

Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill

Angus Council

1. The functions and powers of the NCF (as set out in the Bill)

Angus Council supports the functions of the National Confidential Forum as set out in the Bill in relation to the hearing and acknowledgement of abuse while in care as a child.

We support the function of prevention of future abuse in care by informing policy and practice.

We consider that it will be helpful to adult victims to have an official record of the events that happened while in care. It is not considered a matter that will necessarily aid public understanding.

Signposting to sources of support is considered crucial, as although for some adults it will hopefully lead to improved mental wellbeing for others the reliving of experiences that are traumatic may lead to deterioration in their mental health.

We support the duty to inform the police of any information necessary to prevent the abuse of a child. We consider that another function should be inserted under Part 6 of the Act to alert agencies of any alleged abuse that took place in a care home run by that agency and where no civil or criminal proceedings are being pursued. The local authority where the care home is or was located should also be informed. This is to allow those agencies to take such action as required to prevent future abuse. This would be of particular importance where the abuse took place in more recent times.

2. Status of the NCF – housed as a sub-committee of the Mental Welfare Commission – and its independence

We support the establishment of an independent body. The link with the Mental Welfare Commission is not well understood.

3. Support for participants before, during and after their input

We consider this to be an extremely important element considering that part of the aim of setting up the Forum is to improve the mental wellbeing of participants then access to support at all stages of the disclosure must be available. For those who experience post-traumatic stress specialist help should be made available.

The type of wrap-around-support modelled by The Time to be Heard (TTBH) pilot forum before, during and after hearings should also be in place for the NCF. Such supports were seen as a prerequisite to participation. After care support however will be extremely important. For many adult survivors who feel able to come forward and make their experiences known; it may bring back traumatic memories of the abuse. Access to counselling and support services will be vital to ensure participants are not left feeling more vulnerable.

4. Any other aspects of the NCF

Angus Council contributed to the consultation on the creation of a National Confidential Forum and fully supported this. The opportunity for adult survivors to describe their experiences and have their views listened to can only help to inform improvements; not only for the health, safety and wellbeing of children and young people who are currently in institutional care but also children in the future who require this type of care

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