

## **Briefing for Conservative Party Debate on Named Persons 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

### **Key Points**

- **Barnardo's Scotland, like other children's charities, supports the named person scheme.**
- **The role of the named person is at the very heart of the Getting It Right For Every Child approach, which is supported across the parliament, and central to its effectiveness.**
- **It is essential to have a universal early warning system to identify vulnerable children. In many ways, the child at most risk is the one who has not yet been identified as being at risk.**
- **We acknowledge the concerns that have been expressed about the scheme, and, like others we want to see it implemented effectively.**
- **As is good practice for any piece of legislation as important and wide ranging as this, the Scottish Government should commit to post legislative scrutiny and evaluation once it has been fully implemented.**

### **Introduction**

Barnardo's is the UK's largest children's charity, and Barnardo's Scotland works with more than 26,500 children and young people in over 122 specialised services across Scotland. Our services work with families and children who are living in poverty and facing multiple disadvantages. Many of our services are aimed at providing early intervention and support to families in the first stage of vulnerability. Children's rights underpin all of our work and are a central part of the wide range of services we provide to vulnerable children and their families

### **The importance of Getting it Right for Every Child**

Barnardo's Scotland welcomes the opportunity to discuss how best to support the wellbeing needs of children provided by this debate. Ultimately we all share the same

vision; we all want what is best for children and young people - making Scotland the best place in the world for children to grow up. It is right that we debate the support that we give to Scotland's children and young people and the Scottish Parliament has made such debates a priority, not least in passing the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The Act puts Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) on a statutory footing from August 2016. **At the very heart of GIRFEC and central to its effectiveness is the role of the named person.** The named person has already been shown to be effective in local authorities around Scotland, such as The Highland Council.

Barnardo's Scotland believes the named person policy formalises the best practice of our schools and health services - that every child, young person and their families have a primary point of contact available if and when they need it - it is the formalisation of practice that already exists across Scotland.

The suggestion has been made that instead of a universal named person we should focus on the most vulnerable children. However, **we need a universal early warning system to identify the children who are most vulnerable**, and that is why the named person is crucial in ensuring we can protect every child

The reality is children do not come simply divided into those that can be identified as at risk and those we need not worry about. **In many ways, the child at most risk is the one who has not yet been identified as being at risk.** All the risk signals may be there, but no-one has put all the pieces of the jigsaw together. Making a member of staff of a universal service that is already in contact with the child responsible for collating information is a key part of the early warning system we need to make sure every child in Scotland is protected.

### **Post legislative scrutiny – a better option**

The motion proposed by the Scottish Conservative Party notes that there are concerns being expressed by many professionals on the practical difficulties in implementing the policy. However as with all new systems, it will take some time to fully bed in. In delivering a wide range of children's services Barnardo's Scotland are aware of the challenges in implementing such a universal system. **However, these can only be addressed as those tasked with implementing the policy get to grips with those challenges.**

**We therefore would not support a pause in implementation.** Our view is that whilst there may be concerns from some quarters about how the policy will be implemented it needs to be tested to find out if these concerns are genuine. As is good practice for any piece of legislation as important and wide ranging as this, the Scottish Government should commit to post legislative scrutiny and evaluation once it has been fully implemented.

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