

PE1393/J

**PE1393: Barnardo's Scotland's response to additional evidence received by the Scottish Parliament's Petitions Committee on the petition relating to child sexual exploitation**

Barnardo's Scotland is very grateful to the five NHS Boards that took the time to respond to the committee's request for information.

We are again extremely disappointed that in spite of the Committee re-approaching local authorities for information that they have chosen not to reply, especially considering the nature of the issue and the fact that our petition makes specific calls that would directly affect them.

With regards to the responses given by the NHS Boards we are pleased that overall they are very supportive of our petition and its calls of the Scottish Government.

**Research**

In particular there is clear agreement among all the NHS Boards with our call for further research. Responses indicated that there is currently not enough information on the prevalence and nature of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and that research would help with single and multi-agency planning, staff development and increasing awareness.

NHS Lothian highlighted in their response concerns that agencies are not fully aware of the extent and nature of the problem in Scotland, which can make it "difficult to take subsequent preventative action." These are concerns that Barnardo's Scotland shares and would like to see addressed through new research.

**The 2003 Guidelines**

The responses from the NHS Boards also indicated support for 2003 guidelines to be updated to reflect recent demographical and societal changes, as well as the need to support practitioners with the tools needed to effectively deal with CSE.

NHS Boards also agreed with the need for guidelines to change to reflect the changes in mobile technology and the development of social media.

Barnardo's **Scotland agrees with NHS Lothian's observation that** the revised National Child Protection Guidance does not address the issue of child sexual exploitation to the same extent as the 2003 guidelines. They particularly referred to triggers and indicators that were included in the 2003 guidelines. as being a good source of information.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude we thank all those that have made responses to the Committee on the content of our petition, both for the November meeting of the Committee and for the upcoming February meeting.

We believe that the submissions received by the NHS Boards further support our calls made in the petition, and complement the strong submissions previously given by the Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland (APOCS) and Glasgow City Council, the only local authority to respond to date.

We believe that the lack of evidence received by local authorities supports the case for strong, local guidelines with systems put in place to hold them to account by the Scottish Government.

Considering all the evidence we have received, we believe that the calls made in our petition are pertinent. We welcome the sentiments expressed by the Scottish Government in its written evidence in the autumn last year and look forward to the Minister for Children and Young People clarifying its position at the upcoming meeting of the Petitions Committee on 7 February.

In the upcoming meeting of the Petitions Committee we would hope that the Minister for Children and Young people will:

- Set out a clear timescale for research with clear terms of reference.
- Support the development of a specialised CSE toolkit to support the national toolkit for practitioners with clear timescales for delivery and dissemination, supported by training and support materials for practitioners.
- Ensure that CSE is defined and comprehensively referenced to cover all types of CSE in the National Child Protection Guidance.