

## **Response to Consultation on advice note on engaging children and young people in community planning – 22nd February 2006**

Sacro welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft advice note in relation to the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. Sacro's view is that the Advice note is in essence complete, however, would draw attention to the comments that follow, in particular regarding young people who may be victimised or have offended. The advice note is relevant and would help the target audience, especially if they have limited knowledge or experience of working with children and young people. It is a good reference point that may be enhanced through including a section on the Children's Hearing system to ensure that the young people who enter the system are not discriminated against.

### **Section 1. Introduction**

It is very encouraging to see the quote (in the box) reminding the reader as to why the involvement of young people is so important. It is also helpful to remind people that the note is not just for those directly involved with children and young people and that even they should research the needs of local children and young people.

### **Section 2. Why engage with children and young people**

All sub-sections are relevant and in particular 2.1 stresses the possible waste of resources, if children and young people are not involved timeously. It is also helpful to remind the reader that there is a statutory duty to involve young people, however, there is a need to be careful here not to create a checklist mentality. It would be better to appeal to the values of the reader and as in sub-section 2.1 the fact that resources can be wasted if the process is not adhered to.

### **Section 2.3 Scottish Ministers**

The vision for Scotland's children and young people is welcomed (and endorsed) by Sacro.

The remaining subsections in Section 2 are also helpful to a reader with less experience in working with children and young people and give a good straightforward understanding of the current situation in Scotland.

It would be worth mentioning the Children's Hearing System and the current review of Social Work at some stage. These services deal with many of Scotland's more vulnerable children and young people with both welfare and offending issues. Often part of the risk (of re-offending or harm) factors in this particular group of young people's lives is a lack of appropriate resources to address the sources of risk. Sacro would expect the vision mentioned in sub-section 2.3 to include all children and young people. Highlighting where Community Planning can involve young people who are often stigmatised and socially excluded would be extremely helpful as this may provide the very opportunity to work on the protective factors, which can initiate and sustain change. Any such increase in opportunities for young people and children who are experiencing discrimination to enjoy life and fulfil their potential is a vision to be embraced by us all.

### **Section 3.**

This section starts by stressing responsibility and commitment, which is again very helpful. Again it would be hoped that when people mention 'communities' that there is a recognition that the young people who offend are part of the community and need to be included. The same agencies that are named in the

document can fall into the trap of labeling some of the community members and excluding them from the very processes that would give them a voice and raise the chance of them becoming a resource.

It is interesting that in sub-section 3.1.2. that where resources are mentioned, the wasted resources mentioned may imply money and time. Sacro would hope that resources include the young people's lives and believe this should be made explicit in the document.

The sub-sections considering the involvement of children and consideration of the developmental stage is helpful. Sub-section 3.2.2 is also very welcome as it does cover discrimination against certain groups of young people. It would still be helpful to make particular reference to young people who enter the Children's Hearing system earlier in the Section, to ensure that they are included.

The remaining sub-sections are very helpful, regarding personal development expectations, connecting with personal interests and crucially, avoiding tokenism.

Sub-section 3.3 it would be helpful to indicate how safeguards can be put in place, or at least refer to guidance. The disqualified list and child protection trained staff considers only the staff working with the child or young person.

The National Standards are ambitious and encouraging. In particular there are parallels to the current changes proposed to the Children's Hearing system, where the child is to be at the centre of the system.

The case studies are very interesting and helpful as an illustration of what is going on around Scotland.

**Sacro looks forward to seeing results from the consultation and are grateful to have had an opportunity to comment.**