

Quarriers

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Quarriers' Falkirk Children's Rights Service

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Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service

Annual Report 2007



Quarriers

Welcome to the Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service Annual Report.

Inside you will be able to find out more about the work of the service and what we've been doing in our first year. We were given the task of building a quality service within the Falkirk Council area - which to date we are steadily progressing in a positive and professional manner.

Introduction

Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service began on 1st May 2006 when the two staff members, Gordon Stewart, Children's Rights Officer and Catherine Harrison, Administration and Information Officer, took up their posts. The Service became operational on 5th June 2006.

"Already in our first year we have moved into exciting new premises in the heart of Falkirk Town Centre, which will enable far greater access to Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service for all - young people, parents/carers and fellow professionals who work directly with young people.

It has given me great pleasure representing young people to challenge and promote their rights in a variety of settings and covering a wide range of issues.

I have found my first year as Children's Rights Officer to be both challenging and extremely rewarding and my enthusiasm for the project and the potential of the service to promote and uphold the rights of children and young people continues."

Gordon Stewart, Children's Rights Officer

"Nothing would have been done without Gordon's involvement, thanks"



A Brief History

Falkirk Council commissioned Quarriers to establish and deliver a Children's Rights Service for children and young people who reside or normally reside within the Local Authority area. This was in recognition that children and young people have rights and responsibilities and may, in some circumstances, need the assistance of an adult who can offer:

Advocacy - to enable young people's voices to be heard so they can be involved in making choices and decisions about their lives

An advocate can listen to a young person and help them put their views forward, for example in meetings and reviews. An advocate can help a young person to say what they want or can speak on their behalf. This can include supporting a young person to make a complaint.

Consultation - with children and young people to find out what they think about the services provided for them and how they could be improved.

Information - about children's rights, for example how a young person can make a complaint and what a young person's rights are around issues which affect them.

Training - to promote children's rights to social services staff and carers to ensure young people are listened to and involved in decisions about their lives.



Aims of the Service

Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service maintains records and feedback from people we support and referring agencies in accordance with our service level agreement to monitor and evaluate our service provision ensuring a consistently high standard.

The Children's Rights Officer has been actively involved in consultations, working groups, Children's Commission events and Executive Commission meetings where the rights and voices of children and young people are accurately represented in accordance with Falkirk Council's Integrated Children's Services Plan 2005-2008.

- Promote and protect the rights of children and young people aged 5-25 years within the Falkirk Council Area
- Pay special attention to those children and young people who find it hard to be heard for any reason, including those marginalised by their differing abilities, ways of communication, location, ethnicity, religion, sexuality or other focus of discrimination
- Advocate for children and young people in individual situations and challenge discrimination or breach of rights, whether in the home, school or community
- Involve children and young people, seeking their views on matters which affect their lives
- Contribute to legislative and national policy requirements are being implemented in the Falkirk Area
- Link closely with all key providers to children, young people, families and carers in Falkirk and be pro-active in the work of Falkirk Children's Commission and Executive Commission



Our Work

Promoting our Service

Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service has been involved with a diverse range of referrals since we began in June 2006. We have worked with a large number of young people, partner agencies, council services and also parents/carers of young people who reside or normally reside within the Falkirk Council area.

During our first year we have made contact with many fellow professionals who work directly with young people. We have also been present at information events, parent's nights, and conferences and also BIG in Falkirk where our leaflet and promotional items have been widely distributed. Since our website was launched in September 2006 we have had a significant number of 'hits' and see this as a way to promote our service and provide easily accessible information and advice to a large number of people. Posters and leaflets have been distributed to every high school and community facility in the area and we have advertisements in community magazines. Young Scot books and will also be featuring on Falkirk Council Library bags over the next two years.

We are more than happy to work with any agency who feels that they would benefit from promotional materials and/or activities as we are keen to continue raising awareness of our service.

Working with Young People

During our first twelve months we have received a steady flow of enquiries from a variety of sources presenting us with a range of issues including:

- Disability
- Child protection
- Housing / homelessness
- Education / exclusion / transport/ part time timetables
- Social Work involvement
- Children's hearings
- L.A.C. Reviews
- Legal Issues
- Custody
- Throughcare
- Looked After & Accommodated Young People

Children and young people have rights laid down by International and Scottish Law, and by Government Policy. These include:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, which give young people important rights in education
- The Human Rights Act 1998

Partnership Working

Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service has been proactive in making links with relevant partners and keeps close contact with key individuals. We liaise closely with Falkirk Council's Leaving Care Team and Children's Services Team.

The Children's Rights Officer has been actively involved with Falkirk Council Children's Services Team during its consultation exercise with young people across the Council area. This exercise aims to inform the process of service re-design using the experiences and views of people we support particularly young people who do not normally have this opportunity open to them.

The Children's Rights Officer also attends monthly meetings at the Children's Commission Executive Group:

- This group is responsible for the development and implementation of the Children's Services Plan including regular monitoring
- Pro-active examination of services for children and young people across the agencies in consultation with young people and their families, for opportunities to enhance services by greater integration/collaboration in order to meet needs

(Falkirk Children's Services Plan 2005-2008)

“Without their help this young person would not be in the good place she is now!”

Teacher



Partnership Working

Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service has moved from its original location to the town centre to provide a more easily accessible drop in service alongside Falkirk Council Community Services / Dialogue Youth / Young Scot. We now offer a 'one stop shop' which will better meet the needs of the young people we support.

Links with other agencies

The service has established and continues to extend positive working links with local and national agencies providing services or directly impacting on children and young people within the Falkirk area. The project is regularly in contact with Social Work, Education, Health, and Voluntary Sector Agencies and with advocacy services such as Who Cares? and the SCCYP! Officers.

Achieving targets

The Project has already achieved the initial target set to deliver at least ten briefing sessions to relevant groups and agencies. The Children's Rights Officer presented to every Falkirk Children and Families Social Work Team and Fostering Service, Falkirk Children's Panel members, Link Living, the Throughcare and Aftercare team, various parents' groups evenings and the Scottish Child Minders' Association. This does not mean that we regard this area of work as in any way complete - a key focus for the Children's Rights Officer over the coming year will be to strengthen these links and to establish a pattern for regularly delivering learning and

briefing inputs to teams and agencies. This will ensure that all statutory and service agencies remain aware and alert to children's rights issues in their day to day work

Accessibility

The service has established clear referral, assessment and engagement processes which are easily accessible to young people and an ongoing information and publicity strategy. This includes a bespoke website, posters, leaflets and wallet cards, and a strong network of individuals and agencies with whom the service is regularly engaging and meeting

The Children's Rights Officer and Admin/Info worker have established contact with all key relevant officers in the local authority and relevant local agencies. A communication strategy is in place to ensure that awareness is maintained of the existence and purpose of the service, so increasing access opportunities to young people requiring support to have their rights upheld. During our first year we have actively sought to publicise the service and promote the rights of children and young people to as wide audience as possible. We have distributed over 5,000 service leaflets to all social work teams and ILC bases within the council area and our service website - www.falkirkchildrensrights.org.uk - has received over 14,000 hits in its first year - We will continue to promote the service to maintain a high profile in the area.

Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service is able to evidence that it has met ten of the twelve Quantified Objectives set for 2006-2007 in the Joint Working Agreement 2006-2009 these are:

- 1 Provision of a Children's Rights Service to promote the rights of children and young people living in the Falkirk area
- 2 Train, support and supervise staff within the project
- 3 Attend, present reports and information to and actively contribute to the activities and development of the Falkirk Children's Commission
- 4 Establish and maintain active links and positive working relationships with key individuals and departments, whose activities directly impact on the daily lives of children and young people in the Falkirk area
- 5 Establish and implement a system for promoting awareness of the service's existence and purpose
- 6 Undertake a minimum of ten information/briefing sessions to a variety of groups and agencies to raise awareness of children's rights and to ensure that the rights of children and young people are being upheld
- 7 Appropriately challenge individuals, practice process or policy issues where there is evidence of a breach of rights or discriminatory practice
- 8 Establish a referral system for children and young people who require individual support

- 9 Provide clear, accessible information about the service and implement an information strategy
- 10 Involve children and young people in all aspects of service development and evaluation



Future Developments

We are in the process of establishing a steering group with young people taking a lead role in this, to provide ongoing feedback and consultation in relation the performance of the service.

Volunteers will be recruited over the next few months. It is anticipated that young people will be involved in the recruitment process.

Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service will, over the coming months, begin to look in detail at what the issues are for children and young people who are looked after and accommodated and/or involved with the Child Protection System and report this to the Executive Children's Commission.

We hope that you find this annual report both informative and useful to give you a more in depth knowledge of the Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service.

Contact us

Should you require any further information and/or advice please contact us:

Tel: 01324 692929

www.falkirkchildrensrights.org.uk

“As a carer the service has alleviated the pressure associated with the foster child”

Foster Carer

“I got the information I needed at the time I really needed it”



“Quarriers Falkirk Children's Rights Service has been operating for over a year now.

The partnership agreement between Quarriers and Falkirk Council states that a service will be provided which promotes and advocates for the rights of children and young people ordinarily resident in the Falkirk Council area.

The Children's Rights Officer, Gordon Stewart, has quickly developed a role within Falkirk Children's Commission which is to challenge and report. Recently, he was extensively involved in a consultation exercise undertaken by the Children's Commission. This has ensured that the views and opinions of some young people, who ordinarily may find it more difficult to communicate with services providers, have been included in the findings which in turn will inform service design.

Gordon has been successful in highlighting children's rights to the service and agencies working within the Falkirk area and is enabling ALL “Falkirk's Bairns” to have a voice, allowing them to fulfil their potential and contribute their thoughts and ideas to the benefit of all.”

Carol Wilson

Children's Rights Service

Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

Falkirk Council