

Barnardo's Briefing Note for MSPs:

13th January 2006



SCOTLAND

GIVING CHILDREN BACK THEIR FUTURE

SAFER COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

Barnardo's Scotland manages 62 services that support almost 10,000 of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families in our communities. We believe that increasing opportunities for children and young people to influence local planning can help to bring about safer communities and neighbourhoods.

Children's views on local issues:

Local plans are as relevant to young people as to anyone else, whether through service provision, land use or policing. Barnardo's and Transport 2000 recently convened a series of focus groups with children and young people, to consider the example of local transport policies. The resulting Reduce Speed Now report highlighted that because children have not had the opportunity to fully participate in making transport decisions they believe that their interests have lost out in comparison with other road users, particularly cars. Yet roads are not just for motorists and traffic always impacts on the communities it flows through.

The effects are greatest for children living in areas of high deprivation. Reduce Speed Now highlighted that more than 25% of child pedestrian injuries take place in the 10% of most deprived wards and children living in areas of high deprivation are five times more likely to be killed in a road crash than wealthier households.

When concerns are increasing about children's weight, health and social habits, Reduce Speed Now showed that speeding, traffic levels and a lack of play space are having a real impact on children's lives:

- the radius around the home in which children are allowed to roam has shrunk to a ninth of what it was in 1970.
- in 1971, 80% of seven- and eight-year-olds walked to school alone, in 1990 the figure was just 9%.
- only 3% of children cycle to school
- children spend more time watching TV than playing outside

The Reduce Speed Now report concluded "The children we talked to were experts on their local communities. They knew the dangerous places. They knew where they and their friends wanted to play and they had some very clear ideas about what could make their neighbourhoods safer and better for everyone."

This means that consultation with local children and young people can inform and improve local planning through helping to build a more complete picture of what is happening at a local level.

Ensuring consultation really happens:

There is already a statutory duty for local authorities to consult with local communities in developing local plans. This duty has been supported by clear guidance and the performance of local authorities in this area can be monitored, including through audits of Best Value and Community Planning. However it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the overall extent to which it is making a real impact.

Barnardo's Scotland would like to see the new Planning Bill amended so that local authorities will need to publish a report of the consultation activity they have carried out in reaching the various components of their community plans and the new development plans set out in the Bill. These could be published alongside each new plan, as an appendix. Rather than impose additional burdens on local authorities, this would simply facilitate better scrutiny of progress towards delivering on existing duties.

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