

**PE1393/P**

**Petitions Committee Response – Barnardo's Scotland PE1393**

Barnardo's Scotland would like to thank the Petitions Committee for its ongoing work in support of our petition (PE1393).

In response to evidence submitted to the committee since its last meeting to discuss PE1393 on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012 we would like to highlight a number of points, particularly in relation to the Scottish Government's submission made in April (PE1393/O).

Research

We very much welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to carrying out research into child sexual exploitation (CSE). In our previous response we requested that the Scottish Government set up an Advisory Group to review the findings of the research. The Government in its April's response made no commitment or comment on this.

Although we have been invited to a seminar event in June, there has been a lack of information on how the research has been conducted and progressed. The research must include frontline primary research and not just be a desk-based literature review.

We would still like to see this Advisory Group set up and hope that the Petitions Committee would agree with us and will urge the Government to take this course of action, as well as review the evidence itself when it is published in June 2012.

2010 National Child Protection Guidance

The Government when giving evidence on the 7<sup>th</sup> February stated its commitment to working with Barnardo's Scotland on updating the 2010 National Child Protection Guidance. Since this meeting we have yet to be given a clear timescale for this work. The Government did not reference this work or its plans to carry it out in its April 2012 response and we would urge the Government to progress this work as soon as possible.

### Specialised toolkits

We recognise the note made in the Scottish Government's response of its plans to explore what further specialised tools might be developed for practitioners, following the roll out of a risk assessment toolkit later this summer.

This is not a strong commitment and could potentially take a considerable amount of time before we move forward. We would urge the Scottish Government to progress plans for a specialised toolkit for CSE as early as possible. The evidence given in earlier written responses from NHS Boards and others highlighted the need for specialised materials to support practitioners.

### Local Protocols

The Scottish Government highlighted in its April response, that at a March meeting of the Child Protection Committee Chairs Forum it was agreed that the Child Protection Committee Lead Officers to establish a small working group to explore developing a core set of protocols for Child Protection Committees. The Scottish Government has requested that the issue of CSE be specifically explored.

We would also urge the Scottish Government and the Forum to share widely its information and findings in this regard and encourage a wide input from key stakeholders on the role that local protocols can play.

We welcome this development and would urge the Petitions Committee as part of its ongoing work on our Petition to monitor this work and review its progress.

### Service Visits

At the previous meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March the Petitions Committee expressed an interest in visiting our CSE services in Glasgow and Dundee. Barnardo's Scotland would be delighted to facilitate these visits over the course of the Summer.

### The role of social media

Barnardo's Scotland would like to thank MySpace for responding to the Committee's request for evidence. We support their efforts to protect their users and the work they do with law enforcement agencies.

Our practitioners who reviewed the MySpace site did comment that there was no obvious to report abuse on the site.

Whilst we appreciate the time taken by MySpace to respond, by far the biggest social media site used by young people in Scotland and the UK is Facebook and as such we need to be confident that this social media site is doing all it can to safeguard vulnerable children and young people.