



Independent Chair of Committee
Donald Urquhart

Glasgow Child Protection Committee
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Our Ref: DU/JH
Your Ref:
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Dear Colleague,

I write to you in my capacity as independent chair of Glasgow Child Protection Committee to seek your support for the continued funding of the Multi-Agency Resource Service, MARS and Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN)

As those of you who attended the most recent meeting of the National Child Protection Chair's and Lead Officer's Forum will recall, Beth Smith, advised that the Government funding of the MARS/SCCPN is, at this time, not included in the budgetary projections after this current financial year. In the absence of adequate funding from alternative sources, this valuable resource will disappear, something that I believe would be to our lasting cost.

The MARS, although still very early in its development, has been shown to be an independent and objective resource as well as a repository of expertise, experience and knowledge that is available to child protection practitioners across Scotland. I think that it is the sort of resource that was envisioned by the Enquiry Team when it was included as one of the recommendations of the Western Isles Enquiry included and, while it took some time to be established, it would, I believe, be wrong to allow it to wither for want of what is a relatively small amount of funding.

The links that it has established with the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network are valuable and are beginning to lay the very strong foundations for what is urgently needed in the child protection field, an evidence base for practice that is solidly founded in quality research. The creation of the Community of Expertise, again at very early stage of gestation, offers a facility for senior managers and practitioners to take advantage of the experience and expertise of some of the most experienced senior managers in the field of child protection, child care and related professions. In a time of considerable contraction of public sector services, this is potential source of knowledge, expertise and experience that is at your disposal as a 'critical friend' at a time when alternatives are few and far between and, in all probability, not particularly affordable.

Whilst you, yourselves, may not have taken advantage of the services that the MARS offers, many have done and the recent independent evaluation of the Service concluded that it was more than meeting its objectives, even at this early stage of its life. I very was surprised at the limited level of interest shown in the evaluation of the Service when presented by Beth at the Forum and, indeed,

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the limited degree of concern evident at the Scottish Government's intention not to consider continuing the funding of the MARS/SCCPN. As was remarked by one member of the Forum, we are only one child death away from a media witch hunt, something that would have serious political as well as professional implications and this is something that the MARS can assist us in avoiding.

I am far from complacent about the current and future pressures on public finances but I firmly believe that this is something deserving of continued funding. It is a service that we cannot afford to lose and I ask you to take what steps you can to exert pressure on the Government. It is important to remember that Child Protection is a multi-agency responsibility and the funding need not come from a single source. Whilst Phil Raines' budget might not have the full capacity to continue funding, there are Police, Education and Health budgets that could contribute what is, in essence, a relatively small amount of money. I ask you to lend it your support.

Yours sincerely

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