

The Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group for the Prevention and Healing of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Committee Room 2, Scottish Parliament, 27th September 2018, 6-8 pm

Welcomes and introductions:

MSPs who attended:

- Gail Ross SNP MSP for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross
- Rona Mackay SNP MSP for Strathkelvin & Bearsden
- Liam Kerr Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party MSP for North East Scotland
- Emma Harper SNP MSP for South Scotland

Other attendees:

- George Hosking, WAVE Trust
- Kirsty Morrison, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Bailey-Lee Robb, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Janine Rennie, Wellbeing Scotland
- Linda Brown, 70/30 Campaign Ambassador
- Callum Lynch, Who Cares? Scotland
- Nicki Lawrence, Barnardos Scotland
- Councillor Debbi McCall, Midlothian Council
- Jackie Gordon, Midlothian Council
- Sara Martinez, 70/30 Campaign
- Owen Thompson, office of Gail Ross MSP
- Elaine Stalker, Families Outside
- Rachel Love, NSPCC Scotland
- Arlene McClure, Croftfoot Primary School, Glasgow
- Martine Leitch, Croftfoot Primary School, Glasgow
- Kevin Denvir, 70/30 Campaign Ambassador
- Julia Morton, 70/30 Campaign Ambassador
- Poppy Morton, 70/30 Campaign Ambassador
- Brendan Farrelly, Fernhill School, South Lanarkshire
- Gary Broadway, Kirkcaldy High School, Fife
- Rona Maclean-Ross, Fife Council
- Emile van Loo, With Kids
- Louise Slorance, RCPCH Scotland

Apologies:

- Harriet Hall, Children 1st
- Christine Carlin
- Bernadette Cairns, Highland Council
- Dr Nicola Wylie, Rossie
- David Mitchell, Rossie

- Yvonne Hunter, Chester's Nursery, Drumchapel
- Elspeth MacLeod, Chester's Nursery, Drumchapel
- Suzanne Zeedyk, connected baby
- Annie Wells Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party MSP for Glasgow
- Jock Hutchison, Horseback UK
- Liam McArthur Liberal Democrat MSP for Orkney

Minutes approved from last meeting.

Guest Speaker Presentations:

Bailey-Lee Robb – MSYP for Cowdenbeath, Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

Bailey-Lee took some time to introduce attendees to the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP). He described it as a politically-independent, youth-led, rights-based organisation, formed on 30th June 1999, which aims to represent the young people of Scotland. The SYP is made up of 160 young people who are known as Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament. MSYPs range in age from 14 to 25 and represent constituencies in all 32 local authorities throughout the country, and several national voluntary organisations, including Who Cares? Scotland (represented at the meeting). Bailey-Lee highlighted that the SYP has a better gender split than parliament.

Bailey-Lee explained that he was elected back in 2017 to represent his local constituency, Cowdenbeath.

Members' motions are a chance for MSYPs to debate live issues and raise constituents' concerns. If a motion is passed, that acts as a mandate to speak to decision-makers on the topic. In June Bailey-Lee had put forward a motion that stated:

'The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that there should be a greater awareness of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); and that national and local government, and the NHS, should seek to raise awareness, and invest in initiatives using a human rights based approach which promote safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments which can have a positive impact on a broad range of problems and on the development of skills that will help children and young people reach their full potential.'

This motion was passed with 91% voting for, and 9% abstaining.

Bailey-Lee explained how he had previously attended the How Safe Are Our Children? Conference, hosted by NSPCC in London in 2016 and having learnt about ACEs struggled to understand why everyone didn't already know about it. He wondered why nobody was talking about it.

When he was elected he took a stand against ACEs, and saw their effect on young people. He saw young people being punished in schools for issues which were not

the fault of those young people, but rather the system which is failing young people in Scotland today.

The SYP had therefore engaged with the Scottish Government on this issue. Eight MSYPs were funded to attend the recent ACE-aware nation conference in Glasgow, Scotland, on making Scotland the world's first ACE-aware nation.

In January 2019, the Resilience film will be shown to the SYP Convenor's group. In August Bailey-Lee was a panellist at a screening of Resilience.

In November 2018 there will be a workshop to co-design a resource for MSYPs on ACEs, to raise awareness and educate constituents. They hope to meet the Deputy First Minister and Maree Todd after the workshop to feedback and ensure the Government really are committed to this agenda.

Bailey-Lee finished his speech by assuring the group that work on ACEs will continue within the SYP even if he leaves. He told the group the SYP were committed to continue working on ACEs until Scotland becomes a trauma-informed, ACE-aware nation.

Take away: Listen to young people to truly understand what they want and need

Bailey-Lee brought his speech to a close by asking that all MSPs pledge to endorse the SYPs campaign on ACEs.

Callum Lynch – Public Affairs Support Officer, Who Cares? Scotland

Callum explained that he had come through the Care system. He shared his life story with the group. Prior to going into Care had had 10 ACEs, and life had been very tough. He explained what life was like for him as a young boy, living with a mother who was a drug-user. Violence, abuse, neglect and parental alcohol use were also features of his early life. His behaviour, coming from such a background, resulted in his exclusion from two primary schools, which he often had failed to attend. His clearest memory of school is sitting outside offices being made to write 'I must not...' notes.

When he was taken into Care, there was no trauma-informed approach. There was no positive reinforcement to continue education. He said, "it wasn't an expectation". He also said that in 8 years he was the only person in his group who attended school 'none of my fellow Care children did.'

He found school hard. The attitude was 'you are showing challenging behaviour so I will exclude you'. Only 7% of children in Care go on to university – yet he got 8 Highers. He was fortunate in having a teacher, Jacqui Scott, who cared for him and gave him extra tuition. She was his Always Available Adult (AAA).

He was sent to a Care Home because his Mum abused him. However, at the Care Home, there was a bar on his bedroom window and CCTV cameras outside. He was made to feel like the one in the wrong.

His school did not understand what his life was like outside of school – an un-nurturing, unloving environment that was cold and hostile. The challenge is that carers' expectations of you are so low.

Out of 12,533 children in care, only 6,344 were assessed for getting a coordinated support plan – yet it is supposed to be there for everyone. Only 368 people were recognised as eligible for additional support. There are zero appeals. Those who put the rules into law cared, but it is not followed through in practice.

Left school with 8 Highers. He volunteered with Who Cares? Scotland for 2 months, during which time he made a visit to Harvard University. But he received no support from the Residential Care system.

Callum did not find experience at university easy. “No one supported me to go there”; in fact, his Carer discouraged him. He went to Strathclyde University but, unfortunately, his ACE background caught up with him, and he became homeless in his fourth year. He had bad mental health (suffering with depression and anxiety) and was even suicidal at one point. Strathclyde University is also not trauma-informed. It is a structure to get people through results, not to support those in need.

“Tell me a bit more about what’s happening in your life” question was not asked.

He had been on track for a First Class Honours, but due to the lack of support in his final year ended up with a 2:2. He was very disappointed.

He has recently been on a 2 months research trip, through the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, visiting other countries to look at their Care systems.

Callum concluded by saying we need to ask ourselves ‘what is the purpose of care?’ Callum believes the current care system has no therapeutic value and is failing in every measure.

Screening of ‘Be That Person’ film (by Fife Council)

Gary Broadway of Kirkcaldy High School and Rona Maclean-Ross of Fife Council presented the film ‘Be That Person’, made at Kirkcaldy High School about ACEs. While the film ‘Resilience’ is very impactful, it is also very American, so they “Fifed up” the subject.

The film was made to encourage and inspire others in the Council to provide better support to children. The film is being shown across Fife. The film consists of about five young people talking with and about their adult supporters – the ‘Always Available Adult’ (AAA) shown in the research of Professor Mark Bellis to make a big difference in the lives of children with multiple ACEs. The young people talked about what worked in the support they received and the film lasted 20-25 minutes.

The issues of ACEs were repeatedly addressed in the film. For example, one young man described drinking at school, being 9 times excluded in his First Year, and being in Care by age 13. Another, whose mum died when he was aged 8, described how his learning went downhill, his struggles when teachers criticised him, and leading to him preferring to ‘bunk out’ of school. One young woman described how her mum

and her partner were alcoholics, and she didn't want to be there, but she couldn't tell anyone; another spoke of the challenges of being a girl, where what used to be teenage issues now arise in primary school, and some girls would rather be dead than fat.

The film continued by describing five ways an adult could support a young person with ACEs:

1. Take Notice
2. Connect "she kept coming back"
3. Learn
4. Be Active
5. Give

Examples were shown of support under each of these headings. These included 'Relax Kids' sessions which taught strategies to deal with emotions, and allowed young people to talk about their emotions; support from a key worker after a theft; helping someone who had left school to deal with food and fuel poverty; and encouragement to give help to others (e.g. by helping at a camp for children). The young people featured also described the positive outcomes arising from this support. One, who went into Care in his early teens, is now a kitchen-fitter and lives back with his mum. Another has herself become a mum, and has been to college. Others have found full-time employment.

The message of the film was summarised as being that people are like jigsaws. Sometimes the pieces are in the wrong place. However (the young people summarised):

'Our jigsaws can be rearranged to create bright futures, with the help of a person who supports us.'

Open discussion: Trauma-informed Schools

Gail thanked our speakers, and stressed that, in responding to the voices of the CPG, 'This will not be a Talking Shop. We will be taking action.'

On the subject of Trauma-informed Schools, she invited participants to answer the question 'What do we need to do?'

Rona Mackay suggested that all MSPs should get in touch with the Education Departments in their constituencies and talk to them about Trauma-informed schooling and seek to arouse their interest and support for a shift to this approach.

Gail Ross suggested that, in addition, every MSP should contact every school in their constituency, sharing what we know about T-i Schools, and to discuss what they have to do to become trauma-informed.

Bailey-Lee Robb agreed, and asked that the Scottish Youth Parliament be told which schools do not respond.

Emma Harper said that she had already written to her local Education Department, after the last meeting, and was waiting to hear from them.

There was a discussion about the merits of a form of accreditation for Trauma-informed schools. Not everyone was in favour. Nikki Lawrence warned against some form of 'tick-box exercise' that was a substitute for embedding a truly Trauma-informed approach.

Kevin Denvir stressed the importance of the human connection to people who have suffered ACEs. We tend to look through the lens of professionals but "you can't pour from an empty jug". There needs to be an emphasis on workforce wellbeing and self-care to avoid 'the traumatised looking after the traumatised'. We have to be more human, to connect, to feel, not just be 'trauma-informed'. Teachers can be seen as 'professionals' and not as 'someone who cares'.

The conversation moved to the Suzanne Zeedyk conference and the 5 barriers identified there:

1. Normality vs. Curiosity
2. Complacency vs. Urgency
3. Shame vs. Self-Forgiveness
4. Evidence vs. Courage
5. Them & Us vs. Us

The point was also made that the children who behave challengingly may be the lucky ones – they get noticed. Those with asthma or neglect, or who hide away, may be worse off.

Brendan Farrelly from Fernhill School addressed Gail's question of 'What do we need to do?' suggesting the answer 'Raise Awareness'. Everyone should know about this, it is so important. We should expect schools to implement these practices, but give them support to do so. We should get every teacher thinking 'Challenging behaviour? What's behind it ...' It is all about raising awareness, he suggested.

Gail put forward the suggestion of arranging a Resilience film showing in every school, and including it in teacher training.

Sara Martinez mentioned the Madlug initiative, in which every child in Care is given a bag, for every bag purchased. Many children leaving Care don't even own a bag, and when they leave Care all their possessions go into a bin bag.

Martine Leitch from Croftfoot Primary raised the issue of focus in the Education system. All the focus from above is on attainment. She commented 'I can't put the feelings of a child in standardised tests and bar charts'.

There was general agreement that we risk losing our sense of purpose in Education. 'First and foremost in Education should be a child's welfare, above attainment. Without that they will never attain.' It was agreed that the message from Attainment Advisors should be 'Health and Wellbeing first', and that the Attainment focus was getting in the way.

Other speakers stressed the value of a nurturing approach, and that a happy child is more likely to learn and attain.

Rona Mackay said that she would find out how Children's Panel members are trained – when she had received training, there was no trauma training. Some people have been on these panels for 30 years – do they know about trauma?

Emile van Loo spoke of the challenges of using the PEF grant money (Pupil Equity Funding) to benefit children who might be in need, but live in the wrong post code. He also mentioned the attitude of one Head teacher who had said 'My staff are here to teach children, not to be social workers'. It is important to create space and improve the emotional capacity of teachers.

Bailey-Lee agreed with Martine. As a MSYP, he has five high schools in his constituency. 'They are data, assessment, exam, prelim driven. Schools have wanted to fund mental health work for all children. They are not allowed to. There is no love in the Education system.'

Kirsty Morrison of the Scottish Youth Parliament stressed the need to keep young people at the heart of any solution – so not just: 'Are you doing it?' but 'How are you doing it?' and are young people involved in this?

George Hosking referred to the 5-year evaluation of Trauma-informed schools in San Francisco – the HEARTS study – this showed that the choice is not Attainment versus Child Wellbeing, but that Child Wellbeing is the route to Attainment.

Sara Martinez referred to the presentation about Burnside Primary School at the recent ACE-aware nation conference in Glasgow and their approach to creating a trauma-informed school. This included providing second breakfasts, dogs, no bells, drama therapy, mentoring and buddies.

Callum Lynch stated that had his school been trauma-informed 'I could have taken on the academic if I'd been supported'. "Give a child a sense of self".

Brendan Farrelly commented 'All this is important for teacher training – but it was never in my training. It is fundamental for the future.'

Teacher training needs to include guidance on how to meet the emotional needs of the children.

Martine referred to the current reporting system, with its focus on impact on SIMD (Scottish Indication of Multiple Deprivation) 1 and 2 children. We are losing sight of the moral purpose in education. We should have a 'Happiness indicator' in reporting.

Any Other Competent Business:

N/A

Actions agreed:

- Every MSP: what are their local educators doing to become trauma-informed?
- Rona Mackay: find out how children's panel members are currently being trained

- Gail Ross: write to Mr. Swinney regarding getting a screening of the resilience documentary in *all* Scottish schools and getting ACEs and trauma/toxic stress included as a key module in teacher training course.
- Gail: Write to Richard Lochhead (Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science)
- Gail: write to every MSP and ask what they are going to do
- Gail: Get a piece published in the 'Holyrood Magazine' (read by civil servants, Local authorities, staff at parliament)
- Inform Bailey who responds
- Write to the First Minister regarding having health and wellbeing come first as a priority in addressing the attainment gap
- Bailey-Lee Ross - Write to every MSP and every school about his campaign

Themes, Dates, Guests for Future meetings:

Members of the Group were invited to send their suggestions for themes of future meetings to the Secretariat of the group, WAVE Trust. Please send your suggestions to smartinezcalvo@wavetrust.org as soon as possible.

- Dates of future meetings have now been provisionally set.
- - Wednesday 21st November CR6
- - January TBC
- - Thursday 28th March CR4
- - Thursday 30th May CR4

We will continue to invite Ministers to attend, as appropriate

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the CPG will take place on Wednesday 21st November at 6-8 pm and will be centred on the theme of 'trauma-informed communities'. Speakers will include WAVE Trust, and at least one person from a community setting out to become Trauma-informed.

- *Point I was not clear about -*
- *Nikki Lawrence – write to Education Secretary regarding PEF funding and SIMD ½ reporting.*