

**Cross Party Group on Children and Young People  
Thursday 2 February 2012  
12:30-14:00 Committee Room 6**

**Attendees:**

Marco Biagi MSP (chair)  
Neil Bibby MSP  
Kezia Dugdale MSP

Dorothy Allison, Rathbone  
Mark Ballard, Barnardos  
Derek Bannon, Common Thread  
Vicki Brass, Young Scot  
Gwyneth Bruce, College of Occupational Services  
Margaret Cameron, Quarriers  
Paul Carberry, Action for Children Scotland  
Sara Collier, Children in Scotland  
Marie Cope, Prince's Trust Scotland  
Mig Coupe, Mindroom  
Helen Davis, West Lothian Youth Action Project  
Morag Driscoll, Scottish Child Law Centre  
Jacqui Dunbar, Barnardo's  
Mick Ford, Quarriers  
Maurice Frank  
Lorna Goodwin, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers  
Louise Hill, CELCIS  
Emma Hogg, NHS Health Scotland  
Naomi Jonhston, Prince's Trust Scotland  
Kirsteen Mackay, The University of Edinburgh  
Carrie Manning, The Prince's Trust  
Hugh McAloon, The Scottish Government  
Tommy McDade, Barnardo's  
Kirsty McFarlane, Action for Children Scotland  
Robert McGeachy, Action for Children Scotland  
Ann McInnes, Rathbone  
Lesley McNab, CHAS  
Chris McNaught, Crossreach  
Richard Meade, Barnardo's  
Susan Millar, Princes Trust  
Louise Morgan, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers  
Andy Mount, West Lothian Youth Action Project  
Paul Mullan, National Deaf Children's Society  
Marion Laird, Scottish Marriage Care  
Finlay Laverty, The Prince's Trust  
Paula Raymond, Quarriers

Tracy Rodger, Clic Sargent  
Kate Sanford, Quarriers  
Tony Scally, Action for Children Scotland  
Barbara Schuler, Youthlink Scotland  
Marina Shaw, Circle  
Maggie Sloan, Spark of Genius  
Nikki-Lee Snodgrass, Prince's Trust Scotland  
Bob Stewart, Four Square  
Peter Sweeney, Prince's Trust Scotland  
Gregor Urquhart, Young Scot  
Winifred van der Sluijs, University of St Andrews  
Linda Whitmore, Enable  
Hannah Zagel, The University of Edinburgh

## **Apologies**

Drew Smith MSP  
Margaret Barclay, LTCAS  
Salena Begley, Family Fund  
Sabrina Collins, Scottish Division of Educational Psychologists  
Mo Colin, RNIB Scotland  
John Forsyth, Families Need Fathers  
Gillian Garvie, The Scottish Government  
Juliet Harris, Together  
Kate Higgins, Children 1st  
Nicki James, For Scotland's Disabled Children  
Fiona Jones, CI@n Childlaw  
Nancy Loucks, Families Outside  
Robert MacBean, National Autistic Society  
Elizabeth MacDonald, The College of Occupational Therapists  
Judith Mabelis, Scotcen  
Iain Maxwell, Families Need Fathers  
Felicity Mehendale, Royal Hospital for Sick Children  
Jennifer McConnachie, Holyrood  
Ann McInnes, Rathbone  
Calum Munro, Highland Children's Forum  
Eileen Prior, SPTC  
Arianna Patterson, AFASIC Scotland  
Keith Robson, ATL Scotland  
Maggie Simpson, SCMA  
Amy Westendarp, Enquire  
Megan Wilson, Sense Scotland

## **Welcome**

Marco Biagi MSP welcomed the members to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending, before introducing the Minister for Youth Employment, Angela Constance MSP.

## **Minister for Youth Employment**

The Minister stated that the Scottish Government is committed to improving the life chances of young people, and this is reflected in the creation of the post of Minister for Youth Employment which is the first of its kind in the UK. The Minister then gave an overview of her priorities.

The Minister spoke about the long-term scarring effects of unemployment on individual young people, their families, communities, society and the economy. She emphasised that all Government ministers have responsibility for tackling youth unemployment. The National Economic Forum on youth unemployment took place the previous day (1 February 2012) and the draft Youth Employment Strategy was also launched. The strategy takes an all-Government, all-Scotland approach to tackling unemployment. There are a range of issues to address, including skill-shortages, specific challenges in rural areas, and making the most of events such as the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup etc. In her discussions with local government, the Minister has seen a real desire to tackle youth unemployment through initiatives such as Edinburgh City Council's 'Edinburgh Guarantee' and Stirling Council's '101 Apprentices'.

Young people who are furthest away from the labour market are a priority. Government is speaking to employers to find out what measures could help them to take on young people. The Youth Contract is delivered through the Department for Work and Pensions' Work Programme and this offers non-mandatory work experience opportunities for young people.

Ms Constance explained that bespoke, targeted interventions are required for specific groups of young unemployed people, which can be broadly broken down into two groups: the approx. 20,000 young people who are furthest away from the labour market, who have low or no qualifications and who face considerable and complex disadvantages. The aim here is to get young people engaged with work in the first place.

The other group is the 45,000 or so young people who would be able to find work if the economic situation was better. The challenge with this group is to keep these young people engaged so that they do not become disillusioned.

The 16+ Activity Agreements have been successful and there is now a need to build on this approach through Opportunities for All, which will offer a place in

training or education for all 16-19 year olds. In addition, Education Maintenance Allowances are being maintained.

The Minister has announced £30m additional funding and will detail the plans for this funding during the next few weeks. A debate on youth employment will take place in Parliament on Thursday 9 February, and the issue will remain high on the parliamentary agenda.

### **Inputs on youth unemployment**

Marco thanked the Minister for her contribution and introduced the voluntary sector organisations who will speak to the group. He welcomed the three Young Ambassadors, who are young people who have graduated from one of the programmes run by Prince's Trust Scotland and who have shown leadership potential. They are acquiring insights into, and experience of, the policy-making process in Scotland.

**Tom McDade, Barnardo's:** Tom explained that Barnardo's works across 6 local authority areas in Scotland offering intensive support to young people in areas such as job training, accreditation, continuous support for employment, among others. Of the young people they help, 65% have gone into sustained employment.

Barnardo's works with young people aged 18-24 who are in receipt of Jobseekers' Allowance through the UK Government's Work Programme. Of these young people, most go into FE or HE, 19% start a job but 10% remain unengaged.

Support for young people is patchy in some areas. With Activity Agreements, some are being delivered very successfully while other areas require more work.

The young people Barnardo's works with are not a homogenous group but there is evidence that the lowest performing 20% in education are those who are consistently in need of help. Young people from areas of multiple deprivation are four times as likely to be unemployed. 16+ Activity Agreements have done much to identify those who need support, but more could be done to involve the Third Sector.

Tom emphasised that it is important to remember that formal learning is not appealing to, or appropriate for, all young people, so it is important to offer alternatives.

**Paul Carberry, Action for Children Scotland and Kirsty McFarlane, Youthbuild trainee:** Paul explained that Action for Children Scotland works in 7 local authority areas. Of the young people they work with, around 65% enter a sustained destination. The funding landscape is complicated, however the

organisation has managed to secure long-term, 7 year funding from Inspiring Scotland, which has helped in this period of economic uncertainty.

This long-term funding has enabled the organisation to develop relationships with business in order to train and support the employment of the hardest-to-reach young people. They provide one-to-one support focusing on social care and employability skills. The workers support young people through their entire journey. It is not training for training's sake, but provides real jobs.

Kirsty has participated in the Youthbuild programme. Kirsty said she had left school in 5<sup>th</sup> year and had no success in finding a job. Due to family difficulties, Kirsty experienced homelessness and got involved in a Preparation for Life course which lasted for six months. This programme supports young people to overcome obstacles to living independently and helps with life skills such as cooking, cleaning and managing money. Through Preparation for Life, Kirsty learned about Youthbuild training. This has led to a six month job trial which in turn has led to an apprenticeship. Through Youthbuild, Kirsty gained the PASMA certificate in mobile scaffolding, and in her current workplace she is now directing the other workers in how to construct the scaffolding.

**Paula Raymond, Quarriers, and Mick Ford:** Pauline outlined Quarriers' work exchange programme, which was delivered with partners in the Netherlands. She explained that the young people who participated in the programme were very far from the labour market due to various issues in their lives, and that an international work placement presented an opportunity for the young people to get out of their environment and away from the personal and social problems they were experiencing. It involved an eight week preparation programme prior to going abroad, and a nine week placement in a factory in the Netherlands. The young people had access to a life coach for the duration of the placement. All the young people lived and worked together. They gained certificates on completion of the placement, and once back in the UK they were referred to employment buddies/mentors.

Mick Ford participated in the programme and explained that he had become involved through Stopover, Quarriers' project for homeless young people. Although Mick had work experience, he had been unable to find work. Following the work placement, he got a good reference and was offered a job in the Netherlands. He was now looking for work back in the UK.

**Finlay Laverty, Prince's Trust Scotland:** Finlay discussed the added value that the Third Sector can bring to Opportunities for All. He welcomed the draft youth employment strategy's approach, which is non-judgemental. He explained that the Prince's Trust Scotland engages with a diverse range of young people, from those who are furthest away from the labour market through to young people who have entrepreneurial ideas. The private sector is keen to engage with the

Third Sector in supporting this agenda as it ties in with Corporate Social Responsibility aims. In turn the private sector has helped the organisation in terms of efficiency, and 88p in every £1 that the Trust raises is spent directly on service delivery to young people.

Marco opened up to questions and further comments from the group.

**Marion Laird, Scottish Marriage Care** emphasised the need to link up policy on parenting, early years and the youth unemployment strategy. She explained that programmes to help young people get to the stage where they could start an apprenticeship are important, as they help build resilience.

**Morag Driscoll, Scottish Child Law Centre** reiterated that all young people are not alike, and similarly the Third Sector is very diverse with a broad range of delivery methods. Internships and volunteering placements can be provided even by very small organisations, and can open up opportunities to young people and encourage them to think about options that they hadn't previously considered. However there is an issue in that full-time volunteering is not universally recognised as a positive destination.

**Naomi Johnston, Prince's Trust Scotland Young Ambassadors** explained that she had undertaken a 12-week programme with the Prince's Trust, having faced difficulties in her life due to homelessness and addiction. Through the Prince's Trust, she gained an interest in a career in youth work, something she had not previously heard about. She explained that the programme had given her a sense of well-being and that she had managed to find employment. She felt that there needs to be more support for those who are willing to volunteer, as Jobcentre staff were sometimes unsupportive. Volunteering empowers young people and helps them get into education or a work placement.

**Marco Biagi** asked whether the young people had experienced difficulty volunteering and attending the Jobcentre.

**Naomi Johnston** said that there was a lack of understanding from Jobcentre staff about volunteering and that they failed to see the value of it. She felt that the Jobcentre was focussed on pushing young people into jobs, rather than into education or volunteering opportunities.

**Mick Ford** confirmed that there were difficulties in getting the Jobcentre to recognise the value of participating in volunteering projects. He had undertaken a Raleigh International overseas placement in Borneo and was awarded a Millennium Volunteering award, but the Jobcentre did not place value on these experiences and was only interested in why he did not have a job. Mick explained that it was difficult to take up a full-time course, as this could affect his Housing Benefit.

**Kate Sanford, Quarriers** said that this was a huge issue for some young people, as Housing Benefit is not paid if they attend Further Education college full-time.

**Mig Coupe, Mindroom** said that the needs of young people with conditions such as ADHD, autistic spectrum disorder etc were often overlooked, and there was a lack of support for young people with these conditions when accessing training.

**Martin Hunt, Tartan Silk** underlined the popularity of internships as a way of getting work experience, and **Andy Mount, West Lothian Youth Action Project** talked about the importance of teaching life skills alongside work experience.

The **Young Ambassadors** said that, in summary, Jobcentre advisors were not aspirational or ambitious for young people, and that young people should receive more support.

## **AOB**

**Welfare Reform Bill:** Robert McGeachy, Action for Children Scotland, provided an update on the Welfare Reform Bill and the concessions that Action for Children Scotland (AfCS) and One Parent Families Scotland, with support from CHILDREN 1<sup>st</sup>, Barnardo's, Children in Scotland, had sought from the UK Government in response to amendments focusing on the issue of childcare and sanctions. The amendments lodged on behalf of the organisations by Baroness Ruth Lister, with cross party support from Lord Archy Kirkwood, the Bishop of Ripon and Leeds and from Lord MacKenzie of Luton aimed to ensure that claimants with dependent children do not face sanctions if they are unable to access work or work related activity, or to sustain work, due to a lack of access to appropriate, high-quality childcare.

Lord Freud, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in response to the amendments, made some important concessions. Lord Freud agreed that to introduce regulations, which will ensure that there will be no sanctions on claimants where they are unable to work, or to sustain work, due to a lack of appropriate childcare. The Minister also confirmed that the UK Government would review the way it collects, and analyses, the reasons given by claimants for being unable to access work, in order to improve the work assessment process.

Robert explained that, to put the concessions in perspective, it should be considered that in the year up to and including March 2011 there had been over 76,000 sanctions imposed on lone parents due to failure to attend mandatory interviews because of a lack of appropriate childcare. He said that the concessions would provide important safeguards for claimants with dependent children.

Robert confirmed that the amendments were supported by over 40 organizations and agencies across the UK, including children's charities and other voluntary organisations, churches, law centers and other advice agencies across the UK, groups which campaign to tackle poverty and inequality, the STUC and the TUC. The amendments were also supported by the Children's Commissioner for Northern Ireland, the Children's Commissioner for Scotland and the Children's Commissioner for Wales. Robert thanked the members of the Cross-Party Group for their support in helping to secure these important concessions..

- Action point: Circulate amendments to the group (Robert McGeachy, Sara Collier/Barbara Schuler)

**Gaelic Medium schools and support for additional needs:** Sara Collier explained that the Group had been contacted by Carole Henderson, who is researching parents' experiences of access to speech therapy and other additional support for children who attend Gaelic-medium schools. There is an issue in that speech and language therapy, dyslexia testing, educational psychology services etc are often only available in English and not in Gaelic.

Marco reminded the Group that the Festival of Politics had sent round a request for ideas for this year's programme. The theme is creativity, which ties in with the 2012 Year of Creative Scotland.

### **Next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 1 March 2012 at 12.30 and will be held jointly with the Cross-Party Group on Drugs and Alcohol. Marco asked the Group to consider which theme it wishes to address in the meeting. Parental substance misuse had been suggested as one topic. There was support from some members for this. **Mark Ballard, Barnardo's** suggested looking at alcohol advertising restrictions. Since there was support among members for both of these options, it was agreed that the secretariat would email members to see which option had the most support.