

**Minutes of
Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on
Shared Parenting
Tuesday 12 June 2018
From 18:00 to 20:00
Room Q1.03, Scottish Parliament**

1 Ivan McKee MSP was in the chair. He had a request from David Curl, one of the guest speakers, to take a video sample of a few minutes duration of the meeting. There were no objections.

Ivan welcomed members attending for the first time and suggested it would be useful to go round the table for brief introductions.

2 Present. Ivan McKee MSP, Adam Tomkins MSP, Kate Forbes MSP and Willie Coffey MSP, Kenny Spence (Men in Childcare), Peter Cloke (Circle), Ian Maxwell (FNF Scotland), John Forsyth (FNF Scotland), Peter Morris (Men and Boys Initiative), June Loudon (Grandparents Apart), Eoin Keane (individual), Eileen Brownlie (Relationships Scotland), Mark Malcolm, Issy Shillinglaw, Alistair Shillinglaw (all Issy Shillinglaw Grandparents Rights), Cheryl Brown (Midlothian Sure Start), Frances Byatt-Smith (Edinburgh Parent Centre).

Guests: David Curl (ForKidsSake), Simon Stockwell and Hannah Frodsham (Scottish Government).
In attendance: Jane Denholm Office of Ivan McKee

3 Apologies had been received from Gillian Martin MSP, Finlay Carson MSP, Bob Doris MSP, Andy Weightman MSP. Sam Pringle (Fathers Network Scotland), Brock Lueck (OPFS), Fiona Robertson (North Lanarkshire), Elaine Stalker (Families Outside), Barry Wright (Dads Rock), James Jopling (Samaritans), Graeme Richards (Circle), Line Knudsen (GUS), Pauline Linn and Brian McGlynn (FM West),

4 Minutes of 13 March meeting and matters arising

Membership. Since the last meeting James Jopling, Executive Director of Samaritans Scotland had been approved for membership in a personal capacity though was unable to attend this meeting. Subscription. John Forsyth explained that the inaugural meeting of the group had left open the matter of a subscription. At the next meeting the issue of paying for speakers' expenses had been deferred by a suggestion that there may be grants available. The secretariat had asked for names and contact details of prospective grant funders but had not received any. The proposal from the secretariat was therefore to request a voluntary levy of £25 from member organisations. The more that pay at £25, the less chance of a later request for a higher amount. There were no objections to the proposal. The secretariat will circulate payee details to members separately.

Publicity. Ivan explained that a press release had been issued within the agreed protocol following the March meeting highlighting the research that had been presented to it by the Fatherhood Institute. The Herald ran a news story and a commentary piece by Ian Maxwell. Both generated good social media traction. PDFs had been circulated with the draft minutes.

Shared Parenting as a Feminist Issue. Ivan explained contact had been made with MEP Francoise Hetto-Gaasch. She has indicated interest and negotiations will continue in the hope of organising her participation at a future meeting.

The Minutes were approved, nem con.

5 Presentations and discussion.

Ivan introduced Simon Stockwell and Hannah Frodsham, members of the Scottish Government Family and Property team conducting the Review of Part 1 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and creation of a family justice modernisation strategy. He added that the Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs had written to him, as Co-convenor of this CPG, in May, announcing the launch of this consultation Simon and Hannah spoke about the consultation that is under way - closing on August 7th – and gave an indication of the rough timetable for analysing responses by autumn.

Issues that were raised round the table included:

Current guidance in the English Family Division - details could be circulated to those interested

Importance of moving away from adversarial approach to contact/residence

Importance of pressing for proper qualifications in interviewing children for child welfare reporters and other professionals who report to court

The absence of meaningful statistics in the consultation on mediations and outcomes in Scotland, MIAMS in England and court statistics in Scotland

No follow up on outcomes for children compared to paediatric interventions where there would be detailed case notes

Value of joint registration of births

Members agreed that it was not possible to agree a common response to the consultation in the meeting but all members were encouraged to make their own responses.

Ivan introduced Dr David Curl, Executive Director of For Kids Sake www.forkidsake.org.au who talked about the family law review currently under way in Australia which addresses many of the problems being identified in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK.

David's view is that the courts can't solve most of these problems that are affecting separating parents and their children. Nevertheless, family law is important because it sets the tone for separations throughout the country for the majority who never go near a court.

6. Forward planning of Agenda

Issues discussed included:

a proposal that would illustrate obstacles to shared parenting for fathers in receipt of social security benefits (Action - Peter Cloake)

A reminder that grandparents' rights were an important and often forgotten feature of separated families

James Jopling could be asked for information on incidence of family breakup among those who contact Samaritans (Action – Secretariat)

The importance of effort and public campaign to make men in childcare more 'male friendly' in the same way as so much effort is put into making STEM 'female friendly'

An item on equalising parental leave for mothers and fathers

The imminent Education Bill should be in Holyrood by the October meeting. The CPG could scrutinise its proposals on parental involvement.

7. Any other business

None

Date of next meeting: 2nd October 2018