The Scottish Child Protection Committee Chairs Forum (SCPCCF) has been in existence since the child protection reform programme and plays an important role in working with the Scottish Government to ensure the development and delivery of efficient processes, common standards and the timely introduction of continuously improving services for protecting children during a lengthy time of uncertainty for Scottish Public Services.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Bill in relation to potential child protection implications. At a recent Forum meeting, members commented on several aspects of the Bill.

Generally, members stated that they are satisfied with the provisions around who has access to the marked register and the specific arrangements for vulnerable young people to allow them to register to vote and vote without disclosing their address.

Members are also satisfied that young people who are subject to a non-disclosure order or are vulnerable, more generally, are afforded sufficient protection by the provisions of the Bill.

The canvass form takes account of child protection issues but members felt that it would be helpful to have additional guidance on the form that clarifies the process for a young person to register using another contact address, when they are living away from home because of their vulnerability or other child protection issues.

While the Forum members are positive about the provisions in the Bill, they are looking for clarity about the processes that will ensure local authorities, social workers and other support staff are informed about the child protection provisions, the implications and their role in ensuring that young people can vote safely.

I hope that these comments are helpful.

Donald Urquhart
Chair
27 March 2013