

**Barnardo's Scotland evidence to the
Education and Culture Committee's inquiry into the
Educational Attainment Gap -
Role of the Third and Private Sectors**

Barnardo's is the UK's largest children's charity; we work with some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in Scotland; we run over 120 services and work with over 26,000 children, young people and their families every year throughout Scotland, many of these services provide essential support to families struggling with multiple adversities.

We welcome the Committee's focus on such an important issue and thank Committee for the opportunity to submit evidence. As a large, service-providing third sector organisation our evidence will specifically focus on the role of the third sector and draw on our own experience of providing services in this area.

1. The scale of the third and private sectors' involvement in schools, in terms of improving attainment and achievement, and the appropriate dividing line between their role and the role of education authorities.

Barnardo's Scotland works with a number of local authorities to help improve attainment and achievement in schools. We always seek to start by working to understand all the adversities affecting children and young people who are struggling at school. We deliver different kinds of provision for those who are having difficulty engaging or have been excluded from school.

A crucial element of Barnardo's work with schools is supporting schools to engage more effectively with the parents of children and young people whose difficulties at school arise from issues at home. We work in a non-judgemental way and always aim to empower parents by developing their skills, confidence and abilities. This support encourages young people to feel more settled and secure at home and at school.

We do not see, in practice, a clear dividing line between our role and the role of education authorities. We work on the basis of partnership, normally through being commissioned or contracted to deliver support.

The Curriculum for Excellence and GIRFEC have been crucial frameworks for developing a common understanding of wellbeing among staff and practitioners from third sector organisations like Barnardo's Scotland.

Case Study: Supporting Children to remain in school in Edinburgh

Barnardo's Edinburgh Community Support Services (BECSS) is a joint initiative between Barnardo's Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council.

BECSS is a multi-disciplinary team providing direct support to children and families to ensure that as many primary-aged children with social, emotional and behavioural needs as possible can remain in their own schools, families and communities, wherever that is safe and appropriate. This service is provided in close co-operation with the City of Edinburgh's own Hospital and Outreach Teaching Service (HOTS). BECSS has moved from a limited neighbourhood role in the WHEC and Craigmoynton clusters to one that is Edinburgh wide.

The team has been fully operational since February 1999, and now consists of a Children's Service Manager, 2 Team Leaders, teachers, qualified child and family workers, support workers and a volunteer co-ordinator.

The team's role with families is crucial in working closely with teachers and parents to ensure consistency between school and home, and to enable parents to improve relationships and meet their children's developmental needs. A strong multi-disciplinary approach greatly enhances the service received by the family and school. Community support workers are experienced in work within the school setting and also providing support in the community.

From the beginning of our involvement with schools and families, the team has monitored their work by asking parents, teachers, children and keyworkers to complete brief questionnaires. The evaluation sheets seek the individuals' views on the work done, and provide different perspectives on whether there have been any measurable improvements for the child at school and at home.

BECSS aims and objectives

The service aims to ensure that as many primary aged children with emotional and behavioural problems as possible can remain in their own schools and families wherever safe and appropriate.

This is done through:

- Supporting individual children through a range of interventions including play therapy, group work including nurture/seasons for growth, managing feelings, playground support and peer relationships

- Promoting whole class and whole school approaches, working with others towards including the child positively in school

- Working collaboratively with external agencies, promoting a multi-disciplinary/multi-agency approach

- Offering a range of help to parents through group work, family therapy, counselling, parenting skills, time-limited focused work and relationship

therapy. We provide assistance to parents/carers of children with behavioural difficulties at home which enables them to gain confidence and promotes their parental responsibilities. We also offer support to families out of school e.g. holiday play schemes, individual work with children, after-school clubs etc.

2. Whether their approaches have been particularly successful in improving achievement and attainment for school pupils. If so, whether their methods could be more embedded in the curriculum

Our approach is rooted in the principles of GIRFEC, based on an understanding of wellbeing, including all eight of the SHANARRI indicators. In this context it is worth referencing the draft Definition of the 'achievement' SHANARRI indicator from draft statutory guidance on Part 18 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (See box below).

Achieving – accomplishing goals and thereby boosting skills, confidence and self-esteem; 'being all they can be' (UNCRC Articles 4, 18, 28, 29):

Every child and young person has the right to fulfil his or her potential. Improving achievement and attainment often go hand-in-hand, and both lead to improved life chances. Supporting all our children and young people to accomplish goals and develop skills, ambition and know-how helps them to fulfil their potential and aspirations;

Achievement also applies to a child's development as a social being with a fully-formed and autonomous personality. An achieving child is more likely to feel they belong and to be able to navigate their way through life with knowledge, understanding, and confidence in their ability to cope with new and different challenges.

In this definition, SHANARRI encompasses much more than academic achievement. By clearly identifying that achievement includes making sure a child has confidence and high self-esteem, as well as knowledge, a broader vision of improving achievement and attainment is envisaged.

Barnardo's approach has always been to work with the child at the centre, and this requires a holistic approach which looks at relationships both in and out of school. Therefore, when approaching an issue like bullying, we treat this as an issue closely linked to a child's self-esteem and seek to work with parents to support them to remove any barriers to high self-esteem which may exist at home. We will also work with the school, whilst identifying and addressing any barriers that may exist within the school. A large part of the work we do, therefore is about building capacity, resilience and self-esteem in the children and young people we work with to enable them to succeed both in school and out of school. We believe that there is merit in further embedding this approach

which puts the child at the centre and looks at the wider picture, not simply educational attainment.

At the heart of our work with parents is the recognition that they want their child to succeed. However, a significant number of parents we work with feel that they have been effectively written off by the school. Engagement with parents is crucial; they are the gatekeepers to their children's attendance, they help with homework, they provide emotional support, if they do not have buy in then their children are unlikely to have buy in, this holistic, whole-family approach to a child's attainment and achievement should be embedded in the work of all schools.

Our services, such as BECSS, as detailed in the case study, make extensive use of self-assessment tools for students, to allow them to measure their own progress on issues such as self-esteem. It is important to allow students to feel part of the processes which are affecting them; young people who feel they have a voice will be more engaged. We hope that the culture shift that will come as part of the wider adoption of GIRFEC leads to these child-centred approaches becoming more common.

3. Whether the full potential of the third and private sectors in helping to improve children's attainment and achievement is being realised;

We have a close and productive relationship with our statutory sector partners. Indeed our BECSS service was recently asked to extend the support it offers to young people at risk of exclusion from school by the Local Authority.

Part of this successful relationship is the growing recognition of the particularly valuable role that the third sector can play in building bridges between families and schools. As described earlier, our holistic approach is based on a recognition that you cannot separate schools and pupils from their community. Efforts to improving attainment cannot begin and end at the school gates. Many of the factors that may be undermining performance at school may be due to challenges faced at home; the impact of a benefit sanction for example may affect the family in ways that cannot simply be addressed through in-school interventions. We also work with many children and families experiencing the imprisonment of a parent, this is an issue which often remains hidden, especially from a child's school due to the stigma associated with criminality. Having a parent in prison can often have a direct impact on a child's school work, behavior in school, relationships with peers etc. It is therefore important that these issues are not seen in isolation by the school, involving the family and the community is essential in order to address the underlying issues which may be affecting the child's behavior.

Recognition of the role of a wide set of voluntary sector actors in raising attainment, including specialist in-school and family support services delivered by organisations like Barnardo's Scotland as well as extra-curricular activities

such as those delivered by the uniformed youth organisations needs to be part of the wider shift towards GIRFEC approaches.

4. How successful schools have been in reporting on pupils' wider achievements (i.e. not just examination results) such as those the third sector helps to deliver. Whether such achievements are valued by parents, employers and learning providers as much as formal qualifications.

The Barnardo's Scotland Children's Rights and Advocacy Team has been supporting the delivery of Youth Achievement Awards & Dynamic Youth Awards (YAA/DYA's) to young people accessing our services across Scotland since 2005. The YAA/DYA's offer a peer assessed approach to recognising and accrediting the achievements and contributions of young people in a variety of settings, including youth work, volunteering, active citizenship, alternative curriculum and formal education.

Barnardo's Scotland became the first and largest voluntary sector Awards Operating Agency in 2005 and has been noted by Youth Scotland for our high standard of submissions and excellent quality assurance processes.

When first considering offering young people's accreditations within Barnardo's Scotland, the Children's Rights and Advocacy Team looked at a variety of Awards in order to identify the option that would be most suitable and appropriate for the children and young people accessing our services, as well as complementing Barnardo's core principles, as articulated, for example, in our Basis and Values.

We knew that a number of young people were already completing ASDAN Awards through their education providers, as well as having the opportunity to work towards the Duke of Edinburgh or Millennium Volunteering Awards through Local Authority service providers or uniformed organisations. However, we identified the YAA/DYAs at the most suitable option, for the following reasons:

- The YAA provides the greatest flexibility given that it is completely non-prescriptive, making it accessible for the maximum number of young people (aged 14+) across a wide range of our services throughout Scotland.
- One of the YAA's founding principles is that it is completely voluntary, including in relation to the level at which the young person wants to complete their Award (the YAA offers a tiered system from Bronze to Platinum). This complements our ethos that children and young people should be as empowered as possible about the supports and opportunities they access, as well as in having their achievements recognised.

- The YAA is a nationally recognised qualification, which from April 2015 will become a Scottish Qualifications Authority customised award with the SQA providing certification and the Award would appear on their SQA record of achievement. This gives the Awards significant weight within the Scottish education and qualifications system. Completion of the Award would therefore help to enhance the employability prospects of a young person. In some cases it may be the first time they would have achieved a recognised qualification.
- The YAA links in well with key Scottish plans and strategies, including GIRFEC and the Curriculum for Excellence, complementing its '4 categories' in supporting young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.
- The Dynamic Youth Award, designed for children and young people aged 10+ years as a gateway into the Youth Achievement Awards. The Dynamic Youth Award is also leveled on the SCQF, meaning that young people could be recognised for what they were already doing, as part of their work with our services or outside of them, from the age of 10 years upwards.

This package makes the YAA/DYAs the Awards that most closely fit with our vision to ensure that the young people we work with have access to qualifications that recognise their achievements, and which help them improve their outcomes.

We are currently developing a sustainable model that allows Barnardo's Scotland's to build our organisational capacity to offer more young people the opportunity to complete Youth Achievement Awards & Dynamic Youth Awards, thereby enhancing the quality and impact of the service the young people receive, and those who volunteer with us. We currently employ a part time Development Worker to pilot how we might upscale the delivery of the Awards in a sustainable way.

"I think that doing the Youth Achievement Award is a great way for participants to gain confidence in their ability to participate with their peers, both in giving and receiving feedback. There is a solid and credible record of their efforts, learning, hard work and participation throughout our time together which can then be used as a tool that can last a lifetime as well as having a qualification for their future use and a sense of achievement at completing the award. The award allows participants to focus on the job in hand, increases awareness that there is learning in everything that we all do, and helps to link thoughts and behaviour into action. The element of choice ensures that the topics are relevant to the participants and therefore the process is more enjoyable. Whenever someone gains the award, all of the hard work and challenges are worth it" Barnardo's Scotland Young Families Project Worker

"It's good for young people to feel a sense of achievement. Within the awards, new skills, confidence and self-esteem develop." Barnardo's Scotland Project Worker

5. Given the strong policy focus on the early years, whether the third and private sectors have been able to work equally effectively with pupils of all ages

Yes, while supporting the strong policy focus on the early years, we do not believe this focus has impeded our ability to work in partnership with statutory authorities to support older children.

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