

## **PE1635/M**

Relationships Scotland submission of 6 July 2017

At the Petitions Committee meeting on 22 June the convenor asked that I provide further information regarding the costs of running child contact centres in Scotland, and also regarding the cost to clients of attending supervised and supported child contact.

### **The Cost of Running Child Contact Centres**

In terms of the costs of running child contact centres, it is not possible to give a specific cost. Each child contact centre is different, both in terms of the physical accommodation of the building itself and of the running costs, number of clients using the centre, etc. Some child contact centres that operate from community centres or churches are rented on a daily basis (usually on a weekend). In many other cases the offices of our local services would be used as a venue.

That said, we do know from 2016-2017 that £166,000 of Scottish Government money was used to support our child contact centres, alongside around £600,000 from the Big Lottery in Scotland. In addition to this some child contact centres also receive support from other charitable trusts along with income from legal aid and client contributions.

A very rough calculation, taking the total amount of income and dividing it between the number of child contact centres we have, would give an average running cost of around £18,000 per child contact centre each year.

### **The Funding of Child Contact Centres in the Longer-term**

The Relationships Scotland Network currently receives funding from the Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund. This fund is financed by the Scottish Government and administered by the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland. Our Network receives a total of £1.5m each year, of which £166,000 is used to support child contact centres. The other funding is used to support relationship counselling, family mediation, and the core costs of the Relationships Scotland national office. We have been advised that we will be supported by this fund until March 2019, however the amount we will receive in 2018-2019 has yet to be confirmed. It is not clear what will happen after March 2019.

The Big Lottery in Scotland also provides additional funding of around £600,000 each year to help us work with our most vulnerable clients. This money is primarily used to employ specialist support workers to work with families with additional needs, such as alcohol and drug problems, poverty, mental health issues, etc. We have been advised that when the current funding cycle comes to an end in March 2019 it is very likely that the majority of this funding will be discontinued. The Big Lottery has said that this is because of an overall reduction in the funds that they

expect to have available at that time. If the majority of funding is indeed lost in March 2019, this would have a devastating impact in our ability to provide child contact centres in the future.

Our intention is to request a meeting soon with the Minister of Childcare and Early Years, Mark McDonald MSP, to discuss the future funding of child contact centres across Scotland.

### **The Cost of Attending a Child Contact Centre**

Across the Relationships Scotland Network, there are variations in the cost of attending both supervised and supported child contact. Each of our member services are responsible for setting their own costs for child contact, however they do this within broad guidelines that have been agreed at national level.

For supervised child contact, there is a minimum administration fee of £100 for setting up the contact. A minimum hourly rate of £50 is then charged, with a minimum rate of £50 being charged for court reports. These charges are necessary due to the added complexity of supervised contact (as opposed to supported contact), which requires a detailed intake assessment process, additional staff and greater reporting requirements from the courts. These charges are very often met by the Scottish Legal Aid Board where clients qualify for legal aid.

Most of our child contact centres do not charge for supported child contact. Where charges are made, these too will often be met by the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

I hope this information is helpful. Please let me know if you would like further information at this time.