



Scottish Parliament Justice Committee – Mental Health Services and Secure Care Places for Children (under 16s) in Scotland

Evidence from Barnardo's Scotland

May 2019

Key points

- Support for children and young people's mental health must not be restricted to diagnosable mental health conditions
- Many of the young people in HMP&YOI Polmont have significant experience of trauma, bereavement and loss, and will require support with mental health issues that stem from these experiences
- Demand for services providing this type of support within HMP&YOI Polmont is high, and an increase in capacity to provide them would be beneficial

Barnardo's Scotland provides two services within HMP&YOI Polmont to support young people with their mental health. Our response therefore focuses on the Committee's questions relating to mental health in the establishment, and does not touch upon issues relating to secure care, which we do not provide.

What are your views on the development of services and training at HMP&YOI Polmont?

Services

Barnardo's Scotland provides two services within HMP&YOI Polmont to support young people with their mental health:

Outside In Youth Work Service involves young people as partners in their learning and development by building strong working relationships with the young people based on trust and respect. We offer group work, which can be targeted (for example specifically around mental health and wellbeing) or more practically based (for example fundraising or peer mentoring); one to one support; and performing arts.

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Here and Now is a specialist therapeutic service which supports young people who have experienced trauma, bereavement and loss. The service supports the young people to understand and have an awareness of their emotions and the effect on behaviour; to develop an enhanced understanding of positive and negative relationships; and to develop healthy coping strategies for mourning and grief.

An evaluation of Here and Now by the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ) found that young men reported significantly lower rates of symptoms associated with Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder such as dissociation, anxiety, poor concentration, anger and intrusive negative thoughts after receiving support from the service. Young men described the benefits gained from their involvement: ***"It just helped us a lot and I'm grateful for it know what I mean? I just didn't think anything like that would have actually helped us, it was a big surprise".***

Barnardo's Scotland is one of a number of third sector providers who hold contracts with SPS to support young people in HMP&YOI Polmont. **The inclusion of the third sector brings additional skills to the workforce within the establishment**, for example groupwork, therapeutic skills and specialist trauma support. Feedback from young people consistently suggests that they particularly value the relationships that they develop with third sector staff as they benefit from knowing that staff care about them, and they feel able to develop trusting relationships because third sector colleagues treat them normally.

Comment [KH1]: Is there a better way to phrase this?

While the presence of third sector organisations can therefore be seen to be of great benefit to the young people, these services are challenged by increasing demand for their support; the increasing complexity of the challenges faced by young people in Polmont; and the uncertainty of one year funding relationships.

Training

In 2015/16, Barnardo's Scotland was commissioned by HMP&YOI Polmont to provide **training for all staff within the establishment in trauma, bereavement and loss**. 23 courses were delivered to over 200 members of staff – around half of eligible staff.

This training was also evaluated by CYCJ, who found that:

"The facilitators encountered a certain level of resistance to training, with some participants not fully acknowledging the relevance of trauma, bereavement and loss as an issue for the young people in the establishment, or not seeing the relevance of training to their role...There was also a

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concern that, over time, the impact of the training would lessen due to staff turnover, or staff simply forgetting what had been learnedⁱⁱ.”

While it is extremely positive that SPS understood the importance of a widespread understanding of trauma, bereavement and loss amongst its staff group, this evaluation provides a useful reminder of the challenges of ensuring that training does not stand alone, and starts to identify some of the potential challenges of introducing a trauma-informed approach within a prison setting.

How has the NHS/Scottish Prison Service developed youth mental health and wellbeing strategy in secure care units or in prison custody?

In all aspects of Barnardo’s Scotland’s work, we seek to ensure that support for **mental health and wellbeing is not restricted to diagnosable mental health conditions**. Many of the young people we work with require support with their mental health and wellbeing around issues stemming from their experiences of trauma, bereavement and loss. This is particularly pertinent within HMP&YOI Polmont.

All partners working within HMP&YOI Polmont are clear that mental health is everybody’s business, and that mental health must be considered on a population level within the establishment. At times, however, practice can be skewed towards a medical model of mental health, which does not put as much focus onto meeting the needs of those who require support with mental health issues which do not relate to a diagnosable condition. This tendency is something that we note in a range of contexts across Scotland, and is by no means unique to HMP&YOI Polmont.

Comment [KH2]: Lisa, is this too close to the line?

What are your views on the work of the expert review of mental health and wellbeing for younger people in custody?

Barnardo’s Scotland welcomed the announcement of the expert review, and was pleased to be invited to be part of the review. We advocated that the review should not medicalise young people’s problems and the focus should not just be on the services provided by the NHS but all the support available to young people in prison, especially the learning from Here and Now around the impact of trauma and multiple adversities on young people’s mental health and wellbeing. We look forward to publication of the review report in coming weeks.

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How are Scotland's international human rights obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child being met in relation secure care units and HMP&YOI Polmont?

Barnardo's Scotland services in HMP&YOI Polmont help to ensure that children's rights are part of the work within the establishment, in particular article 39 'recovery from trauma' and article 12 'respect for the views of the child'.

As members of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights), we would draw the Committee's attention to Together's recent Submission to the United Nations Committee Against Tortureⁱⁱⁱ, which includes comments on children's rights in relation to detention.

ⁱ Our Lives with Others: An evaluation of trauma, bereavement and loss developments at HMYOI Polmont, CYCJ
<https://cycj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Our-Lives-with-Others-Evaluation-Report-.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Our Lives with Others: An evaluation of trauma, bereavement and loss developments at HMYOI Polmont, CYCJ
<https://cycj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Our-Lives-with-Others-Evaluation-Report-.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) Submission to the United Nations Committee Against Torture
https://www.togetherscotland.org.uk/media/1275/uncat_final.pdf

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