

SOCIAL & ETHICAL ISSUES GROUP

SCOTLAND'S CHILDREN'S PANELS

If I have learned anything from my 23 years as a teacher, particularly from my 19 years as a pupil support teacher, it is that every young person has their own story.

For many young people, that story is one of a safe home environment, happy family holidays, success at school...however, for so many other young people their story is quite different.

Soon after beginning my first teaching post in Alloa in 1996, I decided to sign up to be trained to serve on the local Children's Panel. The stated aim of the Panel is **"to help protect the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and young people in Scotland."**

Making vital decisions

Following a short but intensive period of training, I then served for a number of years on the Children's Panel in the Stirling area. I would be one of three panel members who would read and study various reports before attending the children's hearing to listen to those in attendance, to discuss what were often very complex family situations, and to make legally binding decisions that aimed to protect and support the child or young person. These decisions are informed by a range of different people including the family, social worker, health specialist or teacher; however the voice of the child or young person is at the centre of every children's hearing.

As a teacher, and now in later life as a parent myself, I would argue that the Children's Panel, which I think is a uniquely Scottish system, has the potential to do a power of good in protecting the most vulnerable children and young people. Not being a lawyer, I did occasionally find some of the legalities a little frustrating, but the Children's Panel is a part of our legal system and therefore requires those legalities which I

This month we have invited Howard Ashworth to share his experience of being a member of a Children's Panel, the uniquely Scottish system of addressing the needs of vulnerable children.



don't necessarily understand fully enough. Over the years, both as a panel member and as a teacher attending to represent a young person, I have seen decisions being made which aim to ensure the safety, protection and well-being of extremely vulnerable children and young people; these decisions include improving their home situation, ensuring the continuity and quality of parenting and nurturing that they receive, or maintaining their education provision.

Becoming a panel member?

During 2017/18, over 14,000 children and young people across Scotland were supported through the Children's Panel system. The Children's Panel recruit throughout the year, seeking to recruit regular members of the local community; you do not need to have any social work or teaching background; you do not need to have any specific experience of working with children or young people; the members of Children's Panels really are just representative of local people, all of whom have

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Children's Panels (contd)

a genuine desire to see the lives of our children and young people improved to become happier, safer, more secure, more successful. Only then can these children and young people, who have such huge potential, grow up to realize that potential so that they in turn can make their own positive contribution to our local community.



The Children's Panel – life changing.

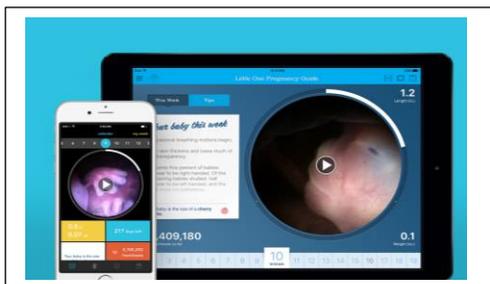
You can find out more about Children's Panels and what is required to apply to be a panel member at www.childrenspanelscotland.org recruitment@childrenshearings.org.uk
Tel: 0131 244 3696



The EHD is an American non-profit organization which aims to increase understanding of how babies develop in the womb and thereby to improve the health of both mum and baby.

Their strapline is *'improving lifelong health one pregnancy at a time.'*

Their web site contains fascinating videos of pre-natal development and there are also free downloadable apps which allow an expectant mother to enter her stage of pregnancy week by week and see an ultrasound picture of her baby's development at that time!
See www.ehd.org



An extract of the EHD web site

A RESOURCE FOR YOUR HOME GROUP



The Christian Institute has recently brought out 'Living Christianity – a series of studies about God's calling for his people in the world.'

Comprising both video and print resources, it is intended to help groups and individuals who want to be equipped to engage our contemporary world.

The five sessions of the package are:

- Concern for society
- Christians and the world
- Christians and work
- Life, gender, marriage and family
- Christians as citizens

The Social and Ethical Issues Group has purchased a set of the materials. We'll be assessing it over the next few weeks. If you are interested in knowing more about it for your home group, do email ethical.issues@stirlingbaptist.co.uk



SBC has registered as a remote venue for the National Prayer Breakfast on Wednesday 12th June. This means that we will be able to broadcast a live stream of the Breakfast in the church premises.

The National Prayer Breakfast brings together Christians from all denominations, joining with politicians and community leaders, to pray for the nation.

To register your intention to attend the SBC live stream, please go to the NPB web site www.npbscotland.org.uk. As a light breakfast will be provided it is important that we know how many people to expect. No charge for entry, but a donation towards catering costs will be appreciated.

We will be publicizing the broadcast to other churches in the town