

Making A Difference: Young People Speak to Scottish Ministers
About their Priorities for the National Domestic Abuse Delivery
Plan for Children and Young People



Protection
Provision
Prevention
Participation

Making A Difference: Young People Speak to Scottish Ministers About their Priorities for the National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People

Claire Houghton

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The National Domestic Abuse Delivery Group in Scotland commissioned a project to facilitate young people with experience of domestic abuse to meet Scottish Ministers. This is part of the ‘participation’ stream of work to ensure children are involved in the development of a national delivery plan to improve outcomes for children affected by domestic abuse in Scotland.

2. The project aim was to facilitate a small group of young people to meet with Ministers and tell them what they felt were priorities for action to help children affected by domestic abuse in Scotland. Specifically these views were not to be influenced by adults or preliminary work of the delivery group.

3. Six young people with experience of domestic abuse met three Scottish Ministers on September 18th 2007. The Ministers were: Adam Ingram MSP, Minister for Children and Early Years; Stewart Maxwell MSP, Minister for Communities and Sport; Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety. The young people had previous involvement in participation projects in Scotland - research, research advisory groups, the Scottish Women’s Aid Listen Louder campaign and training/public speaking.

4. The young people worked together to identify what needed to change to improve the lives of children affected by domestic abuse in Scotland. Young people *themselves* defined, articulated, prepared and agreed their own priorities for Ministers to consider and to “help Ministers” in their plans.

5. The young people said to Ministers that “the groundline is we want you to listen to us about what to do... we want to make it better with the change in government”. They presented the following priorities for action to Ministers

- ensure every child in Scotland has access to a support worker, one named person who can offer one-to one support “someone they can trust and confide in”: not having support had awful consequences for children’s mental health and well being
- train professionals to ensure they understand domestic abuse and know how to help children as “knowledge of domestic abuse would help”: children have felt branded, judged, stigmatised by professionals and not received the support they needed
- improve children’s access to, and knowledge about, outreach support in the community: local authorities need to “help change the future” by “providing lots of different help for different scenarios”. Be aware that children don’t want to identify themselves as living with domestic abuse and confidentiality is key
- provide groupwork opportunities so that children and young people can build friendships and trust with other young people who have been through domestic abuse and “help them get back on the right track”: make sure it’s fun and groups are for children the same age
- “make moving house and refuge life better for children and young people” by improving children’s experience of refuge, ensuring the process is smooth, rehousing is quick, follow on support is offered

- make refuges across Scotland the same high standard “it shouldnae be a luxury”, so that all follow the recommended model that includes a flat with kitchen and bathroom for each family and communal spaces for different ages: take action to address the fact that two thirds of refuges are still “underprivileged”
- provide “cash help for children” and families as children leave a lot behind and little things “can make a huge difference” and “mean so much”: “financial aid would be good for starting again” to help replace possessions and toys, buy storage and uniforms
- “make more help available at school as well as outside school” as school is *the* key place for children, ensure there’s someone for children to speak to “actually in school”: this includes skilling teaching staff *and* considering making specialist support available in school by workers “who knew how to sit and talk about it”
- “teach teachers better” as teachers don’t always understand, respond well or take into account the very difficult situation children living with domestic abuse are in
- teach students about domestic abuse so they can understand and react better to children affected and also can help their friends
- “cooperation between agencies” is important, communication needs to improve especially between the police, schools, health, housing *with the result* that children and their families are treated better: if information is shared it still needs to be “private enough” to ensure that the young person doesn’t get stigma attached to them
- improve publicity and information aimed at children and young people “it’s about getting it out, let people know that the help is there.. and how to access it” for themselves and their friends
- target campaigns at children and young people and link them to help for children, “children don’t know organisations like Women’s Aid exist”: raise awareness with everyone to increase understanding and stop the stigma
- create suitable adverts for children and use media where young people will see them: make sure they’re not “dark” and frighten children and that they link in children’s eyes to ending abuse
- provide as many forms of communication as possible for children to access central and local support - including web, helplines, textlines, email: link a central resource to named local support workers

6. Young people felt that their perspective was unique and vital as they had been through domestic abuse, experienced services and knew what needed to be improved. Young people wanted to be involved because they wanted to make a difference, improve services, achieve change and make children and their families happier. They agreed that it was up to Ministers to make that happen.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 This is a report of a young people's project commissioned by the Scottish Government's National Domestic Abuse Delivery Group. The delivery group aims to improve outcomes for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse in Scotland, through a three year strategic delivery plan and a Getting it right for every child Domestic Abuse Pathfinder. A participation sub group was set up to specifically focus on the participation of young people in the development and implementation of the plan.

1.2 The aim of this project was to facilitate a small group of young people with experience of domestic abuse to meet with Ministers and relate *their own* priorities for action to help children affected by domestic abuse in Scotland.

1.3 Three Ministers agreed to meet the young people: Adam Ingram MSP, Minister for Children and Early Years; Stewart Maxwell MSP, Minister for Communities and Sport; Fergus Ewing MSP, Minister for Community Safety.

1.4 This project was facilitated by Claire Houghton, Children and Domestic Abuse Consultant and Fiona Morrison of Scottish Women's Aid (SWA). Six young people participated in the project and met with the Ministers to relate their own priorities for action to help children affected by domestic abuse. Claire Houghton coordinated the project and is the author of the report.

Young People

1.5 The participation sub group decided that the facilitators approach 5 - 10 young people who had previous involvement in participation projects in Scotland relating to domestic abuse. These projects were: the research study *Refuges for Women, Children and Young People in Scotland* (Fitzpatrick et al 2003); the Listen Louder Campaign (Scottish Women's Aid 2002-4 summarised in Houghton 2006); the Listen Louder research and participation project (Houghton, PhD, forthcoming); the research advisory group for *The Support Needs of Children and Young People who have to Move Home because of Domestic Abuse* (Stafford et al 2007); public campaigning and multi-agency training work by young people, including presentations to the National Domestic Abuse Delivery Group, Parliament, National Group to Address Violence Against Women.

1.6 A number of young people were invited to take part in this project. The facilitators had direct contact with some young people (through the most recent SWA research and the PhD project) and attempts to resume contact with young people with previous involvement were made through children's support workers in a small number of Women's Aid groups. In all, six young people known to the facilitators chose to take part in the project, another two confirmed interest but holidays prevented participation. Other groups expressed an interest in the project but the young people with previous experience had moved on, the interest was noted for the next participation project with all children (Smith et al 2008).

1.7 Three boys and three girls took part in the project, aged 15-20. The young people were living in different areas of Scotland: Islands, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, Fife, Tayside, Central. All of the young people had had to move home more than once because of

domestic abuse, the route to safety and services for each family was very different. For their initial move: two of the young people had to move to rural towns from a Scottish city, two from other countries to refuges in Scotland, one briefly into refuge for an overnight stay, one to relatives. All had contact with Women’s Aid services at some point in their lives but the nature of this, and support received, varied considerably. The young people had a wide spectrum of experience, including homelessness (as children/young adults), separation from mothers and/or siblings, care and legal proceedings. The young people all came into contact with a range of different agencies over a number of years and had experience of a wide variety of professionals, in particular education, health, police, Barnardo’s and housing services. The young people had experienced domestic abuse and its effects for a number of years.

1.8 These young people had all taken part in previous participation and research projects. Five were involved in projects with larger numbers of children affected by domestic abuse (research and Listen Louder projects), and one spoke to many adults through training Children’s Panel members and other agencies - her first experience of a joint young people’s project was speaking at the delivery group. The young people previously involved in research made reference to the fact that their recommendations were agreed by many other children over the years – 57 children were involved in the refuge research, 33 children in the moving house research, 44 children in the Listen Louder research with well over 100 in the three years of the Scottish Women’s Aid’s Listen Louder campaign – and felt that they were reflecting the views of many young people in stating their priorities.

Table 1.1 Young people - age, gender, previous participation projects

Young person	Gender	Age	Previous involvement in Participation Projects in Scotland
J	F	15	Research Advisory Group member for SWA’s ‘The Support Needs of Children and Young People Who Have to Move Home Because of Domestic Abuse’ (Stafford et al 2007) , spoke at the Delivery Group about the research.
M	M	17	Research Advisory Group member for SWA’s ‘The Support Needs of Children and Young People Who Have to Move Home Because of Domestic Abuse’ (Stafford et al 2007) , co-prepared presentation for the Delivery Group.
S	M	16	Involved in refuge research (Fitzpatrick et al 2003) and plans for the new local refuge. Involved in Listen Louder Campaign 2002-4 including Listen Louder research (Houghton, forthcoming), returning in the final year of the campaign to check up on progress of research recommendations.
MG	F	19	Created and produced DVD on follow on and outreach support at a time when only 6 Follow On and 3 Outreach workers existed in Scotland. Involved in refuge research (Fitzpatrick et al 2003), Listen Louder 2002, petitioner at Public Petitions Committee of Parliament (2002), celebrated as young person’s advocate at Edinburgh Castle 2006.
SC	M	20	Involved in local campaigning from 2001 and then the Scottish Women’s Aid Listen Louder Campaign and Ministerial events 2002-4. Involved in refuge research (Fitzpatrick et al 2003) and Listen Louder research (Houghton, forthcoming). Celebrated as a young person advocate at Edinburgh castle event 2006, speaker to the Delivery Group.
L	F	16	First young person to train Children’s Panel members and multi-agency groups in conjunction with Scottish Children’s Reporters Association/Aberdeen University. Spoke at the Delivery Group of experience and concerns.

Note to table: The young people’s initials will be used throughout the report to assign quotes. The six young people agreed the priorities in the Executive Summary, and agreed with the illustrative quotes, therefore these are not assigned at that point.

Methodology

1.9 Young people were contacted by the facilitators and asked if they would be interested in taking part in the project. An information pack was sent to potential participants explaining what the project was about, who the Ministers were, who will hear what they had to say (including details on the delivery group), details of preparation sessions, the rehearsal and what would happen at the meeting. This included a consent form: the young people agreed for the views given to be recorded and used in the delivery plan and research project, as long as it was anonymised. Young people were encouraged to discuss the project with the facilitators, 6 of the 8 young people interested were able to take part. All agreed that a preparation session was a good idea, indeed most requested this at the initial contact. Preparation sessions were then designed based on young people's questions, queries and interests expressed through email and phone contact.

1.10 The direction given by the participation sub group was that the young people's priorities were to be unfiltered and were to be given directly to the Ministers without adult interference or coaching. Therefore the young people were not given *any* information about adults' priorities or the draft priorities of the delivery group. The information provided was factual only – both before and within the sessions. Young people were given information on the Ministers downloaded from the Parliament website and 5 of the 6 young people had a guided visit to the Parliament alongside their preparation session.

1.11 For practical reasons there were two separate preparation sessions. The aims of these sessions were to

- prepare for the meeting with Ministers Tuesday 18th September
- get to know one another and the facilitators
- consolidate what young people know and think about helping children through domestic abuse (including reflecting on their own transcripts of speeches, research interviews and findings)
- feed back on the effect of their work so far, any changes to policy/practice they may be unaware of - so they speak from an informed position
- support young people in identifying their 3-5 priorities – what they are and why they are important to children affected by domestic abuse
- prepare *what* to say
- decide and practice *how* to say it
- develop advocacy skills, build self esteem and confidence

1.12 The facilitators ensured that young people were informed of and explored ethical issues as part of the information pack, introduction and throughout the project. Building on the model of 'three Cs and three Ds' (Mullender et al 2002), the information and discussion with young people covered 'consent, confidentiality, child protection' and considered 'disclosure, distress and danger', with the addition of three E's 'enjoyment, empowerment, emancipation' including advocacy skills for this project (Houghton, forthcoming). Young people went through and discussed elements of the consent form and were clear exactly what they were agreeing to. Confidentiality and anonymity were key to the young people: the limits to confidentiality in the project were made clear – young people were aware of this already and were clear that decisions to share any information if there were concerns should be made *with* them. Young people agreed to this and were more interested in ensuring anonymity in the report and transcripts – agreeing that they would check they were happy

with these before they were public. The Women's Aid rights and responsibilities sheet was used as a prompt for discussion- those involved in the research advisory group were already familiar with this: 'your right to be listened to, respected, say what you think, have fun, disagree with others, say nothing, make mistakes, confidentiality; you're responsible for listening to others, respecting others views, protecting yourself- by keeping things private, confidentiality'. The information sheet and discussions at the sessions ensured that support was identified for the young people before and after the session, and Women's Aid gave out their support leaflet with other sources of support should it be needed.

1.13 The young people then prepared prompt cards to introduce themselves: who they were, what they liked, why they were involved in this project and what they thought of other participation projects that they were involved in. They decided to use this to open the meeting with Ministers. There was then discussion about what they hoped to get from the meeting, any worries/concerns and why they felt young people should be involved and listened to.

1.14 Young people used personal stickits and whole group 'brainstorming' to identify their own views on what the priorities for action for children were - 'what they would do if they were in charge of changing things in Scotland'. They were provided with their own transcripts from previous involvement should they wish to refer back, and the young people on the advisory group had copies of the new research report to refer to should they wish. Prompts for this discussion were 'what was most important to you' and also 'to other young people that they had campaigned/trained/researched with'. In practice young people spontaneously decided on their own priorities, they shared them with their peers and then agreed amongst themselves what the main ones were and who should say them. They were encouraged to disagree and have differences but agreed the same priorities with "different explanations". They then prepared how they would say it to the Ministers: the tool used to help focus was the questions 'WHAT? - would help, needs to change, would have made things better for you, have other children said would make things better for them', and 'WHY? - why is it important, what's it like to be a kid going through it, is there an example, quote, picture that would help explain?'. Young people spontaneously went on to 'HOW' although there was little time to explore this in detail.

1.15 There was a rehearsal with all the young people at the Parliament before the meeting with Ministers. Young people had lunch together beforehand so that the two groups met, and there was time to discuss any worries and get support from the facilitators on the points they had prepared if needed. The young people practiced what they would say, conferred across the two preparation sessions, agreed with each others priorities (this was not a prerequisite), and decided the order of contributions and how they would handle the meeting together. They discussed and decided how to ensure they each got their priorities across in the time available, and agreed that it was important to allow time for the Ministers to ask questions.

1.16 The young people met with three Ministers, the transcript of the meeting is attached in ANNEX 1. The young people related their prepared priorities but also took part in significant discussion led by the Ministers' questions which served to illustrate their points, discuss in more detail 'how' things might change, and address new points raised by the Ministers. The young people received credit and thanks from Ministers at the time and in a letter and token afterwards.

1.17 The young people received positive feedback following Claire Houghton's presentation of their priorities to the delivery group 27th September 2007, and following the

debate in Parliament 24th November 2007 when their meeting with Ministers was referred to and increased funding was announced. The participation sub group has agreed that the young people will receive effective feedback from the delivery group during the plan development process. The young people agreed this was really important, and that they wanted to find out what changes happened, 'threatening' to come back and check.

CHAPTER TWO YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES

2.1 The young people prepared their own priorities, with help from each other. For ease of reference the author has themed the priorities, and also with young people's permission has added further relevant information from the preparation sessions. As this is a young person-led project the young people's own words are used as much as possible. The author has also added elements of the discussion with Ministers relating to the priorities as appropriate. The themes are: support workers; professional training and knowledge linked to effective support; outreach support to children in the wider community; groupwork; making moving house and refuge life better for children and young people; schools; cooperation between agencies; campaigns, publicity and advertising; different forms of communication.

Support workers

2.2 All of the young people agreed that having their own support worker - "a 1-2-1 person who could talk to you, where you can trust on both sides" (M) was their top priority, they all agreed with the statement "I feel that every child that needs one should have one" (MG). One-to-one support was the most important, with one specific named person for them to talk to when they needed to. The type of support worker needed was agreed upon - "a friend" (M,SC, MG), "everybody needs a pal" (M,J, agreeing with child in Stafford et al 2007), "they need someone that they can trust and confide in"(M). That person needed to have knowledge or experience of domestic abuse. Different "innovative means of communicating support" (SC) impressed all the young people, such as: using computers; talking about anything and everything as well as difficult stuff; going out to eat; trips; being informal; so that "you're not sitting there talking to someone about what's going on at home, you're relaxed, in a relaxed atmosphere" (L).

SC: "What I had from Women's Aid was like talking to a friend, it was very one to one but you didn't have to talk about anything, any of your difficulties... as it went on you'd trust the person more and more."

2.3 It was important to "make sure they know how domestic abuse affects children" (J), "more like they know what it's like to deal with domestic abuse"(M). The support worker could be from any agency if that person had the credentials of knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse, being able to speak about it and be trusted ("Women's Aid, Barnardos, social worker, anyone" (M)), although some specifically advocated Women's Aid support workers. The support should be when you need it, should be in places where young people "want to go and *will* go" (M), there shouldn't be waiting lists, "it shouldn't be on a first come first served basis, if you feel you have to see your worker then you should be able to see them" (MG). They cited good practice of Women's Aid and stressed that any organisation should follow that, for example "remove any problems" (SC) such as travel and expenses, and that seeing a child at any time "made it so, so much better" (SC). There was a concern that many professionals did not have the experience or knowledge to help, and the young people agreed that it is important that:

M: "...social workers or anybody that's helping you, actually have, they know what it's like dealing with domestic abuse and knowledge or experience, somebody that's more in touch with it than others."

Trust, confidentiality, not being identified, sharing of information

2.4 The most important quality for a support worker was being able to trust them - "they trust you and you trust them" (M). All young people repeatedly stressed the importance of things being kept confidential and that you could trust that person to "keep it in confidence" (M). It was incredibly important to these young people that they were not identified as experiencing domestic abuse, and that other young people did not have to identify themselves as living with it. Therefore being able to keep the fact that they were experiencing domestic abuse from other people, whilst being able to trust and talk to one person – their own support worker - "makes a real difference" (SC). Privacy was important, as was the prevalent fear of being stigmatised that they related to wider lack of understanding of domestic abuse in people they came into contact with. In their preparation session, two young people discussed the limits of confidentiality:

M: "They'd understand it all, with all the responsibilities and that, they'd keep it all confidential, and, if they think it's really serious, they would speak to you about it and see if you wanted to speak to someone about it or if you wanted them to do it on your behalf."

J: That's a really good thing to have, isn't it?

J: I think that it's good 'cos the child might not know how far it's sort of dangerous for them. They may not have, like, they may not know what to do. So if it's really serious the worker will know what to do – ask them to tell someone or tell them themselves."

These young people agreed "It's in the best interests of the child really"(J) and that "they're thinking about you...they want to actually help" (M), *if* this was done within a relationship of trust and decisions to talk to someone else made *with* the young person. Another related priority was that agencies should communicate better, for this to happen though the provisos above apply and being a part of making that decision and telling others was vital. There was a real fear of what people would do with that information and real life examples of it resulting in stigma being attached to the young person and feeling "judged".

Consequences of not getting support - children's mental health and well being

2.5 The consequences of not getting support when you need it were stark. A number of young people had not received any support at the time they needed it, or had not received support they felt they needed.

M: "Before I go on about support workers, I'm going to put down that everybody needs one. Well, not everyone, but somebody that needs one, they need support workers to go on about issues such as everyone gets through it differently, some people self harm, i.e. myself. Some people get through it without even using it as an excuse. Some people don't get through it at all and live in their adulthoods. Some people don't get through it and don't get a chance to, because they take their life."

Some young people nodded about self-harm. Others talked of how you could get “depressed” and at this everyone nodded. Another young person spoke of her feelings because she didn’t have a support worker, and how she felt that, where she lived, people didn’t think there was a need for one:

L: “I always felt like I wanted somebody to speak to because I was feeling like I was just piling and piling it all on myself. I always noticed that my mum had somebody to speak to, there was plenty of help for adults but I was quite jealous of it to be honest with you, because I always felt that I wanted somebody to speak to, to help me unload some of the things off myself. I couldn’t really talk to my mum about things, no matter how close we were, because it was her that I was trying to protect. It was all to do with her that I was wanting to talk to somebody about. Due to the fact I never spoke, well I feel that due to the fact that I never had somebody to speak to, I’ve just spent the past five years of my life speaking to a mental health nurse twice a week.”

She agreed with others that the type of informal support Women’s Aid outreach support does provide would have suited her and that the mental health service could maybe have been avoided and more importantly she could have “got over it quicker”(L).

Link to Support for Mothers

2.6 That support for children and young people was linked to the support of their mothers was an important factor: “...’cos it’s not *just* you, it’s like your family that’s gone through this” (MG). This was important in relation to helpline and worker support.

SC: “D and another support worker S took me and my mother out and we would discuss problems from both ends – my mother’s point of view and mine as well. So, the other important thing is that outreach and support workers don’t just help young people and children, they also help the adults. However they are mainly there for young people and children which is the most important thing.”

Professional training and knowledge linked to effective support

“Knowledge of domestic abuse would help”: the training of professionals

2.7 The young people were extremely keen that “...the workers for children, make sure they’re actually aware of the effects, that can affect children, of domestic abuse” (J), they all felt this basic understanding and knowledge of domestic abuse was missing in many adults. Only Women’s Aid support was rated highly, other professionals and support staff were not deemed to have the “knowledge or experience” (J) to help, with some professionals particularly inflexible and lacking understanding of domestic abuse and children’s situations. Social work support was not rated highly in one preparation session, leading to the conclusion that the government needed to “make sure social workers actually help” (J). Again the points made were relevant to all professionals that might support children – they need to get the knowledge first.

M: “I’ve always said that, if you’re gonna go into work like that, its not just about going to uni or college or anything, its actually having some knowledge about the

whole thing, such as the social worker me dads got, she doesn't really understand it all. So, if you're going to go into it, make sure you understand.
J: So that they're sensitive to it, not expecting too much of children to speak about it."

Training of professionals was a persistent theme, particularly in relation to teachers and school support. When asked "How are they to know?" about domestic abuse, the collective answer was "Listen to us", with one young person already involved in training a multi-agency audience.

"Effective support" that doesn't "brand" children

2.8 The type of support and the methods used were incredibly important to young people. Different types of support were compared in one preparation session particularly "formal" mental health support and Women's Aid support, with young people agreeing that there was "a big difference between 'counselling' and 'support'" (MG). This is illustrated in the following discussion:

MG: "Counselling is kinda branding that there's something wrong with you, but there's no nothing wrong with you, you're just been through an ordeal.

SC: Yeah, it's everything else that's wrong, but you.

MG: It's, like, tell me what's wrong with you and I will help – NO!"

MG: "OK, you do suffer domestic abuse, but you're not like branded, like, you "This is what happened to you – you need medication", or whatever."

All young people agreed that they wanted someone to get to know them, to get to be their friend, and to be someone they can talk to. This is not to say that domestic abuse did not affect children and an understanding of "how it affects children psychologically" (J) was agreed to be vital. One young person had received formal counselling and this had not suited him, another young person received mental health support but wished she'd had informal Women's Aid support a lot earlier. However, all young people agreed that different young people need different support, and that there should be options:

J: "I wasn't affected mentally but some people might be, they might feel a social worker is not enough. Maybe they need counselling or a shrink, I dunno. Make sure those services are available for those that need them."

Outreach support to children in the wider community: local authorities "helping you through it"

2.9 Young people were concerned that a lot of young people did not know about the help that was available such as Women's Aid outreach workers - "what's the point if they don't know about it?" (MG)

MG: "What is there for people that are in the refuge? ... Is it easy to contact them, like you know who they are and you know how you could get in contact with them? 'Cos that's kinda important, 'cos you don't want them to feel as if, 'cos they're maybe going through the same experience as you are. The only thing is they've not really got help about it yet."

It was felt important that “everybody should have the same equal treatment” (SC) wherever they were in Scotland and wherever they lived in the community. Young people agreed that a major issue “is informing those who perhaps don’t want to identify themselves as being in a domestic abuse situation yet” (SC). They were concerned that all children and young people should know that there is help available, and that they are able to access that help. Young people who had received Women’s Aid outreach support spoke highly of it and all young people agreed that their approach of “it’s whatever’s good for you”(SC) was excellent and “they can go out to see the people but you can also go see them at their office or whatever so that’s great”(SC).

SC: “Now children and young people don’t always have to identify themselves, or don’t want to identify themselves, as experiencing domestic abuse and that’s something where the outreach workers greatly help, they keep everything confidential, everything you say to them it’s just to a friend, you trust them - that’s what I’m trying to say it’s really important...there’s a great stigma attached to people experiencing domestic abuse, or who have lost their home or who are in a refuge, and that extra trust really makes a difference.”

2.10 One young person spoke from a different angle about support workers, having been involved in petitioning the Parliament when there were only three follow-on and six outreach workers in Scotland. She was delighted about the current minimum standard of three support workers per Women’s Aid group (two of which were for the new key worker model of refuge/follow on support, one to develop the outreach service in that area). Her recommendation, agreed by the other young people, was that the number of workers “should be proportional to the size of the areas, for example if you have Glasgow and Ayr – one worker in Glasgow, one in Ayr -and Glasgow’s substantially bigger than Ayr” (MG), emphasised by the statement “It’s not enough because there’s too many people experiencing it at once.” (SC)

2.11 Mr Ingram engaged the young people in a discussion about community support, using examples of young people’s centres (such as Dundee’s The Shore and The Corner) where, on a visit, he had heard young people were very positive about this as “somewhere they can come and actually talk to people about the problems they’re having, it wasn’t...*only* domestic abuse”. He asked the young people if that kind of facility would help, or whether they felt domestic abuse was too personal and there was a need to hide it. The young people felt it depended on the individual, but there was strength of feeling in this group that a lot of children affected by domestic abuse did not want to be identified as such.

MG: “Depends on the person, I think, ‘cos, obviously, not everybody, no many people want to go to a group and make it be identified.

SC: The good thing about the groupwork that I did was it was past people who had also experienced roughly, obviously different experiences, but we’d all experienced some incident of domestic abuse and we’d all been under that support worker, so we all kind of knew each other and that worked really well. So, in instances where young people don’t want to go to a group like that, having more outreach workers and support workers helps.”

In addition, where youth centres did exist it needs to be “acknowledged” (M) if there are workers there who had experience of domestic abuse/working with domestic abuse in order for young people to feel able to speak to them about it. The young people did agree with M’s recommendation that local authorities could help more to address the variety of support needs and services, and that there is a need for different help for different children:

M: “... getting local authorities and councils to help with helping change the future, i.e. building their own refuges, or helping make it better in areas where refuges are. The reason for this is 'cos local authorities and councils can get people in youth buildings or in a place where children and young people will want to go, i.e. youth drop in, library, clinic or even a hospital. The councils run children and young people groups, i.e. back in Dundee we've got 'The Shore' and 'The Corner', and where they know that children and young people will want to go, and will go, where they can access help that they actually need and require there, so they provide lots of different help for different scenarios...”

2.12 Young people felt that outreach services could be developed further and there seemed to be potential for agencies to work together (for example, children’s support workers were great but some Women’s Aid offices weren’t for young people, there were good youth centres but they weren’t really for domestic abuse), keeping in mind though that children did not want to be identified. Mr Ingram mentioned that the community facility was for other issues that would be relevant to these young people such as self-harming and health, and this did seem to appeal as potentially “another kind of refuge”(SC) for this group of young people. Outreach services were also seen as a solution to one young person’s view that he didn’t feel that female workers (at Women’s Aid) would understand, with another young person feeling that women “wouldn’t want male staff if they’ve been vulnerable and abused, they’d feel threatened” (J). They felt the solution was for Women’s Aid workers to put the young person in contact with an outreach support worker from another agency

M: “...you were told there’s someone to talk to and you go out and meet them... and they get to know you, could help you ‘n’ break into your confidence and that.”

Young people felt drop-in services could be helpful as an element of support, both in school but also they talked of drop-in support like women had at Women’s Aid offices/centres. There was one example of an open, relaxed, friendly office where young people were welcome and there was outreach children’s support. Another office was not publicised and not for young people: “I didn’t even know where it was” (M).

MG: “A lot of this stuff seems like it’s for adults, like the phone helpline, the drop in, the adverts – everything’s like you’ve got to be an adult or you don’t qualify.”

Groupwork with other children who have experienced domestic abuse

2.13 Young people spoke about the benefits of groups with other young people who had experienced domestic abuse. The importance of having people their own age to speak to and making/having friends was key.

MG: “It’s like sitting with their friends, you’re with them for so long they become your friends. You don’t have to talk about domestic abuse, talk about what you want.”

Young people reckoned that some kids would rather speak to someone their own age: “I’ve always felt that if I’m speaking to someone within my own age range I’m able to open up a bit easier” (M). The fact that the young people had experienced domestic abuse was incredibly important, it was felt that they would understand the experiences you were talking about: “these are people who’ve understood your darkest moments” (SC). Trust built up through the groups meeting regularly and friendships were made. It was important to all the young people that you could make friends, “have a laugh” (S), “enjoy yourself” (S), play the playstation or whatever, chill, as well as keep in contact with a support worker. Two examples related to groupwork after the young person had moved on from individual support and refuge, which other young people seemed to appreciate:

SC: “An ‘after support groupwork session’ - it would take a number of individuals who have been experiencing support after domestic abuse and we’d meet together and just have a good time, kinda like a club, but we’d be able to talk serious if we needed to and you ended up trusting this group of people, too, and that really helped, being able to go out and do extra curricula activities but having this group of trusting friends really helps you get on the right track after such a low point in your life.”

2.14 Having groups of different ages was important to all young people, all agreeing strongly that there is a big difference between teenagers and younger children: “...people who are in their adolescence versus children have very different issues to talk about” (SC) and there were examples of mixed age groups not working at all. These young people felt that the groups should be mixed, boys and girls, “it’s children, regardless of gender”(SC) and they thought that some people including pals didn’t recognise that boys as well as girls experience domestic abuse, “Yeah, don’t want it to be branded” (MG). There also followed a very short discussion of domestic abuse and gender where young people recognised it’s mainly but not always men against women, and that we’ve “gotta still help” (MG) whoever goes through it.

Making moving house and refuge life better for children and young people

2.15 All the young people agreed with the following priority, as moving had been a hard experience for all of them:

J: “...make moving house and refuge life better for children and young people as it would make the situation a whole lot better if it can be done smoothly. It is important as domestic abuse can be a traumatic experience, and it is important when children are leaving homes because of the perpetrator there is somewhere safe they can go and call home while waiting to be re-housed. It is also imperative that the child or young person and parent can be re-housed fairly quickly so they can get on with their life and not be stuck in a refuge. Although the conditions of refuges have improved a lot, it does not mean that re-housing should be delayed.”

It was important that all children and young people could get “our own home, just to get, sort of start, a new life again” (J), though routes to that ‘home’ were very different for each young person. Two of the young people spoke of being separated from their siblings, through leaving a brother at home or through care proceedings: “It did make things harder going into a refuge and that, ‘cos we ended up apart” (M). All young people discussed different ways that moving house and refuge could be better for young people. Ministers agreed that “It

must be very difficult leaving your home, emotionally hard to cope with” (FE) and that being homeless –such as living on your aunts floor, or living in a refuge – must make many aspects of life very difficult, including school.

Make all refuges the same high standard

2.16 All the young people strongly agreed that the model of refuge recommended in the refuge research (Fitzpatrick et al 2003) would make children’s lives better. This is summarised by S, below:

S: “I believe that all refuges should be up to the same high standard such as the new refuge in Stirling. This refuge has your own apartment in it and your own shower, kitchen, etc. and you have separate rooms for children and for young people ‘cos they’ll have different interests. Other refuges don’t have such luxuries as they all have to share the same bath and cook in the same kitchen... There are still lots of underprivileged refuges all over Scotland.”

They all shared S’s disappointment that the new model had not been phased in (and the old one phased out) throughout Scotland and there were still two thirds of Women’s Aid groups that had the old style communal style refuge that they hated. The young people agreed with MG that “I feel they should be the same. It shouldnae be a luxury”, agreeing it should be a “uniform, high standard” (SC,S) - “they should just have a standard that every refuge should be built” (L). Mr Ewing agreed that

FE: “ If Stirling had found a way to create this facility, that provides a bit of privacy, a bit of space, and at least the basic minimum of a room and shower, privacy that way, that would sound to me that it’s at least a kind of model we should be aiming for.”

At this the young people nodded vigorously and said to Ministers: “So if you could get the other two-thirds to at least follow that” (SC). The model had to ensure that “different ages of children get different services” (J) which was a strongly agreed priority in relation to all services, and specifically in relation to refuge:

J: “Older children in their teens are a whole different category and the teenage years are difficult alone, without having to suffer the effects of domestic abuse. So, for them, the refuge should be suited to them such as having a separate area from young children so that the teens can have their “space” and “alone time” to relax. So it should be noted that the requirements for young children and older children are very different.”

2.17 There were other points made about refuge in the preparation sessions. There was felt to be a stigma about living in refuge, and there were recommendations about it not being recognisable and known to others in the area, especially when it was too large and chaotic, with other children coming into your room (and one report of children being nasty which young people agreed isn’t good when you’ve just left your family and violence). A couple of young people, who had to seek their own accommodation as young adults, recommended a

model that “just fits in perfect” (M) with the neighbourhood, and where there was your own flat, privacy and space.

Follow on support

2.18 One facet of support had been missing for some of the children when they had stayed in refuge a few years before – support once they had left refuge; while two of these young people received the first follow on support. Young people agreed that the new model of having a children’s support worker “all the way through” (Fitzpatrick et al 2003) was the right model to aim for:

S: “Some of the children and young people feel they still need their children’s supporters to talk to after they have left the refuge. Follow on groups lets the children meet their children’s supporters weekly so that the children supporters can see if the kids are coping with moving on, and they can be there to offer the kids support and advice that they may not want to seek from their parents.”

“Cash help for children” and “financial aid for starting again”

2.19 Moving house because of domestic abuse made a significant financial impact on children and young people’s lives, “we had no money- none – it was ridiculous” (SC). The loss of belongings was extremely difficult to take. The loss of, and need for, possessions, toys, expensive new uniforms, travel and storage expenses, all impacted on young people and their families immensely. They felt they should get help with this as “your main priority is to get into a safe situation” (M). One young person related how moving home was often without notice for children, and a shocking and traumatic experience

J: “...when leaving their homes children and young people may not even be aware that they are going, i.e. being misled by a parent... so she wouldn’t have had the time to gather her most precious possessions.”

The young people agreed that “little things really do mean a lot” (SC) and make a “huge difference” (J). They all agreed strongly with J’s recommendation that “it would be in the interest for the child to have some cash help to replace their toys or possessions”:

M: “About possessions ‘n’ that I left almost everything. I’ve got one teddy that actually survived ‘n’ I still own ‘til today and, also, when we got to refuge I also got to take a teddy from there which I still have today as well.

S: That’s why financial aid would be good for starting again.”

As well as cash for losses and necessities, there was also the cost of support – even to get to offices/centres costs money and young people felt “the last thing you want to worry about is how to get to the support” (SC). Two young people talked about how “lucky” they were to recover most of their possessions. For one young person this involved his family borrowing and worrying for 8 months whilst possessions were in storage. (Ministers agreed that storage would be expensive). For another this involved her visiting the country she had fled from, years later, after leaving everything behind (like the rest of the young people had):

L: "...it was only in the summer last year, well, this year, that I built up enough courage to go back, and I went back myself but I didn't go back with my dad, I went back by myself. I went back to see my other family. It was only then I managed to get my stuff back, my teddies, the little things that mean so much to you."

Schools and "making more help available in school"

2.20 All the young people felt that a priority should be "making more help available at school as well as outside school" (M) as "School's, like, an important part of children's life so there should be support there"(J). A couple of young people had received some help at school but it was "not the help that they need" (M). The young people agreed that there was a need for training teachers including guidance teachers "so that they're able to discuss these issues with them" (M). The young people related poor experiences of teachers, and students, making their lives more miserable, and particularly spoke of the stigma attached to having experienced domestic abuse and moving home, being judged and bullied. The young people spoke about improving support from teachers and pupils at school and also options to bring specialist support workers into school, for drop in, 1:1 and groupwork support. "Maybe someone in school, or visiting that school, that the young person going through it can speak to" (M). Young people explained the effect that it had on their attendance, their feelings about schools and the effect on their education:

L: "I went from a straight 'A' student to failing every class because I was concentrating on what was going on at home."

Ministers expressed surprise that the average teacher didn't "factor that in and be aware of what was going on" (FE), but were not surprised that young people leaving home due to domestic abuse found school difficult:

FE: "No wonder you found it hard to kinda cope with getting to school or performing as well at school as you would have liked."

Through their own preparation and discussion with the Ministers the young people came up with a number of priorities for action under the heading of more help available in school: teach teachers better; somebody to talk to in school; teach young people about domestic abuse. Mr Ingram summarised this by asking the young people if they were looking for "much greater awareness amongst teachers" and "some specialist or somebody in the school that can actually help". The young people agreed enthusiastically.

"Teach Teachers Better"

2.21 In relation to domestic abuse, young people agreed that there was a "stigma attached to it and how teachers and students view you"(SC). They described how hard it was for students taken away from schools, or being in refuge and trying to attend school regularly. There was a need to address "...the perception of people of you at school. Don't know what the government can do about that. Maybe teach teachers better" (SC):

SC: "...when you're at school and you're in a situation like this, teachers don't always understand. They don't know how to react to you, sometimes some of them get

it, some of them don't. So I think we need to teach teachers how to respect the pupils experiencing situations, maybe make allowances. Now that sounds like an excuse but if you've got a big homework assignment and you're sleeping on a floor or you come in late, they don't get it and you try to explain it to them and they just say, "Right, that's an excuse.", "Whatever!". They won't believe you."

The experience was on the whole negative. Young people felt judged, that teachers were inflexible and didn't understand - with a few exceptions. "I think them just having knowledge of domestic abuse would probably help" (MG). Guidance teachers were not felt to be for them but for truants and young people with anger and health problems. They agreed with Mr Ingram that this

AI: "...calls for some systematic training, maybe like L has obviously experience of training in awareness of domestic abuse, and what needs to happen in terms of providing a confidential, listening ear [young people nod], is what you're looking for?..."

SC: I think until you've experienced it you don't really know what you're dealing with.

L: Yes, you don't know what you're dealing but that's giving them a better aspect.

SC: A reference, a proper reference, yes."

Again, the skills of young people who have been through it, the awareness of what it's like dealing with domestic abuse, and young people's skills in teaching others, were recognised. Young people also recognised that teachers have not "got the support or they're not given the training to support you through that as well" (M).

Somebody to speak to in school

2.22 Young people felt that school was *the* key place for children and young people to get help and that "...having somebody in school that you can talk to."(M) was really important. They discussed a "...dedicated person who speaks to you about issues, domestic abuse issues, or issues like that at home, a separate staff member." (SC) and came to the conclusion that the person didn't have to be specifically there for domestic abuse but, if you have "...an emotional problem...there's a bigger chance of getting that help there and that person." (L). They also talked of specialist support workers "visiting the school"(M) and being available at the school, along similar models where there is drop in, group, out of class support for other young people, but at present whose staff "...didn't have the knowledge of domestic abuse so wouldn't know how to sit and talk to someone about it" (M). They felt that if Ministers could ensure that there was "...somebody in the school that can actually help" (AI) – children could access the skilled support of "someone who does *know*" (M), then an additional help would be that the "teacher can ask that person and learn from them as well, so that would benefit them" (SC).

Teach the Students about domestic abuse

2.23 *SC: "Not only is teachers an issue it's also students at the schools. They sometimes won't treat you very nicely at all [young people all nod agreement] and I've personal experience of this, and this all over can lead to students being very depressed and not*

wanting to go to school, at all, so it's important that we change that and get students and teachers and staff to understand this."

Ministers recognised bullying and fear of school for many young people, and expressed disappointment at the lack of understanding spoken about in teachers. Other young people were constantly referred to as sources of support or potential support, but also sources of bullying, ignorance and stigmatisation.

One preparation session came up with a befriending idea for school, in particular if you're new to the school "the most popular person in the class gets to help you" (J) and then you're friends with the most popular person so "you don't start at school and get annoyed 'cos you're the new kid, you're straight there, you're the top dogs side kick!" (M). An important part of education was awareness-raising with other young people who did not know about domestic abuse:

SC: "...maybe teaching people who are not necessarily in a domestic abuse situation about domestic abuse. Now, that's definitely improved but there's still not a lot of recognition, so I think that needs to improve."

"Cooperation between agencies is an important factor"

2.24 *SC: "... law enforcement are usually the first on the scene when there's an incident of domestic abuse and they communicate information about what's happened to other agencies, so I think the communication needs to improve between law enforcement and school. So, if there's been an incident of domestic abuse then the school knows about it but it's still private enough that it's confidential. Like the student's not going to get the stigma attached again, but the teachers are going to know so they treat the students better, and even health authorities or housing again, because I lost my home, so maybe help them get a house quicker. That's what Scottish Women's Aid helped us do."*

Mr Maxwell asked if it was the *lack* of cooperation and lack of information sharing between agencies that was a significant factor and "creates problems that could be avoided if they were just working a bit smarter", the young people nodded. SC explained he didn't think the council "had any idea what happened in our house" despite law enforcement involvement and complained about the need for Women's Aid to "pester" housing departments constantly for his family to be rehoused (8 months later). He agreed that links between police and schools, health and housing could be improved, as L put it, agencies should be "communicating together as well". It was important to young people *who* the information was shared with and *why* (only if it's really "serious" or "dangerous" to the child -J) and how it was handled; there was a distrust of adults responding well and keeping it "private enough" (SC).

The number of agencies and professionals that children and young people came into contact following an incident/moving house was high. Young people raised very practical problems such as having to tell a lawyer what had happened – the visit to the lawyer the day after the incident put his family in more danger from their dad - they did not feel safe having to leave home and travel to the lawyers office, and their fears were accurate as a repeat incident

occurred. Young people agreed with Mr Ingram that joining up a lot of services, such as young people's centres and family centres with outreach support, was a positive step.

Police

2.25 One young person felt that the police needed to increase their awareness and effectiveness, that they weren't there in time the first incident, and the repeat incident should not have occurred as "the police should have been checking up on us" (SC). The second time he felt the female officer "seemed to know what she was doing, the guy didn't seem to know much" (SC). The other young people agreed that "the way that the police dealt with us was extremely well" (L) and that "a few of them knew what they were talking about and they knew how to deal with it all" (M).

L: "I think the reason that they did it so well was because they weren't taken aback by the fact that "Oh no there's domestic abuse kind of thing going on here". They just treated it as an assault and the way an assault should be treated, and I think that's why it worked so well. Just that he's, there's an assault happened here, what you would normally do was remove that person from the situation, away from the situation. That's why it worked so well."

Despite Ministerial attempts, the young people did not sign up as new police recruits (!), but they did emphasise the importance of training as he spoke of his visit to Tulliallan, the Scottish Police Training College.

Legal protection

2.26 Mr Maxwell asked about exclusion orders to remove the perpetrator from the home, and possible problems of the man being rehoused near the family. Though the young people agreed that it would be good to have the perpetrator removed and kept a long distance away, they had not had experience of exclusion orders. They did have examples of court orders to keep him away not working, being ignored and being ineffective:

SC: "...my father received a court order that he wasn't allowed near us. He came back the next day anyway..."

Campaigns, advertising and publicity: "Let young people know that help is out there"

2.27 For these young people, the most important point about publicity and advertising was that it enabled young people to seek help, either for themselves or their friends. Young people also spoke at length about the lack of awareness about domestic abuse, including the stigma attached to domestic abuse, by other children as well as adults. They noted the educational value of campaigns and awareness raising when they agreed with Mr Ingram that "clearly the awareness issue is something we need to do and that would also help with the stigma problem".

M: "It's about getting it out - let people know that the help is there, and it can be accessed through schools and other organisations. Not a lot of children and young

people that go through domestic abuse know where the help is and how to access it, and you need to let them know. Some that don't go through domestic abuse but know someone that is going through it might want to seek help so that they could help their friend. So, therefore, they could get as much information as possible and so they could pass it on."

The sorts of help they discussed included services available through outreach support workers in Women's Aid and other organisations, but also other forms of support not currently available were discussed: website, email, helpline, textline.

Local advertising

2.28 Publicity was not just a priority for action for national government but for local government and organisations too, as it was important for children to be able to contact their local support worker.

L: "...the new children's worker she wanted to make it more known that kids can come in and speak to them, if they wanted to speak to them, and she wanted it to be more known. She had posters up all over the place in youth clubs, in the schools. There were packs taken into schools just about Women's Aid - give them a general idea, that sort of thing – advertising within the community. I ken that that's more up to the organisation that's within the community but it's like that idea is what I was more talking about."

The particular local children's worker spoken of here had consulted the young person about the advertising and made amendments according to her views. The young people agreed that the most important thing was that advertising directed you to where you could get help, but that it was also important to consider young people's position "if you don't want to identify yourself, say you're in a youth club and you see Women's Aid...and you don't want to let your pals ken" (L). Locally they made the phone number larger as it was "the most important thing on the page" (rather than 'Women's Aid'), so that it was easy to see and "imprints on your mind" (L).

Campaigns targeted at children that are linked to support

2.29 The young people felt that campaigns and adverts had not as yet been targeted at children and young people, and were aware of some of the domestic abuse TV and cinema adverts (both government and charity) that they felt were "geared towards adults" (MG).

L: "More advertising of organisations that are available for dealing with domestic abuse but focussed on the children and young people...there's lots of campaigns going on that are targeted at adults for domestic abuse but young people and children don't even know some of them that - say organisations like Women's Aid -even exist, 'cos they haven't had things like campaigns pointed in their direction. So I think that needs to change a bit more as well."

The young people all agreed that most young people did not know that help existed – that was the main and major problem that needed addressing. For children and young people to find out that help existed there was a need to consider what advertising would be appropriate

for them, and to consider how to “inform those who perhaps don’t want to identify themselves as being in a domestic abuse situation yet” (SC), including when they actually see the advertising in whatever form.

Suitable adverts in places young people will see them

2.30 Young people had strong feelings about current adverts not being for them but also not being suitable for children (the adverts discussed were about child abuse as well as domestic abuse). They were concerned that adverts could be very negative and the messages and pictures were not right (“Does your father beat you? - Noooo!” (L)) and also could scare kids. They agreed that kids should not have to watch when “little Jimmy got pushed down a chair, broke rib, etc. etc.” (L) and they were particularly concerned that “If it’s a wee kid he might associate breaking ribs with calling the number.” (SC). One young person said “It has to be psychological.” (SC) and all agreed that children shouldn’t be afraid of the publicity and that some adverts were “creepy” (SC). Adverts often had a “really dark tone” (SC) and the young people discussed one advert (not the Scottish domestic abuse one) that “freaked me out” (L); in this advert there was “...the doll that did stuff, scared the crap out of me - daddy comes into the room and punches me and punches me and punches me ... eugh change it!” (L). Adverts needed to contain a source of help for the children and young people watching them. They needed not to include “boring stuff”(S) and needed to be “eye catching” (MG), and in places that young people use. As well as TV (in particular) and cinema being mentioned, there were also other places where young peoples’ advertisements could be placed that were “more inclined for folk to see it - everyone I know has got bebo.” (MG).

SC: “The campaign’s too dark. This is why children need to be able to associate things with ending stuff. You want to associate calling this number with ending the abuse, not making it worse.”

Different forms of communication

2.31 Young people felt that children experiencing domestic abuse should have as many forms of communication and support available to them as possible. They did not feel that current helplines and websites were for them: they were not seen as a means of support for children and young people. Young people felt that there was a need to consider these issues nationally and locally: there should be “central” support workers – available through email, web based support, helpline, textline, and they should be the children’s link to local support workers – who could offer face to face support *and* the opportunity to email, text, phone your own, known worker.

Helplines and Textlines

2.32 The young people felt that the present domestic abuse helpline “is geared towards adults and isn’t accessible for kids or young people” (MG). These young people had not used ChildLine and didn’t feel it was for them or for domestic abuse.

MG:” Basically ChildLine it’s “My parents hit me or batter me, or whatever”. Fair enough, it is that, but it’s not just you. You don’t want to phone and say “and they’re

doing it to this person and that person.” You really want someone who knows what you’re talking about. That’s why I say a phonenumber for children.”

A consistent idea was for there to be a central contact as a route to a local support worker, and the need for a named, known, trusted support was emphasised a number of times, even where helplines were discussed. There was a problem if

M: “...you get a different person every time. It would be better if you had one person to speak to. That way you built up trust with that person and, every time you phone, you’d ask for that person.”

The young people thought making “different forms of communication” (MG) possible was a priority, in relation to local and national/ “central” support. Both should make “as many means of contacting as possible” (SC) available to children and young people. One young person raised a good question about whether all young people would phone a helpline and everyone agreed with his idea that texting would be better for some, “a textline would help too, for those that don’t want to talk” (S).

S: “Do you think kids may be too feared to phone up the helpline or too nervous? Could we not have a textline, text may be a good idea? More comfortable texting someone than phoning?”

[all young people agreed] ...

MG: Good idea.

L: Aye, you’re speaking to a complete and utter stranger so it’d be easier texting.”

Website

2.33 Young people thought current websites were not good at all, even “useless” (MG), but agreed there should be a central website, which has to be “perfect” and “attractive to a child but they shouldn’t be afraid of it” (SC). They agreed the name of it should not be www.domesticabuse or www.womensaid as that was “off-putting” to children (MG):

MG: “There should be a more child-friendly website made up, that should be easy to navigate, that isn’t boring. An idea is it should be a children-run website and children contribute to it. Another idea that I had was, it could be advertised on the msn and bebo. That’s, if you don’t know what that is, that’s well looked at sites that young people tend to look at. It should be eye-catching and it is important that they don’t have to identify themselves.”

All the young people had excellent ideas for designing a website and making it better. It really has to be short and easy to understand and read, not “pages and pages of somebody rambling” (MG). It should include “a sitemap- find your nearest support” (SC) so that a child could find out where to get help in their area. All local support available would be linked to this site and the “central support worker”. A central support worker would be good for a child to contact (by ‘phone or email) and they would help the child get in touch with a support worker locally.

Email

2.34 MG: *“There is also email – you could have your support worker’s individual email address or, if you couldn’t, didn’t have that, there should be like a email address of a central support worker who could give you a support worker in your area.”*

The young people liked “the idea of being able to email a support worker or outreach worker”(SC) and agreed “it would help to be able to email a support worker” (MG). It was important that information was available on websites, even though they recognised everyone didn’t have access to the internet. Again, as many means for young people to access support as possible were needed.

Summary

2.35 This chapter outlined young people’s priorities to improve the lives of children and young people affected by domestic abuse in Scotland. They agreed with the Minister for Children and Early Years that “getting the awareness that help is out there for you” was vital, and detailed the sort of help that would improve children’s lives. In the young people’s opinion, the Scottish Government should

- ensure every child has a support worker, someone to trust and speak to in confidence
- ensure professionals and adults have knowledge about domestic abuse and how to help
- ensure the type of support doesn’t brand children and is “whatever’s good for them”
- protect young people’s right not to be identified as experiencing domestic abuse
- improve children’s access to, and knowledge about, outreach support
- ensure local authorities provide different help for different scenarios
- provide groupwork opportunities
- make moving house and refuge life better
- make all refuges across Scotland the same high standard (the model is described)
- provide follow on support after refuge
- provide cash help for children and their families to start again
- make more help available at school and ensure there’s someone to speak to there
- teach teachers better, and teach students about domestic abuse
- improve agency cooperation and appropriate sharing of information
- improve publicity so young people know help is out there
- target campaigns and adverts at children and young people and link them to help
- provide as many forms of communication as possible for children to access central and local support - including websites, helplines, textlines, email
- raise awareness of domestic abuse with everyone to increase understanding and stop the stigma

CHAPTER 3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT PLANS

Why young people wanted to be involved

3.1 The six young people had already been involved in various projects including research, a research advisory group, the Scottish Women's Aid Listen Louder campaign, multi agency training and speaking to government groups and a committee of the Parliament. They were asked what they thought about being involved so far and why they wanted to be involved in the present project. The two young people who had been (uniquely) members of the research advisory group for the 'Moving Home' research (Stafford et al 2007), hoped for positive results from their involvement, as the research and findings had not yet been launched:

M: "I've felt that I'm doing something that will help others and, hopefully, make a difference and change the future."

J: "I've enjoyed very much being in this project. It's nice to contribute to something like this and, hopefully, make a difference."

The young people had felt listened to by adults in the research advisory group, who "always took us into account which was good, and, like, we felt included" (J). "When we would go on about something they always came over and asked you what we thought about it, so we felt included." (M). Most of all, they wanted to make a difference to others: "hope it does stop it and make everyone happier" (M). They were concerned about the number of moves families had had to make in the research, and wanted things to change "... 'cos it's quite stressful for mums and children to move to a different place" (J). They agreed that "A lot" (M) needed to be done.

3.2 All six young people agreed that they were involved because they wanted to make a difference to others. Other young people spoke about projects they had been involved in a little less recently, allowing time for them to be informed of the difference they had made. This was a major factor in becoming involved in future projects. One young person had taken part in training the Children's Panel, social work and the police:

L: "I've really enjoyed being involved with it so far because I've really enjoyed seeing the change that's happened and the difference that it's made. For example, three months after the first training session in Orkney, two cases of domestic abuse were picked up by members of the Children's Panel. They said that they wouldn't have picked it up if they hadn't been at that training session."

The young people with involvement in Listen Louder/the Parliament smiled as they spoke about hearing how they had made a difference (hearing at events or/and hearing of recent progress in the preparation sessions). All said "aye" to "It's really nice when you hear it, and you think, ah, it did work in the end" (SC), agreeing that:

MG: "It's a great feeling when you know you've made a difference just by saying something."

One young person concurred that “that’s why we need to keep it going”(SC), they had a sense of the precarious nature of funding as well as knowing that not all the changes had been made yet. At least two had experience of losing support due to lack of funding and one felt campaigning was “too late” (SC) as one worker was lost, but was pleased everything was fine in that area now. Alongside this sense of achievement for some, was a sense of owing those who had helped them:

SC: “I am involved because I think its important, want to give something back, and because of the achievements over the last few years.”

One young person had seen at least the foundations of what he and others had recommended in the ‘Refuge Research’ (Fitzpatrick et al 2003) and the Listen Louder Campaign of 2002, through the plans for a new local refuge:

S: “The new Stirling refuge was introduced because of a previous Listen Louder Campaign I was involved in ... I felt it was fun being involved in this campaign. I enjoyed sharing my views with members of the Parliament”.

This young person came back in the third year of the Listen Louder Campaign (2004) to ask Ministers why there was still not enough of the new style refuges in Scotland (a question which current Ministers concurred with at this session). All young people also agreed with him that it was really important that enjoyment was part of the process of being involved.

Sharing their views and the views of other children

3.3 It was important to all the young people that they had a chance to share their views. They were also very aware that children do not get to have a say very often, and many children felt that they wouldn’t be listened to actually *because* they were children

MG: “Aye, very important because you think that, that’s what I was like the first time I was involved, “Och they willnae listen to me, I’m just a wee lassie. They’ll just think “She’s just a wee lassie dunnae listen to her”, but I think it’s dead important.”

Yet it was precisely *because* they are or were children that these young people thought it was important that the government listened to them, and that the media listened too:

SC: “...well not me, I’m 20 now, to listen to young people and children, it’s their views that matter.”

3.4 Young people spoke of the importance of their role in advocating for and speaking on behalf of other children. One young person was a petitioner on behalf of the Listen Louder Campaign to the Public Petitions Committee of the Parliament

MG: “I became involved with this at a very young age through refuge research, I also made a DVD for Listen Louder about outreach. I think, at the time, it was important for others to hear what your views were. I was the first teenager to address the Scottish Parliament for funding for support workers. I love being involved and have done since the moment I started doing it. I think it’s really important for people to hear what you have to say, and especially when you are young, ‘cos younger people

don't normally get the chance to speak of what their views are and it's a great way to express your views."

Three of the young people had taken part in the Listen Louder Campaign that also involved many other children affected by domestic abuse. They talked about how they had

SC: "...gathered the views of children and young people and produced several documentaries to just to get the message out to the media to listen to us."

One young person said that "60 odd" children had recommended the refuge model in the 'Refuge Research' and Listen Louder events, and asked why it hadn't been heard. Another young person stressed that the Listen Louder DVD, made by 44 children involved in the 'Listen Louder' research, encapsulated "our underlying message" (SC). The two research advisors, who hadn't been involved in the Listen Louder campaign, had reflected on what children had said in the 'Moving House' research. These two young people felt the priorities they chose also reflected those of the 33 child participants in the research, and often used other young people's views to illustrate their points. The six young people felt that the views and experiences of many different children should be heard; they were comfortable in their role of advocating on behalf of other children affected by domestic abuse whose views they had heard.

SC: "I think it's important, not only for my experiences but for other types of experience. I obviously got involved in the Listen Louder campaign because I didn't think anyone was listening."

Young people talked about what young people had collectively achieved, they felt for example that in the campaign "we managed to secure more funding" and talked about "trying to secure more funds for *the cause*" (SC). Those with previous experience particularly appreciated and enjoyed speaking to government Ministers, and enjoyed seeing Ministers later on the TV! All six agreed that their shared purpose was 'making things better' for other children and families.

Why Ministers should listen to young people's views

3.5 One young person spoke on behalf of the other six to explain to Ministers why they felt it was important to be listened to in the meeting:

SC: "Essentially the main groundline is we want you to listen to us, about what to do, and I know you're a new government and Labour did some good things, but we want to make it better with the change in new government."

They agreed that "what we have to say is important" (SC) and also spoke in their preparation sessions about the benefits to Ministers about listening to them, "it's their country so they should want to listen" (J):

J: "If they're in charge of the government, they should want to make the country the best place that they possibly can, so they should listen to children and young people."

Young people felt they could help politicians in their plans to make things better for children affected by domestic abuse, not only in saying what to do but how to do it.

MG: “‘Cos everybody’s got different opinions and views and experiences, so they should really listen and take on board what we’ve to say and, if they’re gonna change it, how they’re gonna change it. We’re giving them ideas as well, so it’s not just them plotting “what we’re going to do”. We’re saying to them we think you should do this, to take it all on board. We’re giving you ideas that you may find helpful to use, so it’s helping them as well.

L: Yeah.

L: Yeah, we’re helping them.”

Listening to young people and not just adults

3.6 Young people discussed in more detail at their preparation sessions why they thought the Ministers should listen to them. They were unanimous in explaining that the child’s perspective is unique and adults could not speak for them:

J: “I think they should listen because an adult’s point of view isn’t always a child’s perspective, so they should listen just to get a child’s point of view.

M: Yeah, getting the view from a child is probably more clearly than getting it from an adult as well, ‘cos the child knows.

J: Knows it directly, not like from a parent that’s sort of taken it for what they think that the child would think.

M: That way, you’re getting the child’s feelings as well about it all, ‘cos the parent could just go that the child’s happy about moving, they could be either.”

Young people felt that “everybody listens to them” (MG) -adults or to most adults anyway, and that help was “more concentrated on adults” (L) - they got help already. There was no problem with listening to adults as well. However adults could not speak for children “It’s a different situation” (L) and “Adults haven’t been through it, most of them” (SC) and, basically, adults are not young. They also felt that adults did not understand that children’s experience of domestic abuse was different, one saying “Adults have more power to defend themselves” (SC), another that the effects of domestic abuse on children were ignored, to which everyone nodded.

L: “Yeah but the children are just, like, well, they’re kids, “They were there, but it didn’t really affect them”. That’s what they need to know – it does.”

Listening to young people affected by domestic abuse

3.7 Young people were unanimous that children and young people affected by domestic abuse *should* be asked if they want to be involved. Young people felt that “People would only volunteer if they were happy enough to talk about it” (J), agreeing that it “should be the person’s decision not someone else’s” (M) and that it was “always best to make your own decisions in life” (M). They felt it was “pointless” (J) asking other children who haven’t been through it as “they’ve never experienced it” (M). It was important to concentrate on those with experience directly:

M: “‘Cos then you’re getting from them what they felt like through it all, and that they wouldn’t want to see anyone else going through it as well.”

Those who had experienced domestic abuse did not want others to go through it, but if others did go through it, they wanted them to get more and better help. They were all confident that *they* were in the best position to advise on what would improve the lives of children affected by domestic abuse:

SC: “We’ve had the support. We’ve seen what’s right and what’s wrong, so we would have the best perception of how to improve it.”

SC went on to emphasise that the young people themselves were most informed about what worked and didn’t work for children, “an opinion can never be wrong but some opinions are more informed than others”.

Young people’s concerns about meeting Ministers

3.8 Young people talked about their expectations of the meeting with Ministers, saying they wanted the Ministers “Just to listen.” (S), and not only to listen, one said “I want answers.” (MG). They all agreed that they wanted Ministers to “take on board” (L) what they were saying. When facilitators asked if the young people had any worries about going to the Parliament, they were expecting personal worries, for example, being nervous. However, all the young people talked about being worried about the *outcome* of the meeting. Their main concerns were whether the Ministers would listen and whether it would make a difference.

CH: “Any worries about going to Parliament?”

M: Only worry is that, if we went there and they didn’t listen to anything, and didn’t take anything into consideration at all.

J: What I was wondering, what they find out from us, how would they carry it across? How would they do the actions they say that they will? Well, if they say.”

They were also worried that Ministers might listen but that any action would be “too late” (SC) and Women’s Aid would lose money and workers again. “Or they do listen to you and just say, “Aye right ok”, and just dinnae do anything with it.” (MG). There was scepticism about politicians amongst all the young people, even though one wanted to be a politician, albeit “a different politician”, “a very truthful politician”, with “complete evidence” (MG)!

MG: “Aye. They say, “Aye, right, OK, but they don’t, they’re kinda clever ‘cos they don’t make promises, because so many years down the line you can say “You said that you’re gonna do this”, so they don’t really say. I feel they didn’t say, “Right, we will get so many blah blah for this area”. It’s basically just, “We hear what you’re saying, we’ll dae somethin about it”, but they don’t say “I am going to do this” in case they’re quoted on, and so, when we hear back a couple of years later, we can’t say, “You said you’re going to do that but you actually didnae”.”

SC: AKA politicians.

MG: Yeah.

[laughter]”

The shared concern was that they wouldn't really be listened to, or that it would be a token effort and nothing would happen as a result of the meeting.

Ministers' role

3.9 The Ministers' role was discussed with clippings from the Parliament website - young people interpreted this in straight forward manner "They're the ones who control everything we're involved in" (SC). Young people reassured each other to not be nervous in the meeting "You shouldnae be afraid of them, they're just people, only thing is they're just really high up" (MG). They were interested in their lives and roles, had a laugh about them being "just three old people" (SC) and in one group commented on the "stereotype politician" (J) - white, male, older. The diagram of the whole Parliament and government was used to show the structure and the make-up of the Parliament, with the visit to the Parliament giving a context and understanding.

Ministers' views of the meeting and its impact

3.10 The three Ministers met with the six young people on September 18th 2007 in the Scottish Parliament. Ministers were impressed with the six young people from the beginning and appreciated young people's preparation for the meeting:

FE: "I must say I'm really impressed with the way you've done your presentations- crisp and confident. You've all plainly thought about what you want to say and there's a clear message coming forward and that's what we want.

After the young people had introduced themselves and spoken a little of their involvement, they went on to tell Ministers of their own priorities for action. Following this the young people opened the meeting for Ministers questions. This part of the meeting was very important to the young people who were pleased with the response and questions from the Ministers.

3.11 Ministers particularly appreciated young people's honesty and clarity about the situation of domestic abuse, acknowledging that it had deepened their understanding. They were impressed with the young people's ability to "say it straight" (FE) and the way they spoke and handled the meeting "I must say I am really impressed with the way that you've each, all of you, done it, thank you very much." (FE). They agreed that meeting the young people had increased their understanding about domestic abuse and the effects on children, and what would make things better:

*FE: "I found the way you described your situation today was really very clear. As Adam says, that's very useful because it's helped me to understand problems more than if I had all these papers. We get papers all the time, sometimes you wonder what's it about, and even after some of the meetings with some of the officials have no clue what it's about- really, what is this, rebadging this, send this message – what? Say it straight mate, y'know.
[laughter]"*

Young people in one hour had made a big difference to how Ministers understood the problems, and Ministers had gained some of the knowledge and understanding that the young people were looking for in all adults:

FE: "I've certainly found it's given me an understanding when I didn't really have one before at all."

3.12 The Minister for Children and Early Years related specifically how what the young people had said would relate to the development of the children's Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan. He stated that what young people said - about not only their experiences but their views on what should happen – would help Ministers when making decisions in the future.

AI: "I certainly found that very interesting and useful. Ministers will be viewing the findings of the Domestic Abuse Advisory Group that's currently working in the area and coming up with some proposals, you're obviously aware. So, hopefully, Ministers will be asked to make some decisions in the near future, and I think, having heard directly from you and your own experiences and what you think, will obviously help us when we're making those decisions."

L: Glad to hear it!

[laughter]"

He also stated that their views on what could improve could be worked through straight away in the areas where there was a pathfinder relating to domestic abuse in Scotland.

AI: "You're probably aware of the pathfinding project on Getting it right for every child – in Falkirk, Edinburgh, Dumfries and Galloway, Clydebank – so, hopefully these kinda things that you're telling us here today, they're being worked through in some of these areas, and typically, mirror, too. Well, soon, we might be able to get some proposals coming forward that we can actually put on the ground to improve the situation as we're very concerned."

FE: Thank you very much indeed for coming to see us."

Young people's views on the meeting with Ministers

3.13 Young people spoke immediately after the meeting about how they felt about it. They all felt positive and thought it went "good" or even "absolutely fantastic" and, most importantly, that the Ministers had listened to them.

MG: "They understood and listened to everyone's comments and listened very well. Just the way they were taking an interest in what we were saying and, as I was saying, interrupting us and they were quoting us."

They could tell that Ministers listened by their responses and "Cos they asked questions - could tell they listened" (S), it was important that "they got all our names right" (MG and SC). Ministers asked questions of all of the young people about what they each had said should change, to young people this was evidence that the Ministers had listened: "cos they had quotes you could tell." (J) Also they could tell that Mr Maxwell was interested as when he had to leave early he "asked for the transcript when he left" (J) - so he did want to hear

more - though it would have been better if he hadn't been "clockwatching" (M). Three thought they should have given more time with Ministers.

SG: "The limited amount of time in which we had to speak to Ministers themselves was disappointing. Although we managed our time effectively, we could have said a lot more if we weren't limited to only an hour."

However, they felt that the two Ministers staying longer than the hour allocated was really positive:

M: "Cos they were interested and they did seem impressed that's why they gave you extra time."

Just after the meeting they all agreed laughing "If you don't do nothing we'll get ye." (MG) and agreed strongly with M's suggestion that they "should come back and check".

Young people's feedback

3.14 The young people gave feedback after the meeting via email, text and a questionnaire. They still felt very positive about the meeting, that it was a "great experience", it was "friendly" and not as daunting as feared. The whole project evaluated well and all were happy with the preparation sessions and co-facilitation, saying they had nothing to improve. They liked meeting new people "interesting to hear what they think" (J), and it was "enjoyable", "fun", nice food and accommodation, and good to discuss priorities with other young people. They all concurred that they'd had a "great opportunity" to meet with government Ministers and this was the focus of the feedback. They wrote about how they felt listened to and also how being involved had made them feel:

MG: "Yeah I though it went really well. The ministers felt really interested on what we were saying it was great...I felt they were really keen on listening to what we had to say which was a really good feeling."

SC: "I felt that it went well. It was a good sign that after we had outlined our priorities the Ministers did have questions and concerns to discuss with us. Hopefully they will have taken what we said on board."

J: "I think that it went great! As everyone got their point across, we were all listened to, and the Ministers even stayed 10 minutes extra! The Ministers also felt that they were more aware of the effects of domestic abuse after listening to us...I thought it was very good that the ministers showed an interest and asked questions which shows that they want to know more about domestic abuse and hopefully do something about it."

One young person liked the fact that "Ministers were really down to earth and didn't seem posh as I thought they would" (MG), another that he spoke to his constituency MSP. One person was cautious about his approach

M: "I couldn't say really if it went well or not. It depends whether they listened or not."

This caution was felt by all young people in texts received following the meeting and following the thank you letter and token.

Making a difference

3.15 The young people were asked if they felt they had made a difference, as that had been their collective hope for the project. One young person gave the same answer as to whether he felt listened to and whether he had made a difference “I hope so, if not I’m going back” (M).

MG: “In a way yes! They wouldn’t have known what young people were thinking if we didn’t go”,

J: “Well I’d like to think I have made a difference; it is up to the Ministers to make it happen”

SC: “Hopefully. From past experience working on other campaigns, we won’t know for some time, but I’m sure Claire will keep us up to date”.

All of the young people were extremely keen to get feedback, as they wouldn’t know if they actually had made a difference - this depended on the Ministers, on government action and funding.

Being involved

3.16 They fed back on their experience of being involved in the project, all were pleased at “being able to help others” (S):

MG: “Fantastic! I love to help and always will, it’s such a good feeling to know you are contributing to such a good thing and I will always help when asked.”

SC: “All of the campaigns I have been involved with have been important to me, as spreading the word about domestic abuse, housing, refuges and other issues is something I feel strongly about. I also feel that it is a great way of showing my gratitude for all the help Women’s Aid have given me.”

MG: “I owe a lot to domestic abuse and Women’s Aid and will always be happy to help.”

SC: “I’m in it for life.”

The young people all thanked Ministers for the meeting, extended their thanks for making it enjoyable and “not a daunting process” (MG). All young people agreed to be contacted again with two especially saying to make sure we contact them in the future for campaigns and help if needed.

Feedback to the young people

3.17 At the time of writing, young people had received a thank you from the Ministers for participating in the project. They were grateful and thought it was “really nice of them”, but their texts yet again concentrated on whether there had been any action for children

“S: Gd about the Ministers, are they doing enythin about it?”

“SC: You can tell them no thanks are necessary as long as they’ve listened.”

Young people agreed to their transcript and report to be shared with the Delivery Group and were pleased that the group accepted their recommendations, through ensuring that they were covered in the draft proposals and making amendments, including adding the different forms of communication priority.

3.18 Young people showed particular interest in the 22nd November 2007 Parliamentary Debate on “A better future for Scotland’s children: ending domestic abuse against women” (Scottish Parliament Col 3741 – Col 3779). Young people were delighted about the government announcement that it would

“...invest some £40 million over three years to improve the lives of children and young people who experience domestic abuse and to tackle the wider issues of male violence against women”.

Mr Ingram paid tribute to the young people’s contribution in his opening speech

“Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram): A substantial amount of work will involve the implementation of the national domestic abuse delivery plan for children and young people and the getting it right pathfinder. That work has been and will continue to be informed by the involvement of young people. Indeed, the Minister for Communities and Sport, the Minister for Community Safety and I had the opportunity to meet six remarkable young people who have experienced domestic abuse. Their priorities and views have shaped the development of the delivery plan.” (Col 3471)

Mr Maxwell in his closing speech announced that the government was committed to the three “P’s” of the Scottish domestic abuse strategy – protection, provision and prevention, and announced that there was a fourth “P” which was participation

“The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell):... Participation: We engage in partnership with women who experience violence and domestic abuse, we are now working to increase involvement of children in that work. Their participation has been welcome over recent years.”

3.19 One young person listened to the live broadcast and phoned to say it “went so well I was impressed” (L), she was delighted about the funding and also with what the two Ministers that she had met said during the debate (she did complain at the other MSPs being rude to Mr Maxwell at the close). The other young people received extracts and a link by email and one thought it “looks great” and said “I’m glad to hear that we made a difference”

(SC). One young person's text summarises what the author is sure would be the view of all the young people involved :

M: "That's a lot of money that they are planning but as long as it helps change the future I am happy."

Summary

3.20 This chapter related young people's views on their participation in this project and the meeting with Ministers. It covers Ministers views on the young people's participation and comments on their influence and role in government plans

- Young people wanted to be involved to make a difference, achieve change, build on previous achievements, keep services going, help people understand more about domestic abuse, and to give something back
- Young people felt it was very important to share their views *and* the views of others
- Young people felt strongly that they had a difference perspective from adults and that adults couldn't speak for them
- Young people felt it was very important to speak to children who had been through domestic abuse as only they understood what it was like
- Young people felt they were in the unique position of having used services and seen what did and didn't work, giving them a unique perspective on how to improve it
- Ministers thought the young people were remarkable and their contribution useful, interesting, informative, clear
- Young people felt listened to and positive about the meeting
- Ministers said they would consider what the young people had said when making future decisions about policy, proposals and funding – in relation to the delivery plan and pathfinder
- Young people felt the priority was for Ministers to act and improve things for children: they were very keen to get feedback on whether things had changed and they had made a difference
- Ministers paid tribute to the young people at the Parliamentary Debate and announced significant new investment

ANNEX 1 TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

Transcript of the meeting of 18th September 2007 at the Scottish Parliament: meeting of young people and Ministers to discuss young people's priorities for action to help children affected by domestic abuse in Scotland

Introductions

SC: I'm SC, I'm 20 and from X, Ayrshire. I'm at X University doing a M.Engineering in Computer Science, interested in the video game industry, a/v hardware and building PCs. I became involved in 2001 as one of the first young people to receive children's counselling at Women's Aid who didn't live in refuge – I stayed at my aunts when we were homeless, and have been involved since. I am involved because I think it's important, want to give something back, and because of the achievements over the last few years.

M: I'm M, I'm 17, I'm interested in music and drama. I got involved through Barnardo's where I was involved in focus groups, advisory groups and helped work with and continued to the end result [the publication of the 'Moving House' research']. I've felt that I'm doing something that will help others, and hopefully make a difference and change the future.

J: I'm J. I'm 15, I was born in England but moved here when I was 8. I enjoy reading books and debating at school. I became involved in this project via Women's Aid and I was involved in the focus groups which then led on to the Moving House research project. It was the first project which has involved children, which was me and M, in the advisory group, and the research is due to be published in November. I've enjoyed very much being in this project, it's nice to contribute to something like this and hopefully make a difference.

S: Hi I'm S, I'm 16 years old and I'm from Glasgow. I enjoy football, golf and spending time with friends. I took part in the Listen Louder Campaign to improve refuge facilities and to help build more refuges all over Scotland. I felt it was fun being involved in this campaign. I enjoyed sharing my views with Members of the Parliament.

L: My name's L, I'm 16, I originally lived in the east but I moved to the Orkney Islands when I was 6 years old. I volunteer on a Tuesday at Orkney Women's Aid to do activities with children that are in the refuge, I also do a lot of work with the children's worker cos she's only part time, so I give her a hand with her big workload. I do a lot of babysitting as well generally because I really enjoy working with children. I got involved in this project personally working with Willie Smail from Aberdeen Uni, I did a couple of training sessions for the Children's Panel and social work, and members of the police, to raise the issue of domestic abuse – we did it in Orkney, Aberdeen & Edinburgh as well. I've really enjoyed being involved with it so far because I've really enjoyed seeing the change that's happened and the difference that it's made. For example, 3 months after the first training session in Orkney, two cases of domestic abuse were picked up by members of the Children's Panel - they said that they wouldn't have picked it up if they hadn't been at that training session.

MG: Hiya, my name is M. I'm 19, I was born in Glasgow but I moved around for a couple of years in refuges but now I'm settled in S and have been for 9 years. When I have the right qualifications I would like to be a politician. One of my greatest achievements was meeting Christine Aguilera, she was supporting the Listen Louder campaign and the government's

campaign against domestic abuse. I became involved with this at a very young age through refuge research, I also made a DVD for Listen Louder about outreach. I think at the time it was important for others to hear what your views were. I was the first teenager to address the Scottish Parliament for funding for support workers. I love been involved and have done since the moment I started doing it. I think it's really important for people to hear what you have to say and especially when you are young 'cos younger people don't normally get the chance to speak of what their views are, and it's a great way to express your views.

SM: I'm Stewart Maxwell, I'm 43, though look older [laughter].

(SC. I have the reverse problem [laughter])

SM: I had that problem when I was younger but it's gone the other way now. I am the Minister for Community and Sport and we've all been in the job for about 4 months now. I'm from Glasgow as you can tell from my accent. Before being a politician I worked for the fire brigade – 10 years in Strathclyde Fire Service, and before that worked with adults with literacy and numeracy problems, voluntary projects with those with long term unemployment helping them back into the labour market. That's my background before that Glasgow College of Technology – Glasgow Caledonian now, did social science, was at Kings Park secondary school. That's a rough potted history of me.

Fergus Ewing (FE): - Is it me now?

I'm older than him [laughter] though still possess a comb, Stewart! [laughter]

I used to be a lawyer -solicitor before and practised in Glasgow. Born in Queens Park and for last 8 years have been a politician. MG you've made a good choice, it's very rare I actually come across any people your age that actually say I want to be a politician. I didn't decide 'til I was over 30 so I'm a slow starter, so you're way ahead of me already. I must say I'm really impressed with the way you've done your presentations- crisp and confident, you've all plainly thought about what you want to say and a clear message is coming forward and that's what we want.

Adam Ingram (AI): I'm afraid I appear to be the oldest person here [laughter]

FE: 'Grandad!' [laughter]

AI: I'm the Minister for Children and the Early Years. I have four children of my own roughly your ages: the youngest 18 and eldest 23. My background - from Kilmarnock so I support Kilmarnock football and I did play golf 'til I got this job, and unfortunately not been able to get out this summer at all.

SM: Why not?

AI: So dedicated [laughter]. Before I was a politician I had a varied career, started off as a baker in the family business, then went to college and did an economics degree, and ended up being a consultant. Consultants, you know, borrow your watch and tell you the time [laughter]. So that's my background.

FM: My name is Fiona Morrison, I'm 26 years old. I work for Scottish Women's Aid and so far I have being involved in helping children and young people be involved in the moving house research. So far I've enjoyed working and learning with children and young people about their experiences of domestic abuse and what they think could happen to make that better.

CH: I'm Claire Houghton. I'm only 6 years younger than Stewart Maxwell so doing pretty well I think! [laughter] I worked for Women's Aid when I was in Dundee, I came here 18 years ago to Dundee University, worked for Scottish Women's Aid for years and for the last

couple of years worked at Scottish Executive. Now, I'm one of those consultants Adam Ingram mentioned, actually doing nothing because SC and these brilliant young people have organised things for themselves for this project and they know what they want to say, so I'm going to say nothing.

SM: Tell us a bit about the project, or am I interfering with your script?! [laughter]

SC: I've been involved since 2001 and many, many different campaigns and met up with so many different people I've lost track at least 20-30 times literally; been at Kilmarnock Hotel, Ayr, up here several times, Glasgow, everywhere. The biggest campaign of course was the Listen Louder campaign and that was 3 times that happened, I only attended twice. We gathered the views and opinions of children and young people and produced several documentaries to just get the message out to the media to listen to us, well not me, I'm 20 now, to listen to young people and children, it's *their* views that matter. Other campaigns - I have spoken to Margaret the Housing Minister¹ and spoke to her Glasgow group, also been working getting on funds for Ayr constituency and other constituencies for Women's Aid. So, I've been involved in many campaigns but essentially the main groundline is we want you to listen to us, about what to do and I know you're a new government and Labour did do some good things, but we want to make it better with the change in new government, so...yep. And so at this point we, all of us in preparing for this, have written down a number of priorities: now you can interrupt us at any point if you need to ask us a questions about whatever we're talking about, however we're kinda stuck for time considering we have to end at quarter past now, we originally allocated ten minutes at the end for you.

SM: It doesn't have to end then. I have to leave at quarter past, you don't.

SC: So, we'll still have extra time for you to ask any specific questions that perhaps weren't relevant at the time. It's imperative that all six of us get our priorities out of the way so that's the thing that we'll do first.

Young people's Priorities

SC: I've got three priorities, the first of which is outreach because that's the one most relevant to me, my own individual story.

Support workers and outreach workers are slightly different, and I'm sure you know something about this, but outreach support workers differ from support workers, as the support workers work at a refuge or the office, but outreach workers work in the office and to those that are not in refuges, are facing housing difficulties or staying with relatives, or whatever, experiencing domestic abuse in their home. The big advantage that outreach workers have is that they can go out to see the people but you can also go see them at the offices or whatever, so that's great. My support workers was D, I had her from 2001-2002 and I refrain from saying counselling because I have had counselling at Strathdown House² in Ayr and that was a very different experience. What I had from Women's Aid was like talking to a friend, it was very one-to-one but you didn't have to talk about anything, any of your

¹ Margaret Curran MSP, then Minister for Social Justice (including Housing) and Chair of the National Group to Address Violence Against Women which SC spoke to.

² NHS facility

difficulties, you could talk about what was on television last night, your hobbies. As it went on you'd trust the person more and more, and one of the main things that impressed me about the service, and I think I was one of the first, if not *the* first especially in my area to receive the service, was that they used a number of different innovative means of communicating support. That is, we could go on computers, we would go out, we went bowling, once, D and another support worker, S, took me and my mother out and we would discuss problems from both ends – my mother's point of view and mine as well. So, the other important thing is that the outreach workers and support workers don't just help young people and children, they also help the adults. However, they are mainly there for the young people and children, which is the most important thing. Now, children and young people don't always have to identify themselves, or don't want to identify themselves, as experiencing domestic abuse and that's something where the outreach workers greatly help, they keep everything confidential, everything you say to them it's just to a friend, you trust them - that's what I'm trying to say, it's really important. I'll be talking about this in a minute, but there's a great stigma attached to people experiencing domestic abuse or who have lost their home or who are in a refuge, and that extra trust really makes a difference.

Speaking of that stigma that gets attached, I'll be talking about schools and M will be talking about that in a moment, but when you're at school and you're in a situation like this, teachers don't always understand. They don't know how to react to you. Sometimes some of them get it, some of them don't. So I think we need to teach teachers how to respect the pupils experiencing situations, maybe make allowances. Now that sounds like an excuse but if you've got a big homework assignment and you're sleeping on a floor, or you come in late, they don't get it and you try to explain it to them and they just say "Right, that's an excuse, "Whatever!". They won't believe you. Not only is teachers an issue, it's also students at the schools. They sometimes won't treat you very nicely at all [young people all nod agreement] and I've personal experience of this, and this all over can lead to students being very depressed and not wanting to go to school, at all. So it's important that we change that and get students and teachers and staff to understand this.

On that issue, cooperation between agencies is another important factor, law enforcement are usually the first on the scene when there's an incident of domestic abuse and they communicate information about what's happened to other agencies. So I think the communication needs to improve between law enforcement and school. So, if there's been an incident of domestic abuse, then the school knows about it but it's still private enough that it's confidential. Like the student's not going to get the stigma attached again, but the teachers are going to know so they treat the students better, and even health authorities or housing, again, because I lost my home, so maybe help them get a house quicker. That's what Scottish Women's Aid helped us do.

The one last thing I want to say about schools is maybe teaching people who are not necessarily in a domestic abuse situation about domestic abuse. Now that's definitely improved, but there still isn't a lot of recognition so I think that needs to improve.

Last thing I want to say, because otherwise I could go on for hours, is about groupwork. Now, D, my support worker – well outreach worker technically - arranged 'after support' in 2003-4, once my support was over. An 'after support groupwork session' - it would take a number of individuals who have been experiencing support after domestic abuse and we'd meet together and just have a good time, kinda like a club, but we'd be able to talk serious if we needed to and you ended up trusting this group of people, too, and that really helped,

being able to go out and do extra curricula activities but having this group of trusting friends really helps you get on the right track after such a low point in your life. I attended this three times, no sorry many times, but in 3 full sessions of 6 months or whatever. The first time was a group for older people, then it was a group for older people and younger people, then a group of older people again because we found that mixing older people and younger people didn't work so well. So, we think there should be groups for older people and groups for younger people, because as you can tell people who are in their adolescence versus children have very different issues to talk about. Now D did this all in her spare time but she was only able to do it thanks to funding we attained. One thing I want to say about D is she no longer works for Scottish Women's Aid, we lost her due to lack of funding, so while I and many others were successful in attaining more funds it was too little, too late, so we need more. And that's me.

M: I have four priorities I'm gonna talk about and my first one would be about schools, and like SC was going on about them. It would be making more help available at school as well as outside school. I, like some children and young people, accessed help at school through guidance teachers but it's not the help that they need. So, maybe having, like, training for them, so that they're able to discuss these issues with them, and like when I was at school we had support workers who would take you out of classes if you needed to, you'd drop in at lunchtimes, breaktimes, and you were able to talk to them about bullying, anything you wanted to - sport, the weather, anything, and I may go on about support workers in a minute - maybe just someone they can actually talk to like a friend.

Before I go on about support workers, I'm going to put down that everybody needs one. Well, not everyone but somebody that needs one, they need support workers to go on about issues such as everyone gets through it differently. Some people self harm, i.e. myself. Some people get through it without even using it as an excuse. Some people don't get through it at all and live in their adulthoods. Some people don't get through it and don't get a chance to, because they take their life. But I'm going to stop going on about that part and get on with this.

Support workers like Women's Aid, Barnardo's and Social Work, have a one-to-one person who could talk to you, where you can trust on both sides- they trust you and you trust them. Some children and young people have support workers, some don't, if they do they need someone that they can trust and confide in, i.e. Women's Aid, Barnardo's and Social Work – them. They have 1-2-1 for them that children and young people can trust and I've got a quote from the young boy aged 10 he says 'try to tell someone you can trust'³. That's basically my support worker one.

I've got one about publicity. It's about getting it out, let people know that the help is there, and it can be accessed through schools and other organisations. Not a lot of children and young people that go through domestic abuse know where the help is and how to access it, and you need to let them know. Some that don't go through domestic abuse, but know someone that is going through it, might want to seek help so that they could help their friend. So, therefore, they could get as much information as possible and so they could pass it on.

The last thing I'm gonna talk about is local authorities and city councils, is getting local authorities and councils to help with helping change the future, i.e. building their own

³ Moving House Research (Stafford et al 2007), M was a member of the research advisory group.

refuges, or helping make it better in areas where refuges are. The reason for this is 'cos local authorities and councils can get people in youth buildings, or in a place where children and young people will want to go, i.e. youth drop in, library, clinic or even a hospital. The councils run children and young people groups, i.e. back in Dundee we've got 'The Shore' and 'The Corner' and where they know that children and young people will want to go, and will go, where they can access help that they actually need and require there, so they provide lots of different help for different scenarios, and I'm gonna shut up on that one.

J: I've got three main priorities, the first one is to make moving house and refuge life better for children and young people, as it would make the situation a whole lot better if it can be done smoothly. It is important as domestic abuse can be a traumatic experience, and it is important when children are leaving homes because of the perpetrator that there is somewhere safe they can go and call home while waiting to be re-housed. It is also imperative that the child or young person and parent can be re-housed fairly quickly, so they can get on with their life and not be stuck in a refuge. Although the conditions of refuges have improved a lot it does not mean that re-housing should be delayed.

My next point is different ages of children and young people require different services from a refuge. Young children are relentless and very adaptable to any situation and for them refuge life would be much easier and they would not notice or be aware of their situation as much as older children are. Older children in their teens are a whole different category, and the teenage years are difficult alone without having to suffer the effects of domestic abuse. So, for them, the refuge should be suited to them such as having a separate area from young children, so they can have their space and alone time to relax. So, it should be noted that the requirements for young children and older children are very different.

My next point is when leaving their homes, children and young people may not even be aware that they are going, i.e. being misled by a parent. Mum said I was going to the zoo but you know... as in the research that we conducted, we've got a quote from a 14 year old girl:

"No, I didn't know we were moving, because my mum told my dad we were going to the chippy for his dinner; and eventually she coaxed me out of the house because that was when she was trying to get away from my dad.... And my mum laughs at it now and say's that'll be the chippy he's waited longest for." (Girl 14 in Stafford et al 2007)

So this quote shows that the girl was misled by her mother to leave and so she wouldn't have had the time to gather her most precious possessions. So what I'm trying to say is the littlest things can make a huge difference to a child or young person. So I think it would be in the interest for the child to have some cash help to replace their toys or possessions.

S: Hi, I bring up two points here but the main one is about the refuges. I believe that all refuges should be up to the same high standard such as the new refuge in Stirling⁴. This refuge has your own apartment in it and your own shower, kitchen etc. and you have separate rooms for young children and young people, 'cos they'll have different interests. Other refuges don't have such luxuries as they all have to share the same bath and cook in the same

⁴ S made recommendations as part of the Refuge Research (2003) and has seen plans that incorporated many of the young people's recommendations. S updates us that the refuge is at foundation stage at present.

kitchen. The new Stirling refuge was introduced because of a previous Listen Louder Campaign I was involved in. There are still lots of underprivileged refuges all over Scotland.

My second point is follow-on groups. Some of the children and young people feel they still need their children's supporters to talk to after they have left the refuge. Follow on groups lets the children meet their children's supporter weekly so that the children supporters can see if the kids are coping with moving on, and they can be there to offer the kids support and advice that they may not want to seek from their parents.

L: My two points I want to bring up are more about support workers, and, more advertising of organisations that are available for dealing with domestic abuse, but focussed on the children and young people. Personally, when I experienced this domestic abuse I never had a support worker due to the fact there was no funding for a support worker. I lived in Orkney and as far as they were concerned there was no reason for someone like that. I always felt like I wanted somebody to speak to because I was feeling like I was just piling and piling it all on myself. I always noticed that my mum had somebody to speak to, there was plenty of help for adults but I was quite jealous of it to be honest with you, because I always felt that I wanted somebody to speak to, to help me unload some of the things off myself. I couldn't really talk to my mum about things, no matter how close we were, because it was her that I was trying to protect. It was all to do wi' her that I was wanting to talk to somebody about. Due to the fact I never spoke, well, I feel that due to the fact that I never had somebody to speak to, I've just spent the past five years of my life speaking to a mental health nurse twice a week. The first couple of years were basically me being forced into going, but I decided to go because I would help my mum why doing it, because she was so worried about me, but I think by, just like SC said about support workers, it made me think as well about how you're not sitting there talking to someone about what's going on at home, you're relaxed, in a relaxed atmosphere and that could have been avoided, that the past five years of me dealing with this could have been avoided, and then I might have been able to get over it quicker.

The other point I wanted to make is about the advertising of organisations. There's plenty of, no I wont say plenty, there's lots of campaigns going on that are targeted at adults for domestic abuse, but young people and children don't even know some of them that - say organisations like Women's Aid -even exist, 'cos they haven't had things like campaigns pointed in their direction. So I think that needs to change a bit more as well.

MG: The two priorities I'm going to speak about are support workers, but from a different angle from what other people have talked about, and different forms of communication. Now I came up to the Parliament in 2002 and actually spoke to the Petitions Committee on more outreach workers and follow on support workers in Scotland. At that time there was 3 outreach and 6 follow on workers, that was in the whole of Scotland, now that has been improved because there is now 3 workers to every WA group, but its still not enough. It should be proportional to the size of the areas, for example if you have Glasgow and Ayr - 1 worker in Glasgow 1 in Ayr -and Glasgow's substantially bigger than Ayr. It shouldn't be on a first come first served basis. If you feel you have to see your worker then you should be able to see them without them having to say "I need to go and check my diary" or whatever. I feel that every child that needs one should have one.

Second thing is forms of communication: the first thing I'm gonna talk about is the website. When I was at college I was actually doing an essay on domestic abuse and Women's Aid. I went onto the website to get ideas about Women's Aid and domestic abuse and it wasn't a

good website at all. It was just a website full of pages and pages of just words and not many people would take the time to go through it. That website is actually now shut down. There should be a more child-friendly website made up, that should be easy to navigate, that isn't boring. An idea is it should be a children-run website and children contribute to it. Another idea that I had was it could be advertised on the msn and bebo. That's, if you don't know what that is, that's well looked at sites that young people tend to look at. It should be eye-catching and it is important that they don't have to identify themselves. There is also email – you could have your support worker's individual email address or if you couldn't, didn't have that, there should be like an email address of a central support worker who could give you a support worker in your area. The helpline at the moment is geared towards adults and isn't accessible for kids or young people. I know there is ChildLine but ChildLine doesn't do the job, as it's directed to children and it doesn't help the entire family.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say thanks for listening and we hope you take what we're saying on board.

Discussion and Ministers Questions

SC: At this point, I was just going to say if you want to ask any questions now would be the opportunity, or if any of us have missed any of the points we can speak here and bring them up again but I know you have to go at quarter past so...

SM: I do yes. On you go.

AI (Adam Ingram): Given my education hat, could maybe talk a wee bit about the experience in schools? At one point you said, or one of you said, that while there was a support or guidance teacher at school to go to, they didn't actually give you what you needed in terms of support. So what would you like to see actually in schools that would help deal with the situation that young people are in? I take it there'll be stuff like bullying and things like that going on too?

M: Yeah, guidance teachers are there, but they are there for if you're not keeping up with school, attendance is poor, and they're meant to be there for bullying as well but through bullying at schools the help was never used.

MG: I think them just having knowledge of domestic abuse would probably help.

SC: Yeah that's a good point, yeah.

M: The school I was at, we had the support workers that were there, there was two of them that were there who actually did it voluntarily, they came up and did it out of their own free will and that, they take people away, speak to them and that, but they didn't have the knowledge of domestic abuse so wouldn't know how to sit and talk to someone about it, just someone who has knowledge.

SC: Yeah, I had a guidance teacher Mr S. He himself was quite good, but he was also dealing with like more other troubled teens who were not attending classes and whatever, so he was always busy with that. I think what we need is someone who does that – keeps up with people who don't attend classes or missing for health reasons blah blah blah, and someone else actually a dedicated person who speaks to you about issues, domestic abuse issues or issues like that at home, a separate staff member.

M: Yeah.

L: Also would just like to say that that would be, because not everyone goes through domestic abuse, I don't think that having someone there specifically for domestic abuse because that means...

SC: Yeah, covering that area.

L: Yeah, somebody in school has got a problem - an emotional problem or something, they can go and speak to them, then there's a bigger chance of getting that help there and that person.

SC: Someone who really is a guidance counsellor not a 'check your attendance' guy.

AI: Calls for some systematic training, maybe like L has obviously experience of training in awareness of domestic abuse and what needs to happen, in terms of providing a confidential, listening ear [young people nod], is what you're looking for. What was your experience L?

L: What we did was quite different as members of a children's panel. We did a simulated hearing, it was actually with real members of the panel, but we managed, we were trying to show, the control aspects of domestic abuse and it was like all controlled by a click of a pen, but that's not really relevant to that sort of person like that, but what I mainly did was I was asked along to give them my life story, tell them, go through the nitty gritty, just try and explain to somebody what it feels like to go through something like that.

SC: I think until you've experienced it you don't really know what you're dealing with.

L: Yes, you don't know what you're dealing with but that's giving them a better aspect.

SC: A reference, a proper reference, yes.

AI: What you were saying about teachers and schools is

SC: Yeah, exactly, they just push it off as another excuse.

M: Yeah. When you come in the teachers also judge you by what you're wearing and things like that [others nod]. If you're going through it you're not going to exactly, going to be able to get all the best of stuff, and your main priority is to get into a safe situation.

S: Expensive blazers and ties 'n'...

M: Yeah, and the teachers also judge you about the way you look and that, just they've not got the support or they're not given the training to support you through that as well.

AI: So, basically you're looking for a much greater awareness amongst teachers?

Young people: Yes, definitely [all nod]

AI: and you're also looking for some specialist or somebody in the school that can actually help?

Young people: Yes [all nod]

SC: In each school there should be a separate person who deals with this and perhaps the teachers can ask that person and learn from them as well so that would benefit them.

M: Not even just a separate person who is in the school for that, just someone that does know, or if they know it anyway, just so it's brought up into the whole thing.

SM: I wanted to ask about your point Scott about cross agency cooperation – I presume you mean cross agency *lack* of cooperation?

SC: Yes, lack of. That was really my point, yeah.

SM: Is there an issue then, you mentioned police who are usually, often, first port of call, and clearly a link between them and the schools, you also mentioned health boards? I imagine one of the issues which has come up from various people is clearly related to housing, many talk about refuges, but most people don't end up in refuges, most people don't go through that system, whereas yourself said you didn't go through a refuge system. Is there a problem

and I imagine there is here, of a breakdown between agencies such as police and others and local authorities and housing departments and...?

SC: I don't even think the council had any idea what happened in our house and were like "OK you've lost your home, we'll put you on the list for your area". We lost our home in September and we got a home the next July - the following July, and that was only with Women's Aid in X pestering them constantly.

SM: Can I ask around the room though, in those cases where the abuser is removed from the home and they can be declared homeless, or they can declare themselves homeless, they have to be housed by the local authority. I wondered about possible experience of how that impacts, if there's a lack of coordination between those authorities that know the background to that individual's circumstances and..?

SC: Good point, they wouldn't understand

SM: And then the housing authorities that then have to house them, they don't know so they end up getting a house in same area?

SC: Very good point, you'd want them further away.

SM: Further away.

SC: When it happened to me, my father received a court order that he wasn't allowed near us. He came back the next day anyway but that's another matter. That was another thing I was going to mention actually, we had to go to a lawyer the next day a lawyer in [another town, names the street] actually, there's a lawyer on there and we had to go in there the next day and tell the lawyers what had happened and then we came back and then something else happened. So, I mean, if we hadn't had to tell the lawyers what had happened, we wouldn't have left our home in the first place and it was when we were coming back that the second incident occurred, so that means that second incident could have probably been avoided. I also think the police should have been checking up on us but that's another thing.

SM: Your basic point is there is clearly a lack of information sharing between agencies.

SC: Definitely.

SM: Can and possibly often does create problems that could be avoided if they were just working a bit smarter.

SC: Yes, definitely.

Young people: Yes.

SM: I apologise, I have to leave but once again thank you very much for you taking your time but I mean there's a transcript I'll get.

SC: Take this with you [given DVD of Scottish Women's Aid's Listen Louder film].

SM: Thanks very much [SM leaves].

AI: Just about everything relates to support workers or outreach workers and the lack of them and the need to provide funds for more outreach work.

S: Yes.

AI: I haven't got much of a feel for what the situation is out in the country. M you mentioned there was three...?

MG: Aye, there's 3 workers for every Women's Aid group.

SC: And that's after an improvement, beforehand it was nothing like that, that was after a lot of campaigning.

MG: There was nine, like combined outreach workers and [follow on] support workers there was nine in the whole of Scotland⁵ –that was when I came up to the Petitions Committee

⁵ Approximately three quarters of the Women's Aid groups also had (on average) one part time support worker specifically for children living in refuges, a quarter had no support worker.

2002 and it changed. They obviously funded it and now there's three per Women's Aid but that's still substantially not enough.

SC: Yeah, because one of the great things about it, when I went into it I was one of the first which meant there wasn't many at the time, which meant whenever I met up with D [outreach support worker] she would just hand me her diary and say, "when do you want to meet?". That's what I want everybody to have, because that made such a difference it wasn't, it removed any possible problems, it was like they paid for the travel expenses, then D could see me at any time, it made it so, so much better.

MG: So it's no a first come first served basis, it shouldnae be like that.

SC: Yeah, it shouldn't be like that, everybody should have the same equal treatment.

AI: M you mentioned Dundee.

M: Aye, back in Dundee we have Explore which does do some things about domestic abuse and that, but they've got such a big waiting list. I was one of the lucky ones that actually got put straight to the top of it but because of the lack of staff that they have, there's the waiting list which is a big problem, again they always say to fit you into their diaries not yours and if there's a day when you've got something you have to do, and they've got something they have to do, they actually start moaning about it and then they just forget about you altogether.

AI: In Dundee you mentioned The Shore and The Corner.

M: Yeah, we've got The Shore and The Corner.

AI: Yeah, I went to visit in Summer, and the young people there were obviously very positive about this is somewhere we can come and actually talk to people about the problems they're having, it wasn't just, it wasn't *only*, domestic abuse, that the children young people in that area that were having problems with, just like anywhere else - loads of problems. Did you find that, did you use The Corner?

M: I used The Corner once, that was for different matters but I use The Shore quite a lot. I was part of the Young Suits Team where we'd have a lot to do with like when it should be open, how it should open, the Friday night events. Some youngsters actually get kept on and get a job through it. I was one of the unlucky ones who had to leave for other reasons.

AI: Do you feel that maybe having some sort of facility like that in your community, or do you think it's too personal and to hide, d'you want to..?

MG: Depends on the person, I think, 'cos obviously not everybody, no many people, want to go to a group and make it be identified.

SC: The good thing about the groupwork that I did was it was past people who had also experienced roughly, obviously different experiences, but we'd all experienced some incident of domestic abuse, and we'd all been under that support worker, so we all kind of knew each other and that worked really well. So, in instances where [young people] don't want to go to a group like that, having more outreach workers and support workers helps.

M: Yeah.

AI: This is a facility is for young people who maybe might be self harming or something like that, or might have sexual health issues these types of thing - kinda a place where young people can feel that they could go to and there are people there that.

S: A different kind of refuge.

AI: Yeah, a different kind of refuge.

M: One thing about The Shore is that there are workers that are working there...one who's been through domestic abuse herself so I'm able to talk to her about it, manager has worked with people going through domestic abuse, and the guy X has also worked with people going through domestic abuse. So, one of the things about The Shore, they have got workers there but it's not always acknowledged that they've got them there.

AI: That was the other side, the other thing that you all mentioned, the need to publicise organisations where they've got support for children and young people, or some sort of, basically getting the awareness that help is out there for you.

SC: Aha, L brought up the campaigns and very clearly said that a lot of them are geared towards adults. I was actually watching some of the adverts recently and you watch them and you like think "What was that even about?"

L: It's not just all about adverts on TV, and whatnot, there's a lot...

S: That's just one...

L: Yeah I know. One way to do it would just be to do it within a community, although schools better, but little community would be, like, I don't know much about where you were talking about The Shore, but if it's within the community then more people would know about it. For example, in Orkney there's the Orkney Women's Aid and they wanted to, because there's the new children's worker, she wanted to make it more known that kids can come in and speak to them if they wanted to, speak to them and she wanted it to be more known. She had posters up all over the place in youth clubs, in the schools, there were packs taken into schools just about Women's Aid, give them a general idea that sort of thing – advertising within the community. I ken that that's more up to the organisation that's within the community, but it's like that idea is what I was more talking about.

M: As well in Dundee, not a lot of people know where Scottish Women's Aid office is in Dundee, 'cos even though I've been working with them for quite a while now, I didn't even know where it was. It's upstairs, and you can't really read anything from outside, and it doesn't say anything about it being there, and not a lot of people actually know it's there 'cos it's not advertised at all.

AI: Clearly the awareness issue is something we need to do and that would also help with the stigma problem.

Young people: Yes.

FE: I was just listening to what you were saying, J, about moving house and I think you said it needed to be smooth?

J: Yes.

FE: Presumably it wasn't smooth for you, what was your experience like?

J: Well, because I moved away from my family, and I left my brother and grandma in England, it was all like stressing enough, and like living in the refuge there was other families in there as well and it was a sort of, it would have been better if I could've gone straight into our own house just to get, sort of start a new life again.

FE: It must be very difficult leaving your home, emotionally hard to cope with.

M: Yes, me and my brothers left with me mam, it actually split us up the whole family. I was only in the refuge one night. From there I was taken straight into foster care, in the beginning we were all split up but then me and my big brother had to fight to get together, and then my two younger brothers but even then we were still apart. So, it did make things harder going into a refuge and that 'cos we ended up apart, and now due to domestic abuse at home 'n' all that, my little brother's in care and he's not getting out 'til he's 16. So, even though the problem's no longer there...

SC: It kind of is there.

M: It is and it's not, but it has spoiled the family completely.

SC: Yeah. One of the things I wanted to mention that J brought up was about personal possessions. When I left my home we managed somehow to get money together to put all our possession in a storage facility, but it did mean for the 8 months or whatever we had nothing, absolutely nothing, and we actually lost a box of stuff as well, it was a big box of stuff and that was gone.

FE: You said you didn't stay in refuges, but didn't get a house 'til July, so presumably you stayed with friends or...?

SC: I was staying with my aunt, and mum got the couch downstairs which isn't very big, and I had to sleep on the floor in a room with 3 other males, 3 other people and I was on the floor.

FE: No wonder you found it hard to kinda cope with getting to school or performing as well at school as you would have liked.

SC: Yes, absolutely.

FE: I was actually surprised in the way that you expect an average teacher to factor that in and be aware of what's going on.

SC: To give due credit, one or two that did understand but there were too many that didn't, it was ridiculous. The ones that were in the same department as Mr S the games teacher, they had a rough idea, but it was so scattered it was not like everybody knew.

M: About possessions 'n' that I left almost everything, I've got one teddy that actually survived 'n' I still own 'til today, and also when we got to refuge I also got to take a teddy from there, which I still have today as well.

S: That's why financial aid would be good for startin' again.

M: Yes.

L: Talking about possessions, I was extremely, extremely lucky because, well, no, I wasn't to start with 'cos when we left we left everything behind, because as a lot of cases my father doesn't believe you're actually leaving and we left entire country X, we left X to come here. It was only in the summer last year, well this year, that I built up enough courage to go back and I went back myself but I didn't go back with my dad I went back by myself. I went back to see my other family, it was only then I managed to get my stuff back, my teddies, the little things that mean so much to you.

SC: Little things really do mean a lot.

L: Yes, and that's me being extremely lucky.

SC: I was so lucky, we had to borrow money from everybody to pay for the storage over the 8 months.

FE: Quite expensive.

SC: Yep, very expensive, and at the time we had no money – none, it was ridiculous. I'm so glad we managed to save all our stuff that way, well most of our stuff.

FE: I wanted to ask S about the refuge in Stirling you talked a bit about that, how it was pretty well equipped, you said your own room and shower, was that what you were talking about yourself or..?

S: I stayed in the old one, but the new one's being made the now, not sure if it's open yet but we've been told it's got its own apartments and everything.⁶

SC: It's like an apartment complex, as opposed to a bunch of rooms and a bath.

C: S helped with the plans for the new refuge.

Ministers: Where is it?

CH: You're not allowed to know, are you.

[laughter]

S: Mum knows⁷ because she actually worked for Women's Aid, and she had to go and ask permission from everyone else to build it there, but I don't know where it is.

C: Neither do we, we're not allowed to know, but the point was it was very different than the one that you were in, when you made the recommendations there.

⁶ Update from S: the refuge is in foundation stage, S had seen plans which included your own family flat and communal space for young people and children.

S: Yes.

Minister: Do you know whether, the reason I asked the question, was that you know if Stirling had found a way to create this facility that provides a bit of privacy, a bit of space, and at least the basic minimum of a room and shower, privacy that way, that would sound to me that it's at least a kind of model we should be aiming for.

Young people: Yes.

FE: You'll know better than me what progress has been made towards that kind of objective?

CH: Yes, at the time there were millions spent on a number of different refuge projects, so I think there were about 20 projects but less houses as it included refurbishments. At least some had en-suites but most had apartments with your own door, so that's about a third of Women's Aid groups, there are over 40 in all. But when we looked the other day at Women's Aid provision, two thirds of groups still have old style communal refuge, like the one some young people here went through, with all the family in the same room, and the research that S, M and SC and others were involved in actually recommended that they should be phased out. I think after that initial burst of activity, both the having your own flat but also having separate children and young people's rooms hasn't happened in all areas.

SC: Yes, I seem to recall that.

S: Yes.

FE: Yes, J said that that about separate rooms for younger and older because different interests.

SC: So, if you could get the other two thirds to at least follow in that.

AI: I certainly found that very interesting and useful. Ministers will be viewing the findings of the Domestic Abuse Advisory Group that's currently working in the area and coming up with some proposals, you're obviously aware. So, hopefully Ministers will be asked to make some decisions in the near future, and I think having heard directly from you and your own experiences and what you think, will obviously help us when we're making those decisions.

L: Glad to hear it!

[laughter]

FE: Adam deals with Education I deal with the Justice side –drugs, antisocial behaviour, bit of police, courts, sort of justice, law and order, police, crime that sort of thing. I wanted to ask you, one or two of you alluded to the police maybe not quite the response you would have hoped, I wonder if any of you had general comments – is it the same thing that police don't really have awareness or understanding of experiences, problems and needs?

SC: Yes.

L: I wouldn't say that, I would say that the way that the police dealt with us was extremely well.

S: The police dealt with us really well as well, and now my mum actually works at Domestic Abuse Unit in X.

FE: That's great, S, too.

SC: We had two police officers came out to the first incident, unfortunately they didn't make it in time, they did in the second incident that occurred next day. There was a female and male and she seemed to know what she was doing, the guy didn't seem to know so much. Maybe most of the time they're quite good but I don't really know.

M: The place that I've needed for it all, they've all, actually a few of them knew what they were talking about and they knew how to deal with it all

SC: So if the main issue is they're dealing with it ok, they need to communicate what they've learned now so.

L: I think the reason that they did it so well was because they weren't taken aback by the fact that "Oh no there's a domestic abuse kind of thing going on here". They just treated it as an assault, and the way an assault should be treated, and I think that's why it worked so well - just that he's, there's an assault happened here, what you would normally do was remove that person from the situation, away from the situation. That's why it worked so well.

FE: By sheer coincidence I was at Tullialan which is the place where they train officers.

SC: My mum's been there and trained police officers before, she used to work for Women's Aid as well.

FE: Your mum? Well you'll know all about it S. It's a very good place, training, I think the way the police are behaving now is massively differently from 40 years ago.

J: Is that Kincardine? My friend's on work placement there.

FE: Yes, I was there today, it's a terrific place actually. I don't know if any of you fancy being cops? Lots of people going through the training today, [laughter] not that I want to sort of brainwash you into it..

SC: "We want you" !!!

Young People: Laughter

FE: I'm very encouraged to hear broadly the experience is that they are now in tune with problems and difficulties, areas of life that 40 years ago... it must be the training is really pretty impressive. It's all very positive stuff you know to encourage people...

I found the way you described your situation today was really very clear, as Adam says, that's very useful because it's helped me to understand problems more than if I had all these papers. We get papers all the time, sometimes you wonder what's it about and even after some of the meetings with some of the officials have no clue what it's about- really, what is this, rebadging this, send this message - what? Say it straight mate, y'know !

S: Someone talking to you is...?

FE: I've certainly found it's given me an understanding when I didn't really have one before at all. I must say I am really impressed with the way that you've each, all of, done it, thank you very much.

SC: We wanted to give you these DVDs before we left, they're from the last Listen Louder campaign.

Ministers: Thank you very much

SC: It's just our underlying message.

AI: When was this produced?

SC: er 2005?

CH: Just before, end 2004, 44 children made the film and edited it.

SC: As I said we had a lot of activities when I had my outreach worker and one of the pictures ended up in the campaign.

FE: I didn't want to sort of pull you up or anything, but I probably didn't understand this right, but you said there's a difference between a support worker and an outreach worker- outreach workers go out...?

SC: Yes, they don't just go out they'll go out or be at their office and you can go see them at their office but they can also come out to you.

MG: Yes, some take you out for coffee and things like that.

SC: We've been taken out for food and things - it's whatever's good for you. Support more in refuge.

FE: But D is your support worker

SC: Well, outreach, I probably said that

CH: All are support workers, just traditionally it was support for children in refuge, and then with the campaigning years ago it became refuge and now follow-on, but the problem was

there were people like SC who never came to refuges. Like L said before, children are in the general community so now there's 'outreach' services.

AI: Outreach services are developing across Scotland, particularly in Family Centres in particular areas. I visited one in Inverness a few weeks ago and they had outreach services to people's homes, and they're also joining up a lot of the services– what you were talking about earlier about communication, communication between people, so we need to develop more of that.

SC: Definitely a more positive step.

AI: You're probably aware of the pathfinding project on Getting it right for every child – in Falkirk, Edinburgh, Dumfries and Galloway, Clydebank – so hopefully these kinda things that you're telling us here today, they're being worked through in some of these areas, and typically, mirror, too. Well soon we might be able to get some proposals coming forward that we can actually put on the ground to improve the situation, as we're very concerned.

FE: Thank you very much indeed for coming to see us.

SC: No problem.

M: Had a great time.

All Young People: Thanks.

FE: I'll see you off the premises.

[Laughter]

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