

**Education and Culture Committee**

**Scotland's Educational and Cultural Future**

**Barnardo's Scotland**

Barnardo's Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee's call for evidence. We have focussed our response on Theme 2 of the call for evidence, which focuses on Early Years, Childcare and Employability.

Barnardo's Scotland does not take a position on constitutional questions. Whatever the constitutional future looks like, we will continue to campaign for a Scotland that is consistent with the vision of our founder, Thomas Barnardo, of a world in which no child is turned away from the help that they need.

On this basis we will continue to ask parties and politicians how their policies (including policies on constitutional issues) will help meet the shared aspiration of making Scotland the best place for children to grow up in, free of child poverty and a place in which all of Scotland's young people can make the most of their talents through access to fulfilling and rewarding careers. We therefore welcome this inquiry as a chance to explore some of these issues.

**Our services**

In addition to our wider mission of supporting Scotland's most vulnerable children, young people and their families, Barnardo's Scotland provides a variety of services that are of direct relevance to the Committee's inquiry. Our Barnardo's Works services provide support to help young people into employment from six service bases across Scotland. In addition, Barnardo's Scotland provides a number of early years family support services across Scotland. More information on these services, and examples of best practice are available at the end of this evidence paper.

**Employability**

Barnardo's Scotland has been supportive of the introduction over the past few years of a Youth Employment Strategy and the creation of the position of Youth Employment Minister by the Scottish Government. We also recognise the importance of the creation of an independent Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, and welcomed the interim report by the Commission. However, the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training in Scotland remains too high. In particular, we are concerned that too little is being done to support those young people who are furthest from the labour market.

The Education and Culture Committee has, over the last couple of years, conducted a great deal of scrutiny around the issues affecting care leavers, resulting in some major changes in the support available to care leavers through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act. However, there are still major challenges for care leavers in terms of transition into employment. Only 75% of care leavers have a positive destination following school, compared to 90% of school leavers overall. Our work with care leavers through Barnardo's Works in Scotland has found that these young people often need a more extended period of support than is available through many of the current employability schemes. We believe that extending the period that care-leavers can spend on programmes supported by the Employability Fund would be a positive step. Allowing employers to receive the higher level of financial support (currently only available for Modern Apprentices under the age of 19) for care leavers up until a much higher age, would also be a very positive development. Skills Development Scotland, as a result of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, is now defined as a Corporate Parent, and initiatives such as these could be included in SDS's Corporate Parenting plan, which they are now required to develop.

Finally, whilst the Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy was published relatively recently in January 2012, the youth employment situation has changed significantly since that time, as a result of a great deal of hard work by various agencies and a changing macro-economic situation. Therefore, it is our view that the Youth Employment Strategy should be renewed some time in 2014. This could perhaps be in response to the final conclusions of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. In a renewed Youth Employment Strategy we would hope to see greater recognition of the needs of young people who are furthest from the labour market, and greater recognition of the important role that the Third Sector plays in helping young people improve their skills and find a job.

**Specific issues raised by the Committee:**

***Whether the interaction between current UK and Scottish youth employability initiatives could be improved.***

In Barnardo's Scotland's view, it is certainly the case that interaction between current UK and Scottish youth employability initiatives could be improved. This is one of the least clear aspects of Westminster-Holyrood devolution, with large overlaps and inconsistencies existing between various aspects of education, employability, training and welfare policy. This could of course be addressed through a number of different constitutional approaches, including Scottish independence, further devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament, and the return of powers to Westminster. We would welcome further consideration of this from all parties, both in the run-up to and following the referendum, and regardless of its outcome.

For Barnardo's, the tight regulation that restricts young people from being involved in both the DWP's Work Programme and activities funded by SDS's Employability Fund has raised particular concerns. Some young people are not immediately ready for the Work Programme, but would be more likely to benefit from it following support activities that could be funded by the Employability Fund. We have also had experience of being approached by young people who are currently on the Work Programme and are interested in receiving additional support, but are not permitted to join programmes that might be of most support to them if they are funded by the Employability Fund.

***The extent to which youth employment could be boosted by a constitutional right to the opportunity of education, training or employment***

Barnardo's Scotland has welcomed the introduction of the Opportunities for All commitment by the Scottish Government. Far too many of Scotland's young people are not in work, education or training, and any initiatives that result in improved outcomes in this regard for young people is to be welcomed.

However, regardless of whether access to a job, education or training becomes a 'constitutional right' or remains an 'offer', it must be made real, especially for the most vulnerable young people who are furthest from the labour market. This means continued work to extend the number of places for young people in education (across the senior phase of schools, colleges and universities), in training (across the Modern Apprenticeship programme, the Youth Employment Fund and other schemes) and work (through job creation schemes, wage incentives, and economic policy). It is difficult to see how the number of opportunities in all these categories can be increased without further investment. Nonetheless, increased investment in opportunities for young people would bring about very significant benefits for Scotland, both in the short-term and long-term.

***The extent to which youth employment could be boosted by the bringing together of job matching, employability training and career guidance***

Closer alignment of the activities of Skills Development Scotland and Job Centre Plus could be beneficial, and various mechanisms of doing this are worthy of further exploration.

**Childcare**

Much of the debate in recent months about childcare in Scotland has focussed on the number of free hours of childcare available to the youngest children. This increase in the free allowance of childcare will help support more parents, particularly women, who wish to return to work, thereby increasing family incomes.

However, there has been comparatively less focus on the quality and flexibility of childcare, and on the amount of childcare available for parents of older children who are in school. These are all also important issues and deserve further attention.

The fact that the Curriculum for Excellence recognises that the Curriculum should be applied to all children over the age of three, whether they are in school or not, is very positive. On this basis, there also needs to be a clearer distinction made between the actions being undertaken to ensure that childcare is available to support parents to return to work, and the actions to ensure that early learning is available to young children, over the age of three, as part of the role out of the Curriculum for Excellence.

### **Quality**

In terms of the quality of childcare, there needs to be greater account taken of what is known to science about the links between attachment and brain development. Attachment refers to the scientific evidence that shows the importance for small children of interactions with adults, particularly their main carers. There is strong evidence that this aids the brain development of babies, and that it can help to avoid problems for these children later in their lives.

Despite recent Scottish Government initiatives, there is still currently a great deal of variability in the qualifications of childcare staff, so it is difficult to ensure through this route that all childcare staff have an understanding of the most recent science of child development. Attachment theory should be an important part of professional development for childcare staff, and there should be a focus on the role of local authorities in developing their local childcare staff.

Low pay is also a continuing issue for the childcare workforce, and for many childcare staff there is little scope for career progression. Higher pay would allow more people to see a career in the childcare profession as a positive and viable career option, rather than as stop-gap jobs.

We are concerned that, taken together, these issues are limiting the quality of childcare that is available to children and families in Scotland.

### **Flexibility**

Barnardo's Scotland sees a need to explore how greater diversity and flexibility of childcare patterns can be achieved, in order to help parents to more easily fit childcare and work together. This flexibility is needed both in terms of how service providers structure their delivery, but also in terms of how entitlements are funded and structured. There also needs to be consideration given to how parents, who make a positive choice to 'stay at home' are supported to provide high quality childcare to their children. This is particularly important in a context of the proven benefits of a child being well connected to their carers.

During recent debates of childcare there has also been relatively little focus on the role of employers in supporting childcare and flexible working. Whilst flexible working is becoming more commonplace, the Committee may wish to consider further whether more could be done to encourage employers to make flexible arrangements for their employees. Something like a family-friendly workplace award for employers could be worth considering.

### **Out-of-school care**

Barnardo's Scotland has welcomed amendments made to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act that highlighted the importance of out-of-school care for school-age children. Despite this, further consideration of how this might be delivered to parents, particularly of more vulnerable children, would be welcome.

We understand that the Minister for Children and Young People has committed the Early Years Taskforce to looking at some of these issues further, and the Committee may wish to input into that process.

### **Early Years**

Barnardo's Scotland encourages the Committee to give equal consideration to Early Years during its inquiry, particularly to issues that go beyond childcare. This is particularly important, given the strong body of evidence of the long term benefits of investment in the early years, both at the individual and national level. What happens in the earliest years of the lives of Scotland's citizens, and how this is supported by the public and voluntary sectors, is critically important to the future of Scotland.

There has been a growing recognition across the political spectrum, of the importance of the first few years of a child's life. This is most clearly shown in a number of initiatives, including the Early Years Collaborative and the Early Years Change Fund. There is emerging evidence that these initiatives are having an impact on practice and service delivery. At Barnardo's Scotland we have been considering how we can change what we do, to reflect a greater focus on the Early Years, and to reflect the latest scientific evidence<sup>1</sup>. However, there will soon be a need to ensure that examples of best practice, identified through things like the Early Years Collaborative, are rolled-out on a wider scale.

The increased focus on the early years is based on a strong body of academic research which has identified the importance of the first few years in the brain development of children. In this period in particular the relationship between the child and the main care giver(s) is particularly important – a high quality relationship between the carer(s) and the child, in which the child feels connected, safe and responded to, results directly in the child experiencing better brain development.

A shift to greater spending in the early years and in achieving earlier intervention has been recognised as a key goal for national and local government to achieve. As recognised in the Scottish Government's National Parenting Strategy<sup>2</sup>, greater support to parents is a key part of this.

Barnardo's Scotland provides a number of early years and family support services across Scotland. These early years family support services use a variety of different approaches, including some of the specific programmes mentioned in the National

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Glasgow, the Barnardo's Scotland's Assistant Director for Children's Services with a lead responsibility for Early Years has written on this subject in the most recent edition of Scottish Policy Now - <http://www.scottishpolicynow.co.uk/article/children-putting-policy-into-practice>

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government's National Parenting Strategy <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/10/4789>

Parenting Strategy, as well as other approaches that we have developed in partnership with a variety of other organisations.

However, in our view it is not so much the particular type of programme that is delivered, but rather the way in which it is delivered, that matters most and makes the biggest difference for families. Our programmes are effective in delivering outcomes because our approaches:

- Focus on the strengths and assets of parents,
- Focus on the relationships and attachment between care givers and children,
- Prioritise the strength of relationship between our staff and the people they work with,
- Take a holistic approach to the family and consider the impact of the wider community on the family.
- Work with families to identify and overcome practical barriers (with appropriate additional external support if necessary), especially those arising from poverty, inequality, poor housing, and so on.

We believe that focussing on the way programmes are delivered, rather than particular programme types, is a key point to be made to all those organisations, including local authorities and health boards, that are involved in directly supporting parents and commissioning services to support parents. We would warmly welcome the highlighting of this by the Education and Culture Committee as part of their inquiry into the future of Scotland.

### **Shifting public spending**

It is important that local authorities continue the shift of core funding towards the early years, so that support in the early years is seen as a core function of public services. This is particularly important when initiatives like the Early Years Change Fund eventually come to an end.

The Finance Committee's report on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2014-15<sup>3</sup> raised a number of concerns in relation to the Early Years Change Fund, including:

*"64. The Committee is concerned about the limited contribution which some local authorities appear to be making towards the EY Change Fund and asks the Government to provide details of how much new money has been provided."*

Barnardo's Scotland is concerned that, in some areas, the Early Years Change Fund appears to be being used to fill existing budgetary gaps, given the pressure on local authority funding, rather than to bring about a fundamental shift in the way that public services in Scotland are delivered. As a number of organisations and local

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<sup>3</sup> Scottish Parliament Finance Committee report on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2014-15  
[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_FinanceCommittee/Draft\\_Budget\\_2014\\_response.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_FinanceCommittee/Draft_Budget_2014_response.pdf)

authorities pointed out during evidence on the budget, the Early Years Change Fund is important because it acts as 'bridging funding', allowing crisis-response services to continue to mitigate immediate problems, whilst allowing new preventative services to begin to kick-in. Nevertheless, the long-term sustainability of the preventative agenda will only be achieved through a whole-system shift in what local authorities and other parts of the public sector are doing.

Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) were required, for the first time, to produce returns to the Scottish Government, detailing their financial contribution to the Early Years and the activities that they were undertaking. However, the Scottish Government's own report found that it was hard to aggregate the spending across CPP areas, because of inconsistencies in the information contained in the returns<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, in the report it is hard to form any picture of what activities are being carried out as a result of spending on early years across Scotland, because of the inconsistencies in what spending CPPs included in their returns to the Scottish Government.

### **Wider cultural change**

Specialised services, like those provided by Barnardo's Scotland, are able to provide intensive support to particularly vulnerable families. However, for the Scottish Government's aim of making Scotland the best place to grow up to be fully achieved, there also needs to be a wider cultural change in Scottish society's attitude to children. A public awareness campaign, perhaps delivered in collaboration by Scottish Government, public bodies and civic organisations, to support families across Scotland with positive parenting would be warmly welcomed by Barnardo's Scotland.

### **For more details please contact:**

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<sup>4</sup> Scottish Government summary report on the Early Years Change Fund to the Early Years Taskforce, Paragraph 7.  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00437798.pdf>

## **Further Details on relevant Barnardo's Scotland services**

### **Barnardo's Works**

Barnardo's Scotland's Employability services work from six bases across Scotland, in Renfrewshire, Dundee, Highland, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeenshire and Perth and Kinross. The services support vulnerable young people and young adults into sustainable employment, through a carefully structured programme. The focus is on industry relevant, in-demand skills and link young people to employers who have job requirements. Our services support young people in both a rural and urban setting.

Partnership with employers is vital to the way in which Barnardo's Works functions. The services work closely with both large employers, including Scottish & Southern Energy and Scottish Water, as well as local shops and small businesses. The services are also partnered with a number of public sector employers, including the NHS in particular. However, the majority of placements for young people are in the private sector. The partnership working with Scottish & Southern Energy has been nominated for a number of awards and Barnardo's Works has won the top prize at the Scottish Social Services Council Care Accolades

Barnardo's Works takes a capabilities approach, which focuses on helping young people overcome internal barriers such as literacy/numeracy, confidence and motivation while also supporting them to overcome external barriers such as housing, money management, and lack of vocational skills etc. Each young person is also allocated the support of a on-site mentor, from the employer partners who are involved in the programme.

In the most recent year for which figures are available, the twelve months up until March 2013, Barnardo's Works supported 661 with a variety of barriers to employment, including lack of work experience, lack of formal qualifications, substance misuse, criminal records, homelessness, and experience of care as a child. Over 80% of young people supported by Barnardo's Works in this period achieved a recordable positive outcome.

### **Barnardo's Early Years Services**

Barnardo's Scotland provides a number of early years family support services across Scotland. These services provide a range of supports to families with young children across Scotland. However, further specific details on two of these services are provided below.

#### **Nurturing Inverclyde Project**

The project is based in Greenock, but covers the whole Inverclyde area. It is a partnership between the Inverclyde Community Health and Care Partnership



(CHCP) and Barnardo's Scotland, with the additional support of CVS Inverclyde (the local volunteering centre) and the Scottish Government.

The project is a wrap-around single access service that provides support from pre-birth through to 18, to a large number of local children, and their families, who are facing multiple adversities, including poverty. The project delivers early interventions to prevent the children and families needing more intensive statutory interventions later in life. The service also works with volunteers from the local community who are included in the project, so there is an important element of community capacity building that is part of the project.

The project is funded in part from the Early Years Change Fund, as a Public-Social Partnership, partly from the Big Lottery Fund, and partly from the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland.

The service is in part co-located with a Barnardo's Scotland/CHCP partnership service which provides family support services to children and families between the ages of 0 and 18 who are affected by disability. Many of these families are also experiencing multiple adversities and/or severe economic disadvantage.

### **Barnardo's Threads Paisley**

An early years family support service supporting approximately 200 young parents and their babies. The project offers holistic, intensive support to improve relationships and the outcomes for children. The project also supports a number of peer support groups to address a number of specific adversities, including poverty, inequality and drug and alcohol use, in order to reduce the impact of these on the children. The project uses an attachment approach, based on the latest neuroscience research

A specific part of the project works with young parents, especially fathers, who are part of families affected by domestic abuse. The project works with the young parents to develop healthy and respectful relationships and to develop their understanding of the impact on the physical and emotional health of their babies.

The service also collaborates with the local NHS special needs and pregnancy midwives to provide ante-natal support to expectant young parents who are unlikely to seek traditional forms of support, but who are able to access support through the Barnardo's Threads Service.

Across the service young people will have been referred from the Local Authority, Education services, the NHS or people are able to self-refer to the service. The project is funded by a combination of the Local Authority, donations from the public to Barnardo's Scotland and the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland.