

VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

1. All children and young people deserve the best possible start in life. They deserve to be cared for and to be protected from harm. Many children and young people will, however, experience pressures in their lives — from within their family or from their peers and wider community. For some children these pressures will increase the possibility of damaging behaviour and negative outcomes such as self-harm, substance misuse, sexual exploitation through prostitution and running away.

2. It is important that action is taken to address the underlying issues that can increase a child's vulnerability and potentially lead to their involvement in high-risk activity. This preventative work is not solely about preventing running away or sexual exploitation through prostitution but is about supporting all children and young people and seeking, through early intervention, to prevent a range of negative outcomes.

3. The key to successful prevention is early identification and sound assessment and this needs to underpin all interventions. Practitioners need to understand, and be able to identify, the risk factors that may increase a child or young person's vulnerability. The Scottish Executive is continuing to work towards an integrated approach to assessment. As part of this through the Modernising Government Fund, it is working with a number of local authorities and NHS Boards to pilot an integrated assessment system that would then have the potential to be applied more widely.

4. The Executive is supporting work to address many of the issues identified as trigger factors and supporting better integrated delivery of children's services throughout Scotland to ensure that every child has the best opportunities to prosper. The Changing Children's Services Fund is a catalyst for change in enabling local authorities, health boards and voluntary organisations to work together to deliver better outcomes for the most vulnerable and deprived children.

5. Examples of work to address some of these underlying issues includes:

Bullying

- Scottish Anti-Bullying Network enabling teachers, parents, young people and other members of the school community in Scotland to share ideas about how bullying should be tackled.
- ChildLine Anti-Bullying Helpline is a free, confidential telephone helpline for any child or young person concerned about bullying.
- The Scottish Schools Ethos Network aims to encourage the creation of a positive ethos in schools.
- The implementation of the Discipline Task Group report will have a significant and positive impact on bullying in schools.

Early Intervention

- Sure Start Scotland provides support for families with very young children (0-3) with a focus on families living in areas of deprivation.
- Child Health Demonstration Project Starting Well aims to demonstrate that child health can be improved by a programme of activities to support families and provide access to enhanced community based resources.
- Improving access to high-quality, affordable day-care for children aged 0-14.
- The Executive is pledged to provide a quality part-time pre-school place for each eligible 3 and 4-year old.

Support for Parents

- ParentLine Scotland is a free telephone helpline for parents which is operated by Children 1st.
- The Parent Zone website provides information for parents and carers on a range of issues with a focus on school educational issues.
- Support for parents is an important element of the New Community Schools programme, the Child Health Demonstration Project Starting Well and Sure Start Scotland.
- The Supporting Parents programme encourages the involvement of parents in their child's education.

6. The papers provided here on *Young Runaways* and *Sexual Exploitation through Prostitution* are the result of a wide ranging consultation and *input* from a Steering Group representing the voluntary and statutory agencies (membership of Group attached) for whose help we are very grateful. These will be reviewed from time to time as required and there may be other areas where similar information and guidance may be provided to supplement these.

7. All the documentation is on the Scottish Executive website and should you need further copies of the pack please contact: Alison Knox, Children & Families Division, Area 2B (N), Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ; Telephone 0131 244 0789; e-mail alison.knox@scotland.gov.uk .

Scottish Executive
July 2003

MEMBERSHIP OF THE WORKING GROUP ON YOUNG RUNAWAYS AND CHILDREN ABUSED THROUGH PROSTITUTION

Name	Organisation/Division
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Stella Everingham	Aberlour Child Care Trust
Inspector Gordon Hunter	Lothian & Borders Police HQ
Daljeet Dagon	Barnardo's Scotland
Anne Houston	ChildLine Scotland
Marion Pagani	Glasgow Children's Panel
John Hosie	The Corner
Kathleen Harper	Crown Office
Martin Henry	Edinburgh & Lothian Council
Iain Mitchell	Scottish Children's Reporters
Moira McKinnon	Glasgow City Child Protection Committee
Stephen McLeod	The Big Step
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