to dispel misconceptions about the rights of children and young people - people sometimes trivialise the notion of children's rights by characterising them as rights not to eat cabbage, to have a pony and stay up late!

"Basically, you can categorise the promises set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the '3Ps':

- provision - of services to promote survival and development
- protection - against abuse, neglect and exploitation

- participation - in decisions that affect them.

"However, it is also important to look at the basic philosophy of the Convention, which is alluded to in its preamble: 'The child should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding' ... and should 'be fully prepared to live an individual life in society ... in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity.'

"The Commissioner's role is a strategic one, aimed at long-term influence and change, and therefore it is hard to evaluate its short-term impact.

"However, I believe I have already raised the profile of the children and young person's perspective on a number of issues. For example, I have spoken out on the detention of children of asylum-seeking families and I have also opened a debate on the issue of anonymity of an alleged child abuser until the point of conviction, which it was difficult for others to raise.

"There has tended to be a suspicion that anyone suggesting this was taking the side of the person suspected of abuse, with implications that children mostly lie about abuse. The fact that I am clearly coming from a point of view that represents the rights of children makes it easier for me to say difficult things like this.

"I have pursued an approach that truly reflects the 'joined-up working' that is supposed to be at the heart of current child and family policy. This means that we do not fragment children and young people into different subject areas, but try to get different agencies, departments and professions to work together.

"Much of the work I have been doing has been about making that a reality; joining up the education, justice, health and child protection perspectives; showing for example, how children and young people's rights should inform decisions about 'best value' contracts, about the imprisonment of parents; about the restructuring of services such as maternity provision."

Two years after the post was established by an Act of the Scottish Parliament, it is really only in the last few months that the Office of Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP!) has taken its final shape.

The office premises, in Edinburgh's Holyrood Road just yards from the Parliament, are beginning to form a distinctive, and friendly, look, with SCCYP!'s bright logo on the windows and 'chill out' zone and activity areas in development.

The building houses 15 staff, who track policy and legislation through Parliament, monitor the delivery of services to children and young people, facilitate the participation of children and young people in the work of the Commissioner, and provide an information and enquiries service.

There are two participation workers, aged 18 and 20,



Kathleen Marshall, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

who are primarily employed to make sure that young people's views are taken fully into account through the policy process.

What happens next?

Kathleen says: "Recruitment is shortly due to begin for a reference group of young people from across the country to advise on the office's various functions and operations. A consultation exercise will also be conducted among children and young people, and organisations working with and for them, on what my key policy priorities should be.

"Proactive work in developing law, policy and practice will then be targeted largely towards these priority areas. This may include undertaking and commissioning research and preparation of 'best practice' guidance, where appropriate. However, even if not included in identified priorities, ongoing issues of great concern such as family law and antisocial behaviour provisions may become the subject of research or guidance."

The Office is also finalising a 'Participation Strategy', developing its first annual report, which will be submitted to the Scottish Parliament in the autumn, and is preparing to report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child about compliance with the Convention in Scotland.



Visit

www.sccyp.org.uk

Forum influencing strategic decisions



by **Anne McNeill**
Depute Chair, SCRA

SCOTLAND'S CHILDREN'S HEARINGS FORUM IS A DYNAMIC AND CHALLENGING group of people working towards a better and more unified approach to meeting the needs of children in Scotland.

The Forum is currently planning a conference, which is due to take place in the autumn and is continually identifying issues for discussion that emerge from research and from local, national and international operational practice.

The Forum was established in April 2003 to provide an opportunity for the wide range of partner organisations involved in the children's hearings system to meet, share ideas and learn from each other. Its primary objective is to take a proactive lead in influencing strategic decisions impacting on the children's hearings system.

It meets every two months and has an extensive membership which includes representatives from Children's Panel Chairman's Group, the voluntary sector, Scottish Executive, Scottish Safeguarders' Association, Association of Directors of Social Work, Crown Office, National Health Service, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland, Children's Panel Advisory Group, Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, Children's Panel Training Units, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Scottish Association of Children's Panels and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration.

Forum events continue to attract a high attendance because of the innovative and creative way in which they are structured and the practical outputs which are generated.

Through the Forum, there is the ability to help influence strategy and improve inter-agency understanding and respect. It provides a unique opportunity for partners to improve inter-agency communication on 'what works' and resolve potential policy conflicts. While membership is focused on people who have a strategic view of the children's hearings system, there is a clear understanding that outputs must translate into real operational actions within each agency.

Forum and the review of the children's hearings system

Before the review started, the Forum made suggestions about what should be covered, and throughout Phase 1 of the review, it played an active and important part in the consultation process.

In Phase 2 of the review, the Forum has again taken a proactive role by establishing four sub groups to focus on the key themes which emerged from Phase 1.

Each of the four working groups has a leader who is responsible for managing the process and reporting back to the main forum. The groups are meeting two or three times and have invited other key individuals to participate.

The Roles and Responsibilities team, led by Jackie Robeson, Head of Practice at SCRA, has a clear remit to clarify duties, roles and responsibilities at every stage of a child's interaction with the system. It will also investigate and scope the partnership mechanisms required and consider how the child and family can actively participate and communicate.

The Assessment team, led by Patricia Jackson, a consultant paediatrician, is building on the work done by the Scottish Executive on information sharing and assessment to ensure that there is an appropriate single, shared assessment process which provides the hearings system with the right information at the right time to make good decisions that lead to good outcomes for children.

The Criteria and Thresholds team, led by Deputy Chief Constable Bob Ovens, of Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary, is considering the criteria for entry into the system and the role of the hearing in monitoring and evaluation. It will also look at the need for risk assessment and the various case conferencing models to ensure that the right children enter the system and get the right support.

The Communications and Awareness team, led by Diane Watt, East Lothian Panel Chair, will provide recommendations on how we communicate more effectively internally and externally using a more family friendly language style. Her team will also determine suitable approaches to raising awareness of the hearings system.

The outputs from the four groups are co-ordinated to avoid duplication and make sure that there is a consistent approach to problem solving and meeting the agreed objectives. Team leaders share the thoughts of their teams and are able to contribute to other team discussions.

Recommendations from the teams will be presented to the Forum and once accepted will be submitted to the review team at the Scottish Executive, which has been working closely with the Forum to make sure that members are kept informed of all aspects of the review.

More information
www.scra.gov.uk

Have your say - *The Communicator* readers' questionnaire and prize draw

This is the sixth edition of the new style *Communicator* and we would welcome your views on the content and style of the magazine to help us to plan future editions. All replies will be entered into a prize draw for a copy of Kenneth Norrie's new book, reviewed on Page 8.

	Very good	good	ok	could be better	
1. How would you rate <i>The Communicator</i> overall?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. How many editions would you like each year: 4 / 3 / 2 / other?
2. Please rate the following features:					5. Is there anything that you would like to see included either as a regular feature or as a one off article?
Updates on changes to the CHS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
News items on the CHS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Profiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. any other comments
Related topics e.g. social work and education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you think the balance of content is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name..... Panel Area					

Please cut out and return to *The Communicator*, Children's Panel Office, Highland Council, Glenurquart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX.

Training units moving onwards and upwards

DEVELOPMENTS ARE ANNOUNCED AT CHILDREN'S hearings training units across Scotland.

Willi Smail, former Chair of the Aberdeenshire Panel, has succeeded Joy Gillies as CHTO at the Aberdeen Unit.

Willi said: "Joy will be a hard act to follow, but I am looking forward immensely to new challenges. I am passionate about the hearings system and am eager to share my experience with new and current panel members."

Edinburgh Unit moved from Edinburgh University to Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh on 1 August. The Unit is now located at QMUC's Corstorphine campus and can be contacted by email on chtu@qmuc.ac.uk and by phone on 0131 317 3410.

New Assistant CHTOs are being appointed to help deliver training to panel members across Scotland: Glasgow will appoint two new ACHTOs, and Edinburgh

and St. Andrews one each.

Judith Bell, of St Andrews CHTU, says: "Our workload has been increasing over the last few years, with additional compulsory training to be delivered.

"We are looking forward to the added assistance of the new trainers to relieve some of the pressure and ensure that the training continues to be of a consistently high standard."

Barbara Reid, of Glasgow CHTU added: "Although we recognise that we cannot meet every demand made of the unit, the additional staffing level will enable us to meet some of the additional training needs of panel and CPAC members, and safeguarders."

The appointment process for the new ACHTOs is currently underway. Details of the new trainers will be published in the next edition of *The Communicator*.

New Head of Division



STELLA PERROTT HAS BEEN APPOINTED HEAD OF Youth Justice and Children's Hearings System Division

Stella Perrott joined the Scottish Executive in 1996 as part of the Social Work Services Inspectorate. She was previously an assistant chief probation officer in the North East of England. Since joining the Scottish Executive, Stella has had responsibility for a number of Scottish Executive reviews - sex-offenders, women offenders and child protection. Latterly she was Principal Professional Adviser on the Child Protection Reform Programme.

Stella welcomes the challenges of the Youth Justice and Children's Hearings Division. She says: "The work of our Division within the Education Department is vital and wide-ranging. Central to our work is ensuring services for children are of a high quality, offending is reduced and children's lives improved."

Former Head of Division, Rachel Gwyon left in January to take up a temporary position as Head of the G8 international development programme in Africa.

Safeguarders conference

THE SCOTTISH SAFEGUARDERS ASSOCIATION (SSA) is due to discuss the review of the children's hearings system and ongoing safeguarding issues at its first residential conference.

The conference, *Every Child Matters*, at Dunblane on 17/18 February 2006, is being organised and run by the Association and funded by the Scottish Executive.

There will be representation and input from SEED, and the SSA will present its own take on the review and other matters. All safeguarders are invited, as well as delegates from SCRA, panel chairs and CHTOs.

It is hoped that ministers will attend, but as ever this is subject to parliamentary and constituency pressures and details will be confirmed later.

SSA is also to host a lunch for clerks to the panels of safeguarders on 17 February to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Feedback from the conference will be published in a future edition of *The Communicator*.

'Bible' for all panel members

Children's hearings in Scotland (2nd edition),
Professor Kenneth Mck. Norrie

Review by
Norman Shearer
Chair,
Orkney Children's Panel

'Gives the Da Vinci Code a run for its money.'

'Where is your J K Rowling now?'

'Rebus is more complicated than this.'

JUST SOME OF THE COMMENTS THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THIS BOOK. WELL PERHAPS NOT, BUT certainly the last one is appropriate.

For anyone who thinks that the hearings system is getting too complicated or feels overwhelmed by legislation, Kenneth Norrie's book is a godsend. Written in plain English with plenty of detailed explanation and down to earth advice, this book will help everyone involved in the system to be clear on what their role is in any hearing.

From the start, where there is a detailed explanation of the philosophy of the system and the personnel involved, this book will enable all panel members to be clear in their minds about what procedures they should follow and the responsibilities they have.

It covers all aspects of the hearings system in great detail and through his clear prose, it is as if you have read the papers of a hearing and Kenneth is standing in front of you answering your thoughts. What if...? Can I ...? Who would decide ...?

For example in the section on conditions attached to a supervision requirement, he not only gives examples of the kind of conditions a hearing may consider but also the involvement of relevant persons in the requirement and the local authority responsibility to enact the supervision. He repeats the necessity to consider at all times the overarching principles.

This book is ideal for dipping into and should become the bible for all panel members when they are unsure or unclear of procedures or legislation. With appendices giving a clear flow chart of child protection procedure and copies of the various Acts and Rules relating to hearings, this book covers all aspects of the system succinctly and lucidly.

Children's hearings in Scotland should be accessible to every panel member, either through having their own copy or copies held by their panel library/local authority.

If you are unsure about a hearing you are about to take part in, then reassurance will come from Kenneth!

The Children's Panel Chairmen's Group would like to thank the Scottish Executive for printing and distributing *The Communicator*. Any comments or suggestions on *The Communicator* should be mailed to *The Communicator*, Children's Panel Office, Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX