

Network Policy Forum
3 May 2006
2:30pm - 4:30pm

Issues around Implementing Inclusion Policies

Present:

Ella Simpson (Chair), *The Rock Trust and Executive Committee Member of Edinburgh Network of Voluntary Organisations for Children , Young People and Families*; Andy Baker, *Canongate Youth Project*; Angela Cusack, *Children Inc*; Carly Gillett, *SACRO*; Charmaine Brown, *Firsthand*; Christine Schoeck, *SACRO*; Daniel Winstanely, *LGBT Youth*; Fiona Rogan, *Scottish Community Drama Association*; James Shoemark, *Bethany Christian Trust*; Juliet Wilson, *National Playbus Association*; Malcolm Jefferson, *Edinburgh Leisure*; Pamela Roccio, *2nd Chance To Learn*; Ros Hume, *Couple Counselling Lothian*; Andy Aitken, *FABB Scotland*; Marie Anderson, *Broomhouse Centre*

In Attendance:

Barbara Stott, *Orcadia*; Ali Black, *Equalities Unit, City of Edinburgh Council*; Phil Tully, *Eke-Out Project*; Mridu Thanki, *Eke-Out Project*

Apologies:

George Lamb, *Pilton Partnership*; Carol Rice, *Respite Care*; Margaret Winter, *Girlguiding Edinburgh*; David Hill, *Brenda House*; Pamela Roccio, *Second Chance to Learn*; Sarah Low, *Children & Families Dept, City of Edinburgh Council*

1. Welcome and Introduction

The chair of the Policy Forum, Ella Simpson, welcomed Network members to the second Policy Forum. Network members were also advised that the purpose of the meeting was to encourage a general open discussion on the subject at hand and, hopefully, to give Network members ideas of how to improve current practice and discover avenues where they can gain assistance where needed.

2. Issues around Implementing Inclusion Policies **Presentation by Barbara Stott of Orcadia**

Barbara provided some background details about Orcadia and what the organisation does. Orcadia does not have an inclusion policy and work on the basis that everyone is welcome. Orcadia provide a wide range of arts programmes and believe that any individual can come to Orcadia and join in a package that suits that individual's needs. Volunteers are given hands-on experience with service users although volunteers are never left in one-to-one situations with services users. Barbara believes that communication is at the heart of what volunteers do at Orcadia.

Orcadia find that it is very expensive to run minibus to enable them to give students a door to door service. Barbara would like the Scottish Executive to allocate money to small charities specifically for transport purposes. To illustrate the problems that inclusion can raise in practice, Barbara related an attempt to integrate Orcadia's youth group with a mainstream youth group. The attempt failed due to the mainstream youth group's staff members feeling that they would need special training to deal with the disabled members of Orcadia's youth group.

From Barbara's presentation and the discussion that followed the following key points emerged:

- Due to the lack of integration within mainstream society, people sometimes do not have the experience of working with people who are or look different. Many feel great anxiety in being with or working with people with different needs. While training is crucial to generating better understanding and knowledge around specific conditions, the needs of people as people should not be overshadowed by any perceived differences.
- In its constant search for funding, Orcadia tries to approach 150 to 200 sources a year. Some funding bodies are keen to see an organisation's policies in action, especially those relating to inclusion. But project funding does not necessarily cover cost of implementing equalities and inclusion policies. Organisations could be better supported with practice rather than policies.
- A voluntary sector funding information officer is needed who could provide voluntary sector organisations with answers to pressing problems.
- Not all within the voluntary sector act (or are able to) fittingly when confronted with inclusion issues. Attitudes along with resources are two areas in which the voluntary sector could concentrate its efforts.
- A third of the organisations present do employ people with disabilities but very few have accessible buildings or other equipment to make services accessible.

Ella summarised the discussion session by underling the point that the existence of a policy does not necessarily mean that the policy is translated into practice. However, solving such problems is recognised as being one of the voluntary sector's main strengths. It is important to ensure that services are open and accessible to all who want to use them.

3. Equalities Impact Survey: Presentation by Ali Black, Equalities Unit, City of Edinburgh Council

Ali briefed the Network members about the City of Edinburgh Council's Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) process, its origins and practice.

The Equalities Impact Assessment is a tool to evaluate the appropriateness of Council services against everyone's needs, particularly of groups that traditionally tend to experience disadvantage and / or discrimination i.e. black and minority ethnic communities, women, religious and faith groups, people with disabilities, older people, LGBT people.

The Council has statutory obligation to eliminate discrimination for some of the groups above. In addition, it has made a policy commitment to apply the spirit of these legal requirements to other disadvantage groups. People on low incomes and children and young people, although also subject to disadvantage, are currently not within the agreed remit for EIA by the Council (although some Council services have indicated their intention to include these groups).

The Network members raised their concerns that children and young people are not included in the Council's focus. Another omission is housing in relation to young people. Ali acknowledged the principle behind these concerns, but pointed out that the Council had limited resources and needed to prioritise these on the basis of the legal duties. She also indicated that the Council's housing service (part of Services for Communities) was one of the sections that had noted an intention to apply EIA to children and young people.

Ali provided Network members with additional information and templates of the process used by the Council. She invited the Network members to further training sessions on EIA. She is also looking for voluntary sector involvement in the Council's EIA Grant Funding process, which will be led by Ali, and there will be similar opportunities for involvement in EIA work in the Children and Families department.

Network members who wish to participate in either of these were advised to contact Mridu Thanki.

4. Information Exchange

Colin Murray from EVOC's Social Care Unit informed the meeting of a CHP Health Inequalities Day to be held on Tuesday 16th May and that there are four places available for the voluntary sector

The next Policy Forum meeting will take place in mid-September.

