

## **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 28 January 2026**

**10am – 12pm**

**Via MS Teams**

### **Present:**

Eloise Wilson (Chairperson)	CVS Falkirk & District
Laura Jamieson (Minute Taker)	CVS Falkirk & District
Annabel Russell	Go! Youth Trust
Barry Jordan	LGBT Youth Scotland
Beverley Isdale	First 4 Kids
Claire Davis	GO Kids
Gina Witty	Self Directed Support (SDS) Forth Valley
Jo McCorrison	Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre
Julie Stewart	Cyrenians
Safia Ali	RISE Forth Valley
Sharon Frederiksen	Home-Start Falkirk
Tanya Richards	Wellbeing Scotland

### **Apologies:**

Debbie Hamilton	One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS)
Diane Cairns	Transform Forth Valley

### **Guest Speaker:**

Norman Philip	Falkirk Council
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## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Eloise opened the meeting and welcomed members to the first Voluntary Sector Children's Services Forum of 2026. Those present were advised that the meeting would be recorded and no objections were noted.

Eloise acknowledged the start of the new year and thanked members for their continued participation and commitment to the forum. As several attendees were new or had not attended recently, a round of introductions was held.

## **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held in September 2025 were circulated and approved via email, and are now available to view or download on the [CVS Falkirk & District](#) website (linked for your convenience).

## **3. Purpose of the Forum**

As Chair, Eloise reminded members that the forum provides a space for the voluntary sector to share updates, highlight pressures affecting children, young people and families, and strengthen partnership working. The forum also plays a role in ensuring that third sector views are represented within wider strategic planning structures.

#### **4. Falkirk Multi-Agency Single Point of Access: Norman Philip, Falkirk Council**

Norman Philip provided an update on the development of a Falkirk Multi-Agency Single Point of Access (SPoA), which aims to simplify how families, young people and professionals request support from services. The SPoA is intended to address current challenges such as long waiting times, unclear processes and the need to contact multiple agencies, ultimately saving workforce time and improving the use of resources.

Engagement has taken place with young people, parents and carers, and professionals (including education staff, social work and third sector organisations) to inform the design of the service, referral form and website. Feedback highlighted several key challenges, including difficulty identifying available services, frequently repeating personal information to different agencies, inconsistent referral processes, and limited feedback after referrals are made.

The proposed SPoA website will provide clear, up-to-date information on available services and allow users to submit a single request for support. If a specific service is selected, the request will be directed to that service. If the service is not appropriate, the system will redirect the request rather than rejecting it. Where the appropriate support is unclear, requests may be considered by a multi-agency panel to identify the most suitable service.

Additional features being explored include automated feedback to referrers at each stage, improved information on self-directed and digital supports, and opportunities for agencies to collaborate on group-based interventions to reduce waiting times.

Following the engagement phase, the project has received further funding through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund and is now moving into the design and implementation stage. Work is underway with a Falkirk Council service designer to develop the digital system and referral process, with further consultation planned with partners, families and young people to test and refine the approach. The SPoA will also collect anonymised data to help identify service gaps and inform future planning.

Forum members welcomed the update and expressed interest in continuing to engage with the development of the SPoA as the project progresses.

Norman's presentation is available to view or download via the [CVS Falkirk & District](#) website.

## 5. Neurodiversity and Children's Services

Eloise asked forum members to contribute to a discussion on neurodiversity and its impact across children's services.

Collectively, members outlined the increasing number of children and young people presenting with neurodivergent profiles, including autism and ADHD, and spoke about the significant pressures on diagnostic pathways and assessment waiting times. The implications for schools, families and third sector providers were explored, particularly where children are awaiting assessment but still require meaningful support.

Members highlighted that many young people are navigating services without a formal diagnosis, which can create challenges around eligibility, access to funding and tailored support. Members agree about the importance of early intervention and community-based approaches, and encouraged a strengths-based understanding of neurodiversity, recognising both the abilities of young people and the barriers within current systems.

Discussion following the presentation reflected shared experiences across services. Members noted extended waiting times for diagnosis, uncertainty for families around pathways and thresholds, and the pressure these places on schools and community organisations. It was acknowledged that voluntary sector organisations are often providing informal or preventative support while families await statutory input.

There was broad agreement that neurodiversity is a cross-cutting issue affecting education, youth work, mental health and family support services. The Chair confirmed that concerns raised regarding pathways and system pressures would be fed back to the Strategic Leadership Group.

## 6. Organisational Updates

- **LGBT Youth Scotland:** Barry Jordan provided an update on recent changes following an organisational restructure in 2025 which resulted in reduced staffing capacity within the Forth Valley team. One staff post was lost and the Youth and Community Officer now facilitates both youth groups.

The Falkirk youth group has moved to a Monday evening, and the Stirling group will now operate on a fortnightly basis due to capacity constraints. Partnership work is ongoing with Creative Stirling to provide alternative activities during weeks when the Stirling group is not running.

Barry also shared information about a youth-led hate crime awareness campaign developed in partnership with Creative Stirling and Police Scotland. The campaign includes an animated resource, co-produced by young people, which uses birds as a metaphor to explore the impact of hate crime. The resource addresses hate crime in a broad sense rather than focusing solely

on LGBT experiences. Police Scotland will roll the animation out nationally across schools in 2026. A workshop resource for youth settings is currently being developed and will be shared once available.

- Peer Support at SDS Forth Valley: Gina Witty advised that consultation is underway to develop peer support groups for individuals receiving statutory funding through Self-Directed Support. The intention is that service users will shape the structure and focus of the groups. Members were invited to share information about the consultation with relevant individuals. Further details will be circulated following the meeting.

## 7. Communication and Strategic Representation

Members discussed the importance of improved communication between statutory partners and the voluntary sector. There was concern about difficulties in accessing strategic discussions and receiving timely information, which can limit meaningful contribution.

The Chair confirmed that themes raised during the meeting, including neurodiversity pressures and concerns about representation, will be communicated to the Strategic Leadership Group.

## 8. Actions and AOCB

The Chair thanked Norman for his presentation and all members for their contributions. The meeting closed with appreciation for the continued collaborative approach across the sector

- Actions:

It was agreed that materials from the hate crime awareness campaign and details of the Self-Directed Support peer support consultation would be circulated. Feedback from the meeting will be provided to the Strategic Leadership Group, particularly in relation to neurodiversity pathways and communication challenges. A future agenda item focusing specifically on neurodiversity and partnership responses will be considered. Members are invited to suggest agenda items or offer presentations for upcoming meetings.

**Date of Next Meeting:  
Wednesday 25 March 2026,  
10am – 12pm, via MS Teams**

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