

Cross-Party Group on Children and Young People

Tuesday 5th November 2019

17:30-19:15

Scottish Parliament, Committee Room 2

Brexit going forward – Concerns of the children and young people's sector

Chair: Iain Gray MSP

Minutes

Attendees:

Iain Gray MSP	Fulton MacGregor MSP	Brian Whittle MSP
Amy Adair	Elaine Kerridge	Kelly Munro
Amy Walker	Elaine Leith	Laura Wright
Amy Woodhouse	Fiona Souter	Lindsey Macleod
Andrew Aldous	Helen Forrest	Louise Slorance
Blake Brown	Janet Morton	Lynsey Martin
Chris Ross	Joan Mowat	Maria Doyle
Claire Benton Evans	Kaiwei Liao	Mary Ann Powell
Craig Wilson	Karina Padilla Malca	Megan Burt
CYP	Kate Whiting	Natasha Turner
David MacKay	Katie Souter	Qiuling Dong
Robert McGeachy	Sara McFarlane	Vaska Bodjaji
Ruiqing Yu	Sarah Paterson	Zhen Wang
Sam Harris	Tracey McFall	Leighton Anderson

1. Welcome from Chair

Iain Gray MSP, convener of the CPG, welcomed attendees to the first CPG on Children and Young People meeting of 2019-20. He mentioned that this is an exciting time for the CPG as it is the first meeting with the new young co-convenors and that the group will also be looking to be a bit more innovative by trialling a range of new developments including meeting outside of the Scottish Parliament.

He confirmed that this meeting would focus on Brexit in the context of the recently published Withdrawal Bill. The meeting had been due to take place after the expected exit date from the European Union before an extension was granted.

The meeting will also be a chance to set up an agreed range of aims and outcomes for the CPG going forward.

2. Confirmation of Previous Minutes – including update on previous actions

Iain noted that the previous minutes were sent on and asked for any comments from the floor. There was nothing to add.

He noted that all the actions had been covered, particularly in introducing the new young co-convenors.

3. Introducing the new young co-convenors

The Cross-Party Group welcomed the 4 new young co-convenors. The young co-convenors will help direct the work of the group by helping to identify topics and ensuring that children and young people's views are at the heart of the CPG's work for this year and beyond.

Iain was pleased to welcome the 3 young co-convenors who were in attendance. They had already met with the Secretariat for the CPG who will be providing support to them across the year. They discussed the ways in which they can contribute to the CPG's work as a group.

The 4th young co-convenor Lauren was not in attendance. Lauren is 19 and lives in Dumfries and Galloway. Lauren is also an MSYP for the Church of Scotland and has spoken at a CPG meeting before on her work during the Year of Young People.

Iain explained that the 3 young co-convenors who are were present would introduce themselves and give a brief introduction as to what they have already discussed about how they would like to be involved.

He introduced Sam, Katie and Blake . The young co-convenors then took it in turns to introduce themselves.

Iain then welcomed Brian Whittle, MSP, co-convenor for the CPG.

Chris Ross, Children in Scotland, spoke about his work with the young co-convenors. The Secretariat conducted a survey with the CPG over the summer and a lot of what the young co-convenors have introduced came up in the survey. They will help chair meetings, choose topics and speakers, and work on how to make meetings more accessible for other children and young people.

4. Aims and Outcomes for the CPG

As this is the start of the new year, it would be helpful to discuss the future of the group and how to maximise the CPG's collective work. Iain noted that the group has new young co-convenors and that he himself is a new co-convenor, so it is a good time to take stock on the work of the group.

He explained that this section would be led by the secretariat who will introduce discussion questions and organise attendees into groups. Each group has someone who will take down points raised in the group discussion, which will last 15-20 minutes, and will provide feedback to the wider group.

Iain asked those leading the discussions to feedback.

Chris Ross, Children in Scotland

- Be specific across the year and have an outcome related to that.
- Decide who we need to have involved by end of year.
- Have a structure planned out for end of year.

David Mackay, Children in Scotland

- Aims being champions for children and social justice; inclusion at the heart of CPG.
- Influencing change – outcomes focused.
- MSPs to be more accessible to CYP and planning processes clearer. This could be done through a year planner of future dates and topics and commitment from MSPs to attend.
- Joint CPG meetings: research and evidence-based approach.
- Outcomes communicated back to the different groups and communicated wider.
- Child-friendly/easy-read minutes.
- More CYP at meetings; barriers include formality and language. Potential use of social media to connect with other children's organisations.

Sarah Paterson, YouthLink

- Making sure we have more CYP voices within the CPG – especially since introduction of young co-convenors.
- CPG is a good space for sharing information across the children's sector.
- What is missing and where are those voices not being heard? Thematic areas – poverty, mental health, care experiences.

Iain noted that the Secretariat would bring back a paper detailing aims and outcomes to the next meeting.

Fulton MacGregor, MSP and co-convenor, arrived at the meeting.

5. Brexit – concerns of the children and young people's sector

Iain spoke about how those in politics have spent the last year speaking about Brexit but haven't listened to children and young people's concerns. There will be an interesting and varied panel of contributors at this meeting, who will provide some strategic oversight of how exiting the EU could impact on the sector; the CPG will also hear a number of direct examples of how exiting the EU will affect children and young people.

Unfortunately, members of the Scottish Universities Legal Network on Europe (SULNE) were unable to attend. However, Chris Ross received their paper on the Withdrawal

Agreement from Maria Fletcher. It was only sent the morning of the CPG so Chris will disseminate this after the meeting.

There will be three presenters to start off the conversation.

Craig Wilson, SCVO

SCVO is the umbrella body for charities in Scotland. They try and support Scotland's vibrant third sector as best as possible. After the Brexit vote, they tried to draw in the thoughts, opinions and concerns of members by conducting a survey, which had close to 1000 respondents. This was to find out what the third sector really thought. The results showed that a high percentage of members had a negative view. This is an area where Scotland's third sector is quite forthright.

They wanted to keep Scotland up to date on all issues, but it became unmanageable as they had to update the papers every day, so they tried to focus in on only a few issues – common themes like free movement of people and trade (medicine and food specifically), European funding in charities or more generally (maybe from the government or general public), human rights, and maintaining connections with European organisations.

Many charities in Scotland rely on funding from Europe. In the period of 2014-2020, Scotland received £800 million from Europe and charities took a large chunk of this pot. The UK government have said they will keep this up, but there are no details on this yet, or whether charities will still be given part of this money.

In terms of free movement, almost 3000 EU nationals work for charities in Scotland and it is still uncertain as to whether they can stay. There are currently 3 million EU citizens in the UK and only 1 million have applied to stay – so far.

SCVO are running a campaign called *EU are Valued*, which encourages employers in the charity sector to speak to EU employees and make them feel valued.

In terms of human rights, these are underpinned by the EU. There is concern that the strength of human rights in the UK will be diminished or end.

Scotland's charities are involved in networks all over Europe. They share information and work together; SCVO want this sharing of best practice to continue.

Robert McGeachy, Camphill Scotland

Robert is the Policy and Engagement Manager for Camphill Scotland. Their membership is made up of 11 Camphill communities. They were first set up in Aberdeen in 1940 by Austrian Jewish refugees, but since then they have become an international movement. The communities provide health and social care support and education, which includes 2 schools.

They have been providing support to young people as part of their core work since the first Camphill was established. They have kept strong European links; they have 251 students and short-term volunteers from EU countries who help in the communities and 88% of their other volunteers are from EU countries. Camphill has also developed cultural ties with EU countries. They are interested to know how the UK is going to develop its cultural ties with the EU post-Brexit.

The £30,000 annual income threshold for immigrants set as part of the new system would mean that sectors such as social care will struggle to recruit EU workers, with many of the roles required by organisations failing to pay the minimum rate required.

Camphill have been working with SCVO and the Health and Social Care Alliance to gather support for a Bill produced by Brendan O'Hara MP to ensure that the impact of Brexit on the Health and Social Care Sector is measured. The bill has been side-lined due to the coming election, but if re-elected, Brendan will reintroduce the bill.

Robert will circulate details of the bill once it is introduced. He has a template letter to send to local MPs. The bill has cross-party support and 103 organisations support it, which is a significant achievement in itself. Some organisations at the CPG supported the bill.

Sarah Paterson, YouthLink Scotland

Sarah is the Public Affairs Manager for YouthLink Scotland, which is the national agency for youthwork with 120 diverse members. They like to make sure the views of children and young people are heard by politicians, who make decisions about the money that goes to young people.

They are keen to stress that the *Erasmus+* programme is not just for university students, but a great opportunity for many young people across the UK. It has been worth £4.5 million in the last 5 years. However, there has been no guarantee that it will continue from 2021-2027. There is no guarantee if we come out of the EU, that the UK government will fund this part of Erasmus. They may fund university students, but we need it for all children and young people.

YouthLink's members work with over 350,000 children and young people across Scotland and they are seeing an increasing demand, as there are more children and young people in poverty and experiencing mental health issues.

For YouthLink, coming out of the EU with or without a deal is a huge concern and it is difficult to know who to lobby down in Westminster.

6. Floor Discussion

Iain thanked all the contributors and opened to the floor for a discussion.

Craig Wilson, SCVO, asked on the point about Erasmus+, whether the Scottish government might be involved in one of the parliament committees on this.

Sarah Paterson, YouthLink Scotland, responded that there had been a vote on continuation in the chamber. YouthLink spoke to Mike Russell a month ago and asked for clarification on this, but they haven't had an answer. When they do, they will update the CPG.

Iain Gray, MSP, mentioned that there have been debates on the impact of Brexit and there is a desire to see Erasmus+ protected. The government haven't made a guarantee, but all the parties support this.

Brian Whittle, MSP, caveated by saying that he supported the Remain campaign during the Brexit referendum. It is likely that the UK will leave the EU and therefore we

must be pragmatic, as Erasmus+ is very important. All members and convenors should use their time to inform and promote everything they are concerned about to do with Brexit, and therefore these things will remain on the agenda. Lobbying both the UK and Scottish governments creates the chance to have ongoing dialogue and keep issues on the agenda.

Katie, young co-convenor, noted that valuable experiences happen on the Erasmus+ programme and it would be a huge mistake to get rid of it.

Chris Ross, Children in Scotland, spoke about his conversation about Brexit with the young co-convenors before the meeting. Things are changing so regularly, that it is difficult for children and young people to process the information and keep updated.

Andrew Aldous, The Prince's Trust, reminded the CPG that we can't underestimate the impact of Brexit on children and young people's services. If we come out without any guarantee, then the small charities working in local communities will disappear. This is so important.

Tracey McFall, Partners in Advocacy, noted that there would be less money for adult services, which would have an effect on children as well.

Joan Mowat, University of Strathclyde, mentioned how children and young people have talked about mental health concerns. There will be difficulties employing people in the health service as CAMHS is already underfunded and Brexit will make it worse rather than better.

Brian Whittle, MSP, sits on the Health and Sport Committee and they have engaged in extensive work around some of the issues discussed here, for example supporting the third sector. They can carry a significant part of the load if funded over an extended period of time. If you are a third sector organisation that is funded through EU money, then it is important we bring this up the agenda. We need to ask how the UK and Scottish governments will make sure we have the money to work in communities. Nobody knows what is going on, but we should be asking them as an individual in an organisation – here is where my funding comes from, I will lose it, it will impact my community, what are you going to do? It is massively important that we put these issues in as stark a way as possible to ensure the support we have in communities is not lost.

Blake, young co-convenor, mentioned that CYP don't get a say in Brexit, and it would be best if they could use words that children understand.

Iain Gray, MSP, said that unfortunately a lot of the time they don't know what they are saying. They speak to schools who come to parliament and sometimes they have to say they don't know. He acknowledged the point Blake made and mentioned that sometimes using big language is deliberate in order to hide the fact that they don't know what is going on.

Leighton Anderson, MSYP for Shetland, spoke about the SYP's manifesto - Lead the Way – where 72,000 young people were consulted. SYP doesn't have a stance on Brexit, but a majority of their membership thought that Scotland should remain part of EU. In the same document, the majority of their membership commented that the

voting age should have been lowered so that all referendums could be taken part in by children and young people.

Sarah Paterson, YouthLink Scotland, outlined that the voting age has been lowered for elections in Scotland. The fact that we have not lowered the voting age in UK to 16 is a contentious issue, as YouthLink have asked those in the youth work sector what their views are on this, and they agree it should be lowered.

Iain Gray, MSP, gave his support for a consistent age of 16.

Brian Whittle, MSP, commented that young people have a range of experience and understanding of politics. Brian said he felt voting age will inevitably move to 16. Had the election not been called so quickly, he believes the age of voting would have come down to 16.

Elaine Leith, Harmeny Education Trust Ltd, works in a residential school in southside Edinburgh. She noted that Blake's point around language is really important. Months ago, Kezia Dugdale, former MSP and convenor of the CPG made use of a traffic light system, which brought inclusive language to the table (traffic lights are used to highlight if attendees understand a speaker). Elaine felt that there should be a general theme going forward on how to resurface these traffic lights. This will encourage young people to attend and continue to attend CPG meetings.

7. Agree actions

- The CPG will reintroduce traffic light system to support attendees to identify that they do not understand a speaker
- Secretariat to provide a paper summarising the aims and objectives discussion and proposing actions based on this.
- The CPG will write a letter to the UK government highlighting our support for Brendan O'Hara's Private Members Bill on an evaluation of how Brexit will impact on Health and Social Care.
- CPG will look at how we could support the invest in youth work campaign.
- Write to UK government highlighting the CPG's support for the keep Erasmus+ campaign.
- Write as a CPG to both governments to ask what they will do about third sector funding as a result of exiting the EU.
- Write as a CPG to UK Government about votes at 16 in all UK elections.

Craig Wilson, SCVO, mentioned that the EU structural funding was announced today by the Scottish Government.

Katie, young co-convenor, mentioned the idea of getting more young people involved in meetings. They get surveys in registration, so maybe the secretariat could contact some schools and ask them what they think should be happening.

Iain Gray, MSP, thought this could form part of the aims and objectives paper.

Chris Ross, Children in Scotland, said he would talk to the young co-convenors about this before the next meeting.

8. AOB

Robert McGeachy, Camphill Scotland, highlighted the launch of the proposed Member's Bill, the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions) (Scotland) Bill, by Johann Lamont MSP. This is seeking to improve outcomes for children and young people with a disability transitioning into adulthood.

The deadline for the consultation is 22nd January. There will be a public consultation event on 11th November.

Iain Gray closed the meeting.

Next meeting:

Tuesday 4th February, 13:00-14:30, Committee Room 2 at Scottish Parliament.

Topic: The Youth Work Sector Crisis and Funding.