

MARS

Multi-Agency Resource Service

helping keep children safe

Edition 1, September 2009



Q&A

Welcome to the first MARS newsletter

This newsletter will be one of a number of ways for you to keep in touch with the work of the Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS). We'll talk about the issues which are important to you and share interesting developments and learning from practice.

Who we are

The MARS is funded by the Scottish Government to develop a community of knowledge and facilitate access to experienced child protection professionals. We aim to help agencies deal with particularly challenging child protection situations.

Beth Smith, Director of the MARS, will provide strategic management within the broader national context of the development of services to children, young people and families. **Jane Scott, Implementation Coordinator**, will develop the processes required to underpin and support the development of the MARS. We will also soon be joined by **Business Manager Scott Reid**. Together we will work towards our aims of providing a 'critical' voice to child welfare organisations, as well as setting up communities of expertise and good practice.

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Our vision

The vision of the MARS is as relevant now as it was in 2005 – when it was set up in response to Recommendation 27 of the SWIA report *An Inspection into the Care and Protection of Children in Eilean Siar* – and not just for remote and rural communities.

'Lessons from inquiries all point to the fact that only a strong and confident workforce can make the right decisions, and provide the right support for vulnerable children' (Laming, 2009).

Building communities of expertise

The MARS is working hard to build 'communities of expertise' across Scotland. It is important to stress that many communities of expertise are already in existence. However, not everyone can be an expert in everything and there will be times when frontline practitioners, middle or senior managers and local policy makers will identify a lack of expertise when addressing a particular issue.

Some of you have already been in touch to ask for information and others may have been approached and asked to share knowledge or practice developments.



Who is the MARS for? The MARS is for all staff and agencies working within the field of child protection. We are keen to work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders and within the wider context of *Getting it Right for Every Child*.

Who can approach the MARS?

It is envisaged that our primary contact will be with agencies rather than individuals. Local child protection committees have been asked to identify an individual to act as your MARS contact to simplify communication.

Will the MARS give actual advice or just put agencies in touch with each other?

The primary function of the MARS will be to put agencies in touch with each other and to broker the transfer of support and knowledge. The MARS may be able to help contacting agencies identify where there are gaps that need to be filled, but it will not have capacity to fill those gaps itself.

What kind of complex child protection situations are we talking about?

The function of the MARS will evolve based on the demands for its services, and what the sector finds helpful. Agencies can approach the MARS over a specific case, or in a situation where a death or injury has occurred. You can also contact us for support in implementing findings and recommendations from inspections.

What kind of agencies/experts from other countries would the MARS engage with?

The MARS is principally about ensuring that connections are in place to draw on practical and professional expertise when it is needed. Links will be forged outside Scotland with agencies and practitioners involved in child protection. The MARS will operate alongside the SCCPN and the newly announced National Coordinator for Child Protection Committees.

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SCCPN Scottish Child Care and Protection Network

Connecting research and practice Edition 1, September 2009

A year of growth and expansion in activities

The Scottish Child Care and Protection Network (SCCPN) draws together academics, researchers, policy makers and practitioners to explore ways to foster collaboration and coordination of research production and dissemination. Its overall aim is to increase access to evidence for best practice in child care and protection. A year ago the Scottish Government awarded a grant to the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network to facilitate its growth and an expansion in its activities.



During the past year, we have seen increased interest in the network and what it can offer and a growing mailing list. It has been a busy time for our working groups on research, evaluation and dissemination. We have seen the completion of two research reviews and a survey of frontline practitioners on what they see as priorities for research.

Future plans

In the coming months, we will be disseminating findings from our research work on significant case reviews and child death inquiries, and from a review of research on supporting children and families affected by parental substance misuse.

We will also be feeding back the findings of our survey of practitioners and pursuing ways that they suggest research can be made more accessible, appealing and relevant to child care and protection practice in Scotland.

Fiona Mitchell
SCCPN network coordinator

Using a public health approach to child protection

Method or metaphor? Across the English speaking world, we are facing some major decisions in child protection policy as the unsustainable and ineffective nature of our current approaches becomes increasingly evident.



Professor Dorothy Scott, Director of the Australian Centre for Child Protection, sees this as an exciting opportunity for new ideas and possibilities.

New perspectives on child protection. In June, she gave time in her working tour of the UK to share her perspective on Using a Public Health Approach to Child Protection. You can listen to Dorothy's presentation and view the annotated slides that accompanied it by emailing fiona.mitchell@stir.ac.uk.

Carnegie Trust awards research grant

The Network was recently granted an award by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland to undertake a pilot research study.



With support from two Child Protection Committees, the Network was successful in acquiring funding for a researcher who will work to identify the best way to measure the impact of interventions on the lives of children and young people over time.

This work will lay the foundations for a larger scale study that will help us to understand what is effective in improving the outcomes for children and young people in the short and longer term.

Making connections across agencies

Making sense of who does what and where they fit within the practice, policy and research worlds is not a simple task. Sharing and exchanging our knowledge makes it simpler.

SCCPN, together with the MARS, is developing a simple, online directory that will profile organisations, agencies, networks, and forums which support the development of research, policy and practice in child care and protection.

Got any suggestions? Send them to sccpn@stir.ac.uk. This resource will go live this autumn, along with the SCCPN website.

Share your studies

Do know of any recent Scottish research or evaluation studies relevant to child care and protection...?



Then tell us and we will include a reference to them on our online index that will be accessible to all researchers, policy makers and practitioners. Please email: fiona.mitchell@stir.ac.uk

Join the network

If you want to keep up to date with our activities, join the network mailing list. Send your email contact details to sccpn@stir.ac.uk.

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