

## Voluntary Sector Children's Services Forum (VSCSF)

*"Working together, sharing our knowledge skills and resources to support children, families and communities to reach their full potential."*

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023**

**12pm – 4pm**

**Zoom Meeting**

### Present:

Norman Philip (NP) (Chairperson)  
Laura Jamieson (LJ) (Minute Taker)  
Jade Harley (JH)  
Lynsey Hansford (LH)

Barnardos  
CVS Falkirk & District  
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Allan Robertson (ARo)  
Angela Boyce (AB)  
Angela Hendry (AH)  
Annabel Russell (ARu)  
Beverley Isdale (BI)  
Cathy Megarry (CM)  
Chris Walsh (CW)  
Diane Cairns (DC)  
Emma Cashmore-Gordon (ECG)  
Jane Lennox (JL)

Social Security Scotland  
Aberlour  
One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS)  
Go! Youth Trust  
First4Kids  
Falkirk Council – Whole Family Wellbeing Fund  
Falkirk Council – Whole Family Wellbeing Fund  
Transform Forth Valley  
Aberlour  
Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre (Young Carers team)  
Committed to Ending Abuse (CEA)  
Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre (Young Carers team)  
Social Security Scotland  
Home-Start Falkirk

Jennifer Sherlock (JS)  
Jo McCorrison (JM)

Marita Buchanan (MB)  
Sandra Rankin (SR)

### Apologies:

Alice Wadkin (AW)

Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

NP and LH introduced themselves, welcomed forum members present and advised the meeting was recorded via Zoom. Introductions were made via the Zoom chat function.

### 2. Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

CM and CW introduced themselves and spoke about the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, which they are focused on as part of Falkirk Council's dedicated team. Key points are listed below:

- The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is a Scottish Government fund, with Falkirk District's share being £900,000 over the next 3 years.
- As part of the fund, Falkirk has agreed to set up a taskforce to ensure realistic, transformative change. CM and CW are the first part of this taskforce (CM is the lead, while CW is new in post as the Partnership Promise Lead), with more to come to support the work.

- They are keen for this to be a partnership with the third sector, developing a family-centred approach; while part of Falkirk's share of the fund is paying for the taskforce, the rest is open to bids from partners and the third sector.
  - CM and CW anticipate medium grants to be available, with £20,000 per year assigned to the grant programme.
- In March they will be reporting to the Children and Young People's Executive, mainly around the progress and engagement so far, and gaps identified across the Falkirk area.
- CW also spoke about his role, and the Promise tool, which has been designed as a way to draw everything under [The Promise](#) into one place, and allow groups and organisations to collectively contribute. He noted this is a reporting tool for the Falkirk area only, not to Scottish Government.

There was also discussion with members around funding durations, and that longer term funding is needed to deliver on the aims of the Promise.

LH raised that the Fund had previously been promoted as non-competitive, which would mean no grant funding. CM explained the Fund is still non-competitive, but limited and fair, designed for smaller, successive changes.

NP noted that one key element is the focus on transformative change, and identifying what can be done better, with funding to take that forward.

### 3. Infant Food Security (Formula)

LH informed members that Scottish Government had been in touch with CVS Falkirk around infant food security, particularly access to formula, during the cost of living crisis – if the family runs out of formula and can't afford more, what happens?

A number of members disclosed that they will pay for formula out of their own funding (and in some volunteer-led groups, volunteers have paid out of their personal money). The following points and resources were also raised:

- [Best Start Grants](#), which are available until a child is 2 years old and **automatically topped up**, and can be used to buy anything except alcohol and cigarettes.
- [Aberlour Urgent Assistance Fund](#), especially as an option for those experiencing in-work poverty who don't qualify for benefits.
- Mental health is a main barrier seen – especially if the parent is not in contact with anyone, and doesn't feel able to leave the house; this can often lead to watering down formula to make it last longer.
  - Another point around the impact of gas and electricity costs, and that formula milk will often only be warmed, not boiling.
- Looking at causes and how to prevent this from happening in future is key.

As Scottish Government is looking for responses by Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February, LH will collate members' responses and send on their behalf.

### 4. Action Tracker

LH introduced the new action tracker, as part of the efforts to refresh all third sector forums facilitated by CVS Falkirk, moving forward as an action-focused forum and the best it can possibly be. Members agreed to use the action tracker going forward.

## 5. Developing VSCSF

NP and LH introduced JH, a student currently on placement with CVS Falkirk, who has been working on ways to develop the forum. JH delivered a presentation on her work so far and possible ways forward, which is available via the [CVS Falkirk](#) website (linked for your convenience).

Afterwards, NP noted that the key is how the forum reaches out to new members, that JH had put forward some great options, and he is very grateful she is able to take on some of this work while on placement.

Members then discussed other options, including [ALISS](#), and the local Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADP). They agreed they are happy for JH to continue this work, with LH and NP keeping members informed, along with using MentiMeter in future meetings.

## 6. Future Themes and Speakers

As part of the forum development, NP asked members for their ideas on future themes and speakers, in order to make VSCSF more accessible to groups across the Falkirk District – rather than “filling the room”, this work is about reaching groups who may not be aware of VSCSF and are able to contribute to their work, as well as giving the forum a sense of the work already being done.

Members discussed whether the forum should be a place for all children's services practitioners, or leads and decision-makers, and the best way to disseminate information to and through groups.

NP also noted that during funding reporting, third sector groups will be asked for more information on their awards going forward, and the impact this had, which may be a possibility for future speakers. Discussion then took place on data, evaluation and self-evaluation.

## 7. AOCB

- Support to Individuals: In addition to Aberlour's Urgent Assistance Fund, SR highlighted the [Falkirk Children's Clothing Bank](#), a partnership between Home-Start Falkirk, KLSB, and the Larbert Rotary (with high quality clothes for all ages, providing 4 – 5 outfits per child).
- Steering Group: Those interested were invited to join a steering group with NP and LH on the direction of the forum – AB volunteered.
- CVS Falkirk Upcoming Events: LJ highlighted the upcoming [Falkirk Funders Fayre](#) and [Forth Valley Third Sector Conference](#), both in March, with information on how to book places.
- Supporting Families Toolkit: DC shared Scottish Government's [“Supporting Families: A National Self Assessment Toolkit for Change”](#).

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023,  
10am – 12pm, via Zoom**

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