



North Wales Children's Rights Practice Exchange Group Meeting

Children's Commissioner's Office

22 May 2009

MINUTES

1. Present:

Anita Myfanwy (Chair); Allison Hughes (Minutes); Julie Edwards, CCW; Delyth Owen Ynys Mon Council; Hawis Jones, WLGA; Wendy Roberts, Cymru Kids Club; Kevin Williams, Barnardos Cymru; Huw Gwyn, Tros Gynnal; Suzanne Bradley, DVSC, Judith Moore, NWW NHS Trust; Ann Bierd, Maggie Kelly, Wales PPA.

Speakers: Laurence Smith, Assistant Director: Corporate Planning & Assurance, CAF/CASS Cymru
Julie Edwards, CCW
Hawis Jones, WLGA

2. Apologies

Jonathon Bentley, RAPA; Kirsten Buchanan, Funky Dragon; Emma Williams, Barnardos Cymru; Sian Ap Dewi, NPHS; Judi Jones, WPPA; Spencer Smith, Mencap; Pete Wynne, Flintshire Children's Service; Sue Walls, NSPCC; Sheila Chapman, WPPA; Moira Williams, CCW.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were read and agreed as a true record.

4. Matters Arising

- The credit crunch is having an effect on the amount that parents are contributing to the savings bank at Ysgol y Moelwyn, one of the LA Child Poverty Pilots
- Results of the consultation on Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation – Child Index (WMID) have now been published and copies were made available to the group.
- ECPN Cymru – Child Poverty Rural Project – Anita is hoping to produce a draft report by the end of June and that it will be launched at the Royal Welsh Show.

- Research/occasional paper by the FSA has been forwarded to Anita by Adrian Firth. It shows that there is an increase in the wellbeing of people who are financially literate. Anita to circulate to the group.
- Action: AM**
- Staff of the Children's Commissioner for Wales Office will be notified of their new job titles today.

5. Presentation by Laurence Smith on the Role of CAFCASS and the Adoption Act.

Anita welcomed Laurence to the meeting and informed the group that the presentation is relevant to Core Aims 3, 5 & 6 and UNCRC Article 12 in particular.

Laurence explained to the group that the Act is in 2 parts, which is the Children and Adoption Act 2006 and Inter-Country Adoptions (safeguarding children adopted from foreign countries).

The Act focuses on private law contact disputes. Its role is to ensure the courts have the appropriate information to ensure the wellbeing of the child. CAFCASS follow policy outlined by the Welsh Assembly Government and Westminster. There is a need for clear policy when there is a family breakdown and the courts are able to take action against breaches of contact orders and may make an enforcement order imposing an unpaid work requirement.

If the court receives an application for contact it is the role of CAFCASS to carry out an assessment, by means of speaking to the family and the child, and a full report is then provided to the court. Information and advice sessions/parent education programmes are available to families, which are free to families in receipt of Legal Aid.

The group expressed/asked the following:

- Concern at the lack of provision for children when parents separate, as there is no special support available to them.
- The possibility of extending the service to the 90% of families who do not go through the courts.

Anita thanked Laurence for his informative PowerPoint presentation and the presentation will be circulated to members of the group.

6. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Julie Edwards, CCW

Anita informed the group that there is a general lack of knowledge by agencies of the UNCRC and the 7 Core Aims. Julie explained that in her previous role she had heard of the UNCRC but had no in-depth knowledge.

Julie gave a PowerPoint presentation which covered the following areas:

- History of Rights
- What rights do children have?
- Why is the UNCRC so important?
- UNCRC facts
- The UNCRC and the Law
- 4 Guiding Principles
- The reporting process

Julie asked the group to take part in an opinion game, asking for their opinions on the following quotes:

“Today is too dangerous to play out – children are better inside with their families” – Children have a right to play and is crucial to their development

“Being smacked never did me any harm” – Protection, UNCRC (Article 19), Children are Unbeatable

“Refugee children should not take up resources, Welsh children should get what they need first” – UNCRC (Article 22) Children who come into a country as refugees should have the same rights as children born in that country

“Families should always talk to their children before making important decisions” – Having a say (Article 12) Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions about them and have their opinions taken into account.

Questions

- the group asked if a parent wished to withdraw a child from any part of their education can the UNCRC stop them? - No, because the UNCRC is not legally binding
- Who is responsible for a child receiving education at home? - The Department of Education has a responsibility for every child of school age.

Ann Bierd, Project Co-ordinator, Gorwel Project

Ann introduced herself to the group. She is seeking to attend the most appropriate forums (relevant to Article 28) to promote the North Wales Reaching Wider partnership, which is aiming to encourage children in care to reach their potential educationally and is supported by the University of Wales Bangor and the Frank Buttle Trust. They are currently developing a training pack for carers to become educational mentors to raise young people’s aspirations i.e. to continue their education by going to university. There is a peer mentoring programme working with young people in year 11.

Ann asked the group for its advice on the best way to disseminate the training packs when they become available. Delyth agreed to disseminate packs and also Hawis agreed to provide contact details. It was also suggested that Looked After Children Education co-ordinators and Leaving Care Teams would be a good point of contact.

Anita agreed that CIW would send information out to its groups when it becomes available and that Ann would provide Anita with further written details on the project. **Action: AB**

7. Code of Practice for Keeping Children Safe From Harm – Hawis Jones, Wales Strategic Partnership, WLGA

Hawis explained to the group that the responsibility of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) is to ensure that rules are implemented when considering applications for refuge and is relevant to Article 22 of the UNCRC.

Wales Strategic Partnership is currently co-ordinating work throughout Wales. It was agreed that Hawis provide Anita with the relevant links. **Action: HJ**

The document touches articles of the UNCRC and its main principles are:

- the children and family's need for accurate and timely information
- local arrangements and the UKBA's working arrangements with the Social Services and the Local Safeguarding Children's Boards
- the duty of the UKBA staff to refer cases to Social Services in accordance with procedures
- implications on private fostering arrangements and Social Services' responsibility to inspect private fostering arrangements
- the need to make timely decisions around the child
- inter-agency information sharing arrangements
- stability in the child's life

8. Information Exchange

- Ynys Mon Children's Festival on 2nd & 3rd of July 2009. The Partnership will perform a self-assessment. Gareth will be leaving in November.
- Barnardo's has been commissioned by Newport Council to monitor the effect of the Single Plan
- All Wales participation courses for children under the age of 12. E-mail Kevin at kevin.williams@barnardos.org.uk for further information.
- Barnardo's are intending to train all its staff on the UNCRC and Swansea University are seeking input from Barnardo's when selecting students.
- Single Plan – fields such as commissioning are developing. There is a need to improve relations between providers and commissioners and to share good practice. Partnerships are working on their plans and

the North Wales Advocacy Partnership are looking at how to improve collaboration with children centrally

- Tros Gynnal are holding a Celebration Day in Conwy on 24.07.09
- CCW will be launching Making Learning Better around October time. It is looking at improving the atmosphere in the classroom and what makes a good teacher and are aiming to target trainee teachers in colleges.
- CCW -'Bordering on Concern – Child Trafficking in Wales' available on the website. Hard copies were distributed to the group.
- Tros Gynnal are looking for the opportunity to attend events and have a presence.

Handouts/Booklets

- Vetting & Barring – Venue Cymru 14.07.09
- Safeguarding Children Board – Safe Parenting
- Financial Capability available from FSA www.fsa.gov.uk
- ECPN Cymru membership forms
- Conference on Early Support by CIW - Wrexham 12/06/09
- Domestic Abuse – Conwy
- Deep Rural Study Consultation coming to an end soon.

8. Any Other Business

There was no further business to discuss.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Funky Dragon
Suicide in Young People – Papyrus

Anita asked the group to consider what they would like to discuss at the next meeting and bring forward their ideas.

9. Dates of Next Meetings

07.07.09 (Glasdir, Llanrwst) – Joint meeting with NWVOSG

06.10.09

19.01.10