Third Sector Forum: Children and Families

Tuesday 1pm: April 15th 1pm

**Action note**

Present: Helen Davis (WLYAP), Tracy Kerr (VSGWL), Simon Henderson (Play works), Hazel Tyson (Circle), Wilma Murray (Carers of WL), Gareth McKenna (BUSC), Victoria Carmichael (Open Door), Tess Hamilton (HMP Addiewell)

Apologies: Karen Nailen (CAB), Tracy Murdoch (Kidzeco), Victoria Isbister (VSGWL)

1. **Welcome and Apologies (Helen)**

The meeting began with introductions. Condolences were expressed for Victoria who is on bereavement leave. Helen reviewed the minutes from the last meeting, and these were agreed for accuracy. From the actions, Helen mentioned that the West Space site was still being developed and provides valuable mental health resources. Helen will send out links and resources to the site once available. Helen spoke about the Child Services Annual report and encouraged all to submit case studies, particularly highlighting new initiatives before the deadline of 25 April.

1. **Agency Presentation: Tracy Kerr (VSGWL): Service Locator**

Tracy discussed the enhancements made to the Gateway service locator, which has been updated after a year-long project to improve its accuracy and usability. The new locator is now live on the website and links to a separate site for real-time updates. Currently, it only includes information about member organisations to ensure the data remains accurate. Tracy encouraged all to check the details for their organisation and let her know of any inaccuracies. [Membership - Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian](https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/organisation-support/our-members/)

1. **In work poverty project update: CAB: Karen Nailen**Karen was not present and will give an update at the next meeting.
2. **Feedback from other meetings – brief update**

Children & Families Strategic Planning group meeting

Helen shared insights from the meeting held in March which included a presentation from housing on the homeless strategy and outlined a new housing project that will provide pods installed in Livingston, staffed 24 hours. Housing have long waiting lists and are keen to work with the third sector to support people on the lists. The meeting also included a discussion around a high number of young people experiencing difficulties attending education. Ongoing collaboration with education and third sector groups to support re-engagement in education. Helen provided an overview of the Supporting Opportunities for Life (SOL) project, developed through Aid and Abet, which focuses on using trained peer mentors to support young people aged 10-25 in West Lothian, with assistance from police officers. The initiative aims to prevent crime by engaging with young people and offering one-to-one support.

Alcohol and Drug Partnership

An evaluation for the Alcohol and Drug Partnership is set to begin, assessing the partnership's effectiveness and informing future funding decisions.

Community Safety group

Helen provided an update on community safety, indicating that the situation has been manageable during the Easter holidays. Young people have been using their free bus passes to visit places out with West Lothian, resulting in enjoyable outings without significant trouble. However, there are ongoing concerns in Bathgate, where efforts are being made to engage with local youths and reduce issues.

Food Network

Helen provided updates on the Food Network, highlighting the decline in funding for food poverty initiatives and the need for creative solutions. Plans are being discussed to organise an event to engage businesses and the farming community for support. Additionally, there is ongoing discussion about collaborating with the Jamie Oliver Foundation for training programs.

Climate Action Group

An event will be held on 7th May however it was noted that this is the same date and time of the Social Enterprise Forum which causes conflict for some.

Child Poverty Steering Group (Karen, CAB): No updates.

1. **The Promise (Caroline)**  
   No updates, no further funding has been received so previous post held by Douglas is now redundant.
2. **Mental Health Oversight Group**   
   Helen reported a recent revamp of the Mental Health Oversight Group, with some of the subgroups actions now complete. She noted that CAMHS continues to face significant waiting lists, with efforts being made to implement preventative measures to reduce the need for the service. She noted a change of management in WLC mental health team.
3. **Whole Family Wellbeing Fund :**  No updates.
4. **Third Sector Strategy Group**Minutes from the previous meeting can be read <https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/working-together/third-sector-strategy-group/>. The next meeting will be held on Thursday 29th May.
5. **Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian**Tracy advised that there is a new benefit available to Gateway member organisations, where staff are eligible for corporate membership of Xcite West Lothian.   
   The Gateway are in the process of recruiting a new development officer who will specialise in employability. A new social enterprise forum has been created and are meeting on 7th May.
6. **Members updates**  
   Open Door - Victoria explained that she is working with 15 young people supporting independent living. Her young people are mostly care experienced young people, some with Autism. She noted that it is easier to find availability for voluntary positions but more challenging to find opportunities for employment.

HMP Addiewell Tess from the family centre at updated that her role is managing the visitor centre at Addiewell. They support the families and young children through the visit experience. Helen asked if Tess would do an agency presentation at a future children and families forum, Victoria to connect with Tess to find a suitable date.

Circle have received funding for an 18-hour post and have filled the position. The post will start on 5 May, and Hazel will share more info once they are in post. Circle have been awarded the West Lothian summer grant to provide activities over the summer for families.

WLYP and COWL and Play works also reported that they also got the summer funding and have plans in place to run summer programmes. Parent and young carers using it.

1. **Date of next meeting**: 1-2.30pm \*Hybrid\* at the Gateway: Tuesday 17th June

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| August 19th | [amycampbell@ygam.org](mailto:amycampbell@ygam.org) TBC | YGAM – free training for staff working with children and young people |
| October 14th | Tess Hamilton TBC | HMP Addiewell |
| December 16th |  |  |

**Actions**

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| Children services annual report case studies to Helen | All |
| Helen will follow up on the West Space resources and send on one received | Helen |
| Connect with Tess at Addiewell to arrange agency presentation at future meeting. | Victoria |
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