

## 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 16 August 2023**

**10am – 12pm**

**Zoom Meeting**

### **Present:**

Norman Philip (NP) (Chairperson)  
Eloise Wilson (EW)  
Kerrie Hoggan (KH) (Minute Taker)

Barnardo's  
CVS Falkirk & District  
CVS Falkirk & District

Beverley Isdale (BI)  
Sandra Rankin (SR)  
Barry Jordan (BJ)  
Val McInroy (VM)  
Angela Hendrie (AH)  
Suzanne Brown (SB)

First4Kids  
Home-Start Falkirk  
LGBT Youth Scotland  
FDAMH  
One Parent Families Scotland  
Children's Rights Officer, Quarriers

### **Apologies:**

Angela Hendry (AH)  
Gill Wilson (GW)  
Laura Kemp (LK)  
Derek Allison (DA)  
Justine Nicolson (JN)

One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS)  
Epilepsy Connections  
Youth Scotland  
Falkirk Foundation  
Strathcarron Hospice

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

NP introduced himself, welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained that the meeting was recorded via Zoom. All attendees were invited to introduce themselves and provided some background to their organisation. NP explained that the forum existed to provide an opportunity to meet on a quarterly basis to learn and develop, frequently an external speaker attended the meeting, plus share experiences and knowledge with each other.

### **2. Minutes of Previous Minutes and Action Tracker**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2023 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. Updates were given as available on the actions assigned at the previous meeting. Attention was drawn to Action Number 6, related to the Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF) and that an update would follow in item 3.

### **3. Updates from Local Strategic Meetings**

NP provided his autumn update. The slide pack can be viewed or downloaded via the [CVS Falkirk](#) website. The following points were noted under each heading.

#### **3.1 Falkirk Children's Services Planning Partnership – Staff Handbook**

The [Staff Handbook](#) produced by the Falkirk Children's Services Planning Partnership was now available to view online via the link.

**3.2 Falkirk Child Poverty Action Group: Grangemouth Place – Based Approach Test of Change**  
NP outlined the background to the 'Grangemouth Place – Based Approach Test of Change', which was focussed on Tinto Drive, Grangemouth as, despite previous funding opportunities and input, social deprivation and poverty in the area remained high. The overall aim of the project was to enhance services for family health and wellbeing from early years to school. More details, including the draft action plan, can be found in NP's slide pack.

**3.3 Falkirk Corporate Parenting**

NP outlined the role of the voluntary sector within the Falkirk Corporate Parenting Group and his invitation to also be involved as a Champion. He stressed the importance of also having a voice from the third and voluntary sector and asked for anyone who would like to join to contact him.

**Action:** Consider joining the Falkirk Corporate Parenting Group to strengthen the third sector voice. Contact NP for more details.

**3.4 Pre-employment Parent Programmes**

SR and AH outlined the details of the 'Pre-employment Parent Programmes', scheduled to be rolled out from 29 August 2023 in Falkirk North, led by Aberlour and in Denny, led by Home Start. Further programmes would then follow in Falkirk North, led by Barnardo's and in Grangemouth led by One Parent Families Scotland. The following points were noted:

- i. The programme will run for six weeks on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- ii. The goals were to increase confidence in relation to employment and provide certificated training in areas such as first aid and food hygiene.
- iii. It is designed for 12 parents who have been out of work a long time and are seeking to see strengths, rather than feeling stuck.
- iv. All reasonable childcare and travel costs would be covered.
- v. It represents a soft touch introduction to the employability programmes led by Falkirk Council's Employment and Training Unit (ETU).

**Action:** A request was made to consider any parents in the Denny area who would benefit from the training, please let SR know.

**3.5 Mental Health and Wellbeing**

NP outlined that in June 2023, the Scottish Government's new '[Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)' had been launched. A discussion took place on the mental health challenges facing young people and the importance of looking out for each other, throughout the workforce.

**3.6 Safe & Together Training**

NP outlined details of the 'Safe & Together' Learning Sessions due to take place from August to December 2023. The training is free and is aimed at increasing Falkirk's multi-agency staffs learning of a domestic abuse model for those working with survivors and perpetrators, with children at the heart. Further details can be found on the [CVS Falkirk](#) website.

**4. CVS Falkirk & District Update**

EW provided an update from CVS Falkirk & District (CVS Falkirk). The slide pack can be viewed or downloaded via the [CVS Falkirk](#) website. The following points were noted under each heading.

#### 4.1 Child Protection Committee (CPC) Scotland – Cost of living campaign

CPC Scotland had commissioned a journalist, Mairi, to undertake a cost-of-living campaign. Mairi would like to interview family groups about their experiences, these families would be introduced to her via participating groups, who would receive a financial donation in return.

**Action:** Please contact [lynsey.hansford@CVSfalkirk.org.uk](mailto:lynsey.hansford@CVSfalkirk.org.uk) to receive Mairi's details.

#### 4.2 Empowering Communities Programme and Fund

CVS Falkirk have been able to negotiate the delivery of funding through Falkirk Council to support organisations considering Community Ownership. At present, funding is understood to be in the region of £300,000, due to open on 1 September 2023 and managed by Falkirk Council, CVS Falkirk would share additional information as it becomes available.

#### 4.3 Opportunity to contribute to CELCIS Survey

As part of the Children's Services Reform Research, a Scotland-based research study is being undertaken by CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection. CELCIS wants to hear from senior leaders, managers or supervisors, frontline workers and support staff within social work, health, education, youth justice, police or the third sector. The survey can be accessed [here](#).

#### 4.4 Falkirk Council – Autumn School Holiday Food and Activities Fund

Applications were open until Friday 1 September for Falkirk Council's Autumn School Holiday Food and Activities Fund.

**Post meeting note:** This is now closed to applications.

#### 4.5 Invitation to CVS Falkirk Third Sector Employability Summit

Forum members were invited to attend Falkirk's Third Sector Employability Summit on Thursday 24 August.

**Post meeting note:** this event has now taken place and feedback will be circulated in due course.

### 5. Discussion

NP invited Forum members to consider what challenges are facing the sector locally and nationally. A discussion took place on the difficulties experienced by several organisations in terms of consistent engagement in activities by children, young people, and their families. This applied across attendance at pre-organised groups, but also a reduction in the number of volunteers available and the recruitment of staff across the third sector was noted.

The following points emerged from the discussion:

- i. This experience appears to have been particularly acute post pandemic.
- ii. Fundamental to success was the engagement of parents and guardians, many of whom were experiencing their own, frequently mental health, struggles.
- iii. Psychoeducation plays an important role in supporting the whole family, the examples given as anxiety – what it is, how to support someone struggling with it etc... and neurodiversity.
- iv. Many young people were perhaps engaging less, as their lives had got busier again.

- v. Signposting support was not always easy due to a lack of awareness of all the services that exist in this area. NP drew attention to the '[Organisation Directory](#)' available on the CSVF website and encouraged everyone to add their details if they haven't already.
- vi. The lack of civic spaces for young people to meet in Falkirk led to challenges in getting groups together.
- vii. The cost-of-living crisis had impacted people's capacity to volunteer.
- viii. Many of the recruitment challenges were driven by an increase in the cost of recruitment, but without a corresponding increase in funding.
- ix. That student placements had worked very well in several settings, providing a setting for learning, but also a valuable contribution to the organisation. It was agreed to add this as a topic for future discussion.
- x. Often part-time childcare was viewed as a steppingstone for a full-time position in education, which resulted in high turnover. Consideration was given to the option of sharing staff across shift patterns.

**Action:** If not done already, please list your organisation details to the '[Organisation Directory](#)' on the CVS Falkirk webpage.

**Action:** CVS Falkirk to consider whether it could offer a hub for listing potential student placements, plus add working with student placements to a future agenda.

**Action:** Consider what physical, civic meeting spaces remain available in Falkirk.

## 6. Ebulletin

EW encouraged all members to sign up for the weekly [CVS Falkirk E-bulletin](#), to receive up to the minute information on events, funding opportunities etc... but also as a space to advertise volunteer and employee vacancies.

## 7. AOCB

EW attended the third and final workshop about how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) approach will be embedded within Falkirk. A draft action plan was reviewed by attendees - including third sector and young person lived experience - and this has been sent to Strategic Leadership Group at Falkirk Council for consideration. The Forum will be updated with its progress.

**Action:** Consider, once more information is available, the impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) at a local level.

BJ shared the following points:

- i. The Sandyford Clinic had published a [waiting time announcement](#) related to its gender dysphoria services and waiting times.
- ii. LGBT Youth was looking for additional volunteers for a September intake, if anyone was aware of candidates. EW offered to put BJ in touch with CVS Falkirk Volunteering Development Officer, Meg Guy.
- iii. Aware that there is not enough support available for parents and guardians looking for help in the LGBT space, BJ offered to pull together a note of resources currently available.

**Action:** If know anyone that would like to volunteer for LGBT Youth Scotland, please let BJ know. EW to put Barry in touch with Meg Guy the newly appointed Volunteer Development Officer.

**Action:** Provision of information on support available to parents and guardians within the LGBT community.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed.

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 1 November 2023,  
10am – 12pm, via Zoom**

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