

CPG Children and Young People - How do we define Success for Young People in Scotland?

Thursday 4th October

13.0-14.30

Committee Room 1

Attendees

Marco Biagi MSP

Kezia Dugdale MSP (Chair)

Amelia Alias, University of Edinburgh

Jeni Bainbridge, Children in Scotland

Emma Cochrane, Venture Scotland

Sara Collier, Children in Scotland

Joe Connelly, Venture Trust

Morag Driscoll, Scottish Child Law Centre

Brandi Lee Lough Dennell, LGBT Youth Scotland

Ximena de Toro, The University of Edinburgh

David Ferrier, Includem

Barry Fisher, D of E Scotland

Ingrid Fitzsimons, National Deaf Children's Society

Maurice Frank, Personalised Education Now

David Gaughan, YPeople

Lorna Goodwin, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers

Juliet Harris, Together Scotland

Kin Hartley, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy

Martin Hunt, Tartan Silk

Megan Johnson, Smart Play Network

Nuur Israa Kamaruddin, University of Edinburgh

Shohei Kawabata, University of Edinburgh

Charlene Kelly, Relationships Scotland

Adam Lang, Youthlink Scotland

Shixia Lin, University of Edinburgh

Tianyue Liu, University of Edinburgh

Cath Logan, Big Lottery Fund

Nancy Loucks, Families Outside

Sara Lurie, Fostering Network

Laura MacLaughlin, Barnardo's Scotland

Brian Magee, COSCA

Carrie Manning, The Prince's Trust

Louise Marryat, Glasgow University

Tara McCarthy, Article 12 in Scotland

Sharon McCluskie, Play Scotland

Susan Miller, The Prince's Trust

Louise Morgan, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers

Paul Mullan, Quarriers

Caroline Maise Plaine, University of Edinburgh

Jenny Read, University of Edinburgh

Tracy Rodger, CLIC Sargent

Lisa Ross, Mindroom
Tony Scally, Action for Children
Terry Shevlin, The Scottish Parliament
Kim Smith, YWCA Scotland
Tania Smith, SCIS
Nikki-Lee Snodgrass, The Prince's Trust
Annie Taylor, Children 1st
Leli Tsai, University of Edinburgh
Gregor Urquhart, Young Scot
Tom Watson, Venture Scotland
Linda Whitmore, Enable

Apologies

Roderick Campbell MSP
Fiona McLeod MSP
Drew Smith MSP
Pamela Barnes, Includem
Salena Begley, Family Fund
Jackie Blair, Spark of Genius
Jackie Brock, Children in Scotland
May Chamberlain, Relationships Scotland
Mo Colvin, RNIB Scotland
Jacqui Dunbar, Barnardo's
Louise Hill, CELCIS
Fiona Jones, Cl@n Childlaw
Lesley Kelly, CRFR, University of Edinburgh
Richard Knott, Salvation Army in Scotland
Robert MacBean, National Autistic Society
Kirsteen MacKay, University of Edinburgh
Marion Macleod, Children in Scotland
Margaret Mcleod, Youthlink Scotland
Cathy McCulloch, Children's Parliament
Ian McCulloch, In Train
Chris McNaught, CrossReach
Felicity Mehendale
Calum Munro, Highland Children's Forum
John Nelson, Glasgow Council
Arianne Patterson, AFASIC Scotland
Eileen Prior Scottish Parent Teacher Council
Bev Read, firsthand
Helen Reilly, BMA Scotland
Devin Scobie, Caledonia Consulting
Maggie Simpson, Scottish Childminding Association
Paula Swanston, Home Link
Claire Telfer, Save the Children
Chris Wiles, British Psychological Society Division of Clinical Psychology in Scotland

13.10 – Welcome

Kezia welcomed everyone to the meeting which was particularly timely given that there would be a debate in Parliament that afternoon on employability and long term youth unemployment. Ensuring young people are not left behind or defined solely by academic success and grades is important for the group. She noted the example of the closure threatened Castlebrae High School – it has high ASN rates and low attainment with the latter being cited as a reason for closure.

13.15 – Kezia then opened up to a roundtable discussion on how we define success for young people in Scotland. The first contribution came from **Joe Connelly of the Venture Trust**. Joe explained that many young people are failed by the education system as parts of it don't work for them. Venture Trust works to pick up the pieces. Today success cannot be measured in academic terms, and in the current climate by employment. Young people today often do so much virtually – eg gaming and social media they lack the physical and emotional ability to take part in the wilderness adventures the Trust offers. Real life interaction is very much encouraged. Joe talked about the 'cognitive posture' – something we are born with which develops to include our beliefs and ways of thinking – this can become an 'attitude' which can be negative.

Effective communication and confidence are both key – for example in looking for jobs and seeking opportunities. Some young people rely on drugs and alcohol for confidence, we need to show them they don't need them. Often young people do not think consequentially – we need to help them think before they act. If we can equip them as early as possible with these tools we can help avoid failure and breed success. Perhaps we need to change the message that employability is the key tool or measure of success. Some young people just accept their given lot in life and don't aspire to change. They are too entrenched in who they think they should be, and need to be encouraged to see things in a different light. We need to give them the chance to see themselves and the world in a different light in order that they remain hopeful about their futures. Joe stressed the importance of communicating to young people that success is about relationships, none more so than the one with ourselves. Young people need empowered to relate to themselves in a positive way.

Tony Scally, Action for Children explained that they work with vulnerable children and young people – this includes ex-offenders, young people who have been in care and those with addiction problems. Those who can be seen as 'failures' by society. They also work with children and families on early intervention programmes.

The journey is important – everyone has a different starting point and a holistic approach based on this is required. Often we are required to report on and measure successes, outcomes and outputs – for example getting a job as a positive outcome. However we also need to care about the journey and milestones along the way not just the 'final' outcome. We are often resourced to do something, get an outcome, but then we take a nap. Support needs to continue. This generation can be inspired by the Olympics and Paralympics – not everyone can win but we can all try for a personal best and have this as our measure of success. These successes need to be part of the story – this can be lost in the current focus on outcomes and outputs. Self-perception is important – about 'my' journey and goals, not the collective result. Action for Children encourage the measure of success amongst youth to be how they are treated and respected as this is something that will be reciprocated.

Kezia noted one of the findings of the Christie Commission – why do we obsess over outcomes?

Susan Miller, The Prince's Trust, said that they don't assume they know what success is – they ask young people. For them, it is usually a job as this gives them purpose, self-respect and money. They give them the practical tools, knowledge and support to take chances.

Nikki-Lee Snodgrass is a young ambassador for **The Prince's Trust** – working with them has been a life-changing experience for her. She completed the 'get into retail' programme which gave her work experience, a temporary job and also helped her to succeed in other ways. For her, success used to mean 5 Highers, a degree and a dream home. While she might not have this, she does have ambition – and success for her was overcoming barriers to get to where she is today – admittedly something which is difficult to measure. Getting to the age of 18 without having a criminal record or addiction is an achievement – her dad was also proud that she hadn't tied herself down at a young age.

Success and failure are hard to define – people might have the same final goal but different steps along the way to achieving them. Telling a child or young person they have failed can give them a negative outcome – you need to pick out where they have succeeded and encourage them.

13.40 – Group discussion

Maurice Frank, Personalised Education Now noted that if you wanted an opportunity that others had and that was taken away from you it should be considered a failed outcome for you. You may be given other things but not what you want – we need to look at what young people have been deprived of, how they have been let down and learn from this. The ambitions of young people should be key.

Tracy Rodger, CLIC Sargent, talked about self-perception and setting one's own goals. We would all agree that we don't want to fob young people off with unpaid jobs but they can be useful baby steps to regain confidence and get motivated and can be better than claiming benefits. The Rickter Scale tool is flexible and allows young people to set their own meaningful goals. Support is also key to staying motivated and positive. Young people often compare themselves to celebrities, but what about comparisons the other way – eg with those in Malawi.

Kezia said that while many charities and organisations are bound to reporting on strict outcomes some funders are more flexible about this – for example the Big Lottery and Comic Relief.

Kate Sanford, Quarriers, reported that they give young people opportunities to travel abroad – for example their employability programme in Holland. Young people report this to be inspiring and life-changing but come home to the same circumstances they left, and we can be guilty of 'taking a nap' – we need to continue this support and aspiration. Maintaining this support to succeed is the challenge for the sector.

Joe Connelly said young people need to get the positive energy of those who have seen it differently. The Venture Trust take them to remote places – this is hard for them, not a holiday. They often see a change in their eyes but then they return to the same community. Positive peer mentoring is a useful tool – having someone to call when the professional isn't on duty. They can help each other and we can give them the tools to support them to do this.

Nikki-Lee talked about the recent 'Be the change' event which looked at children trying to make the change – young people need someone to turn to and to listen to them. Young people can feel intimidated by adults, which is why peer support is particularly good.

Tony Scally, talked about self-perception. AfC has a Youth Build programme for ex-offenders and those with chaotic lifestyles. Before starting the programme they self-assessed themselves and did the same a year later. Some areas showed improvement but their self-perception was not very accurate. They thought at the start that their health was one thing they did have , but, after working on a building site they realised they weren't very fit after all.

Sara Lurie, The Fostering Network, reported that foster carers often say young peoples' dreams are squashed by structures and the attitudes of professionals such as social workers. A positive and proud attitude can be instilled from the early years.

Morag Driscoll, Scottish Child Law Centre, said we also need to focus on adults' attitudes. We focus on tangible outcomes – eg jobs – but the intangible are equally important eg decision making and empowering. Some boxes are

harder to tick. We also need to consider what we mean by outcomes – just because something can't be measured doesn't mean it isn't important.

Kim Hartley, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy, said that the proposed Children and Young People Bill talks about listening to children. It is implicit that this is possible. 'Inclusion' (one of the SHANARRI indicators) means young people feeling included and the community accepting and recognising them. It needs to be more explicit about their capacity to understand choices and express themselves. The high levels of speech, language and communication difficulties found in young offenders indicates a failure. We need to be more explicit about how we are enabling understanding.

Megan Johnson, Play on Wheels, talked about the importance of developing resilience through play and wilderness. Resilience is important whether you fail or succeed at parts of your life.

Linda Whitmore, Enable, said that learning disabilities are a barrier to success. They impact on employment opportunities, employer attitudes, public attitudes, parents being overprotective and can lead to a lack of self belief. There are extra things for them to overcome. We need it to be more explicit that children and young people with disabilities and communication need extra assistance.

Nico Juetten, SCCYP, noted that as part of the 'right blether' consultation relationships had emerged as a key concern for young people.

Barry Fisher, D of E, talked about the importance of mind set. In this climate people have to know that there is a chance they will lose/change jobs. Children and young people can be praised and given success too often so that it becomes meaningless and damaging.

Andy Mount, West Lothian Youth Action Project, said that achieving potential depends on the young person. They need to have enjoyment in work as well as financial incentive. There is also a need to rethink social policies, reduce deprivation and break the chain of dysfunctional families.

Juliet Harris, Together, talked about the child rights indicators in the Children and Young People Bill. The wellbeing indicators do not capture everything and we have to look at what the rights and wellbeing reporting duties on public bodies are actually capturing. Juliet suggested that the CPG consider the Child Rights indicator framework in place in Northern Ireland.

Martin Hunt, Tartan Silk, suggested we have 2 years to act with the inspiration of the Olympics and Commonwealth Games. Investment in sport and teambuilding are important.

Tony Scally noted that the importance of the 'journey' seemed to be the consensus of the group. Statistics are important but we also need simplicity

and less admin and bureaucracy. There should be something simple and effective to capture data.

Joe said we sometimes make it too difficult – it's about people and not new. It starts with us and it's up to us to 'pass it on'.

Nikki-Lee said that if it can just takes one person to inspire change in a young person and dysfunction does not necessarily have to pass down families. If it clicked into place for her it can for other young people. She stressed that it is inspiration that leads to success.

In a written submission on this topic Richard Knott from the Salvation Army made the following comments:

I would point out that often the area of spiritual needs is overlooked despite the fact that the often referred to Convention on the Rights of the Child includes spiritual needs. As this extract from the UNICEF website demonstrates, religious faith communities have an important part to play in this respect within communities. *"The [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) expresses a holistic vision of the child that is informed by and reflects values shared with the world's major religious traditions, such as:*

- *Fundamental belief in the dignity of the child.*
- *High priority given to children and the idea that all members of society have rights and duties towards them.*
- *A holistic notion of the child and a comprehensive understanding of his or her physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs.*
- *The importance given to the family as the best place for bringing up children.*

Religious communities have developed structures and defined relationships shaped by these values, and their mandates and belief systems encourage efforts to speak out on behalf of and assist the disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable. Their traditions of intergenerational sharing of knowledge and faith help to sustain and perpetuate these systems."

I would therefore hope that when the Cross Party Group is considering what defines success for Scotland's Children and Young People it will include this holistic approach including Spiritual needs and development and recognise the important role that faith communities can play.

14.20 – Action points and date of next meeting

Kezia thanked the speakers and everyone for their contributions. The next meeting of the group will take place on Thursday 8th November from 13.00-14.30 in Committee Room 2. This meeting coincides with Scottish Youth Work Week.