

**National Appropriate Adult Oversight Group  
13 March 2024 10.30am – 12:00am**

**Attendees:**

Sandy Riddell, Mental Welfare Commission (Chair)  
Frances Donohoe, National Policy and Participation Officer (Secretariat) (COSLA)  
Sarah Meanley, Scottish Government  
Anil Gupta, COSLA  
Anne- Louise Hayden, Carr Gomm  
Leanne Murphy- Scottish Legal Aid Board  
Jane Kelly, Care Inspectorate  
Kay Newton, Care Inspectorate  
Stephen Grimason, Police Scotland  
Nicola Cumming, Tayside/National Operational Group  
Diane Greenaway- The Appropriate Adult Service  
Callan Curtis, Orkney/National Operational Group  
Laura Kerr, Social Work Scotland  
Emma Thomson, COPFS

**Apologies:**

Jana de Villiers, Forensic Network  
Grazia Robertson- Law Society  
Franck David - People First  
Tony Bowman- SOLD Network

**1. Welcome and introduction**

Sandy welcomed everyone to the fourteenth meeting of the Oversight Group. A very warm welcome was given to those joining for the first time.

Anne- Louise Hayden- Carr Gomm

Leanne Murphy -Scottish Legal Aid Board

Diane Greenaway- The Appropriate Adult Service (TAAS) -new service in the Ayrshires which was previously run by Clarity in Communication

**2. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were offered.

**3. Minute of previous meeting**

The minutes from the October meeting were approved.

Sandy noted the departure of Ffion Heledd and the pressures that staff turnover and resource implications are having on the project.

**4. Update from National Appropriate Adult Project**

Fran provided an update on the recent national event, highlighting its success in bringing together stakeholders, showcasing achievements, and discussing future strategies.

Sandy added observations on the event's positive atmosphere, the commitment of attendees, and the importance of maintaining momentum in the project. He also said he

had been really impressed with the huge amount that has been done and that there is a sense of still so much more to do. There had been an emphasis on the need for consistent standards and support across Scotland and future events to track progress.

Fran also mentioned that the event had helped showcase local and National initiatives. The variability in practice and how people were supported was expected. The communication, support and leadership of Fran and Ffion as well as Jo Savege was remarked on, as was the need to keep the momentum going and to have another follow up event where we can hold each other to account. The event exceeded expectations and it was good to have a wide range of partners present.

In Fran's updates to the group efforts that had been taken to strengthen links with other organisations.

- It was noted that the handover of the Ayrshire Councils (which had been run by Clarity in Communication) to (TAAS) 'The Appropriate Adult Service' had taken place. It is based in England although a local coordinator, Diane Greenaway, is now in post in Ayrshire.
- Fran has attended meetings of local oversight groups over the last few months and has been supporting areas where these are less developed.
- In terms of awareness raising and supporting training and development, Fran and Ffion had worked with Police Scotland colleagues to contribute to more targeted Police training in November 2023
- There was a training session for the Scottish Legal Aid Board in November, and they are reciprocating by offering to join one of our future Operational Group meetings.
- Ffion also presented at a Forensic Network national meeting in November.
- The project team continued to strengthen links with Adult Support and Protection colleagues and colleagues working on Equally Safe and the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda and Public Protection. Both offer opportunities to raise the profile of Appropriate Adults and we have been invited to present about our work at both networks.
- Fran attended the ASPire event in Feb 2024 in Stirling and also provided a response to the Neurodiversity bill which was collated with various policy areas in COLSA.

As a result of the Dundee event Ffion drew up a very draft table delivery plan covering matters to be progressed. It was sent out with the meeting's papers. Members of the Oversight group were asked for their views on both continuing as they are and the proposal to increase the political governance – which apart from having Councillor Maureen Chalmers attend our national event has been light.

Anil covered the development of the delivery plan, outlining key areas such as governance, training, and performance information. He sought input from members on the future direction of the project and acknowledged the upcoming changes in staffing.

Sarah provided insights into the Scottish Government's funding allocations for various aspects of the project and expressed support for the ongoing role of the national oversight group. Sandy highlighted the importance of the group's intelligence in identifying areas for improvement but acknowledged its limitations without adequate project support. There was consensus on the need for further developments on

resourcing and the development of the delivery plan before reconvening the group to assess progress.

Sandy acknowledged the challenges of uncertain funding but expressed optimism about the increasing interest and political engagement in appropriate adult services. Despite resource constraints, he encouraged a forward-looking approach to addressing gaps and concerns in service provision, emphasising the importance of considering ideal outcomes and needs rather than solely focusing on resource limitations.

It was noted that as the oversight group have highlighted some great nuggets of excellent work but also seen some disconnect with supervisory and leadership with AAs along the way. This is a critical issue for the service if it is to operate appropriately. At the same time there is a limit to what the oversight group can do without support of a Project Team – any plans we have need people to drive them.

Anil mentioned how the draft annual report was sent to the Community Wellbeing Board and some support and interest from them on this. Sandy agreed that is very topical and people want to know more about especially about training and development and consistency across Scotland. He also emphasised the need for realistic planning informed by available resources and proposed a timeline for collecting feedback from the oversight group on the draft forward plan by the middle of April. There was consensus on the importance of addressing gaps and enhancing support for services to maintain momentum in the project.

Anil said we will have a hiatus until staffing in place but if people have comments on it, they should get in touch with him - it was simply a first draft and it's development will be highlighted in the handover notes for the new team and will also be a priority for Sandy and the Scottish Government.

**ACTION: All** others to feed in and look through detail and add a bit of flesh to delivery plan in terms of what we know needed to be done

- Future developments
- Sustainability
- Project planning /subgroups to develop
- Governance/Communication and Awareness raising.
- Learning and Development
- Performance /information.
- Annual report-next steps

Sandy expressed concerns about the challenges posed by the uncertain financial situation in public services and emphasised the need for clarity on resource availability before finalising any plans. There was consensus on the importance of addressing gaps and enhancing support for services to maintain momentum in the project.

**ACTION: Comments on draft delivery plan to Anil by mid-April**

**ACTION: Anil, Sarah and Sandy to meet to progress resourcing.  
COSLA will wait for grant offer letter and process recruitment.**

During the meeting a question around the quality of data collection remaining a problem was raised through an email from Grazia Robertson of the Law Society. She was concerned that there was a lack of information regarding how the service currently operates and whether there are differences between sheriffdoms. She was interested in knowing whether or not Police Scotland record the relevant information on the operation of AA Services.

Stephen Grimason of PSoS responded to this prompting discussion about challenges in obtaining relevant information from Police Scotland systems. Stephen explained the limitations in data provision due to the nature of appropriate adult services. Sarah suggested the importance of collectively agreeing on the narrative desired from the data before exploring data collection methods.

The meeting agreed with plans to address the concerns raised and provide feedback to Grazia.

**ACTION: Fran/Anil to advise Grazia that her question was raised**

**ACTION: Anil to look at who is collecting what data and get some advice from Improvement service.**

## 5. Member updates

### Care Inspectorate

- Jane and Kay gave an update on how well received the launch of the Quality Improvement Framework went at the National Event – positive engagement and progress made since the launch event including working with early adopters and developing tools for implementation.
- Sandy and other members expressed encouragement and potentially expanding the approach.

### Scottish Government

- Sarah Meanley provided insights into the Scottish Government's funding allocations for various aspects of the project and expressed support for the ongoing role of the national oversight group. Sarah spoke about resourcing and SG role which has 3 parts:
  - Funding to Local Authorities to support services- funding has been agreed and allocation letters sent.
  - Funding for Care Inspectorate is baselined so that has been agreed into the next financial year and beyond, and.
  - 3rd strand for 2 posts- one was Ffion's and Sarah wished her well and the other was for the post Fran is in- a comfort email has been issued from SG to COSLA but still need to go through internal processes.
- On the proposed delivery plan Sarah thought the SG would continue to support the work of the Oversight group. In terms of adding a political aspect there would be no objection if they are needed.

- Sarah emphasized the importance of considering local discretion in delivering appropriate adult services, highlighting the need to avoid restricting local authorities in their ability to tailor services to local needs. She also stressed the importance of ensuring that training, standards, and performance measurement are adaptable yet broadly applicable.
- The refresh of guidance will likely be Summer 2024. Sandy addressed the Scottish Government's progress on reviewing guidance, acknowledging the challenges they face and the potential delay in completing the refresh due to resource constraints and shifting deadlines.
- Sarah provided updates on various government initiatives and highlighted the importance of incorporating recent developments, such as the UNCRC Incorporation Act, into the guidance.

Sandy Riddell echoed this sentiment, emphasising the need to prioritise the rights and experiences of individuals accessing services. He highlighted the potential risks of unintended consequences if different parts of the system are not aligned and urged vigilance in overseeing developments to ensure consistency and effectiveness.

Fran shared insights from recent events and discussions regarding public protection and transitions from children to adult services. Laura spoke regarding alignment between different initiatives.

Sandy emphasised the need for a follow-up event to coincide with the launch of the refreshed guidance and expressed appreciation for the government's efforts despite capacity issues. Sandy acknowledged the challenges of uncertain funding but expressed optimism about the increasing interest and political engagement in appropriate adult services.

### **Police Scotland**

- Stephen said that there are several key points to consider regarding the transition of services between children and adults, particularly in relation to domestic abuse and the need for appropriate adult support.
- He highlighted the potential increase in older children experiencing domestic abuse and the implications for providing appropriate adult services.
- Additionally, he mentioned a drop in referrals to appropriate adult services within police divisions, speculating about potential causes such as increased use of investigative techniques. Finally, he noted a positive collaboration with Dundee Perth /Kinross to explore the use of appropriate adults for witnesses in investigations.

Sandy acknowledged the points raised and assured that they would be taken into consideration.

### **6. Training and Development/Standards**

- Kirsty Naysmith had forwarded on invite for SAAN refresher training on 20th March which David, Kirsty & Michelle were to be running. The invite had gone to 78 people including 5 from Police Scotland. The training is based on the West Lothian College campus. Fran emphasised the need for regular updates and involvement of key

stakeholders like Police Scotland and Speech and Language teams in delivery of training.

- Fran updated on themes discussed at Practitioners forums/ Operational group which included how other areas are delivering training including British sign language and visual impairment awareness and how some Appropriate Adults can feel quite isolated and therefore enjoy the connection of practitioners' drop-in sessions.
- Fran raised concerns about dropping numbers of appropriate adult referrals in some areas and a significant increase in others, possibly due to over-enthusiasm in requesting appropriate adults. She highlighted the importance of supporting appropriate adults, especially regarding local oversight groups and connections between appropriate adults.
- Fran also mentioned positive feedback on practitioner forums, which provided valuable opportunities for connection and information sharing among service providers. Additionally, she covered matters related to the transition of services from one provider to another and the importance of local coordinators in supporting appropriate adult services. She mentioned ongoing data collection efforts, including a piece of work being done by Katie in Fife to gather information on the current operation of appropriate adult services.
- Sandy acknowledged Fran's input and suggested that data collection has been adequately covered in previous discussions but noted the importance of considering minimum data sets and the need to gather essential information effectively.

Sarah emphasized the importance of considering discretion within the system when it comes to training, development, standards, and performance information for appropriate adults. She noted that the legislation governing appropriate adults allows for local authorities to tailor services to meet local needs. Sandy agreed, highlighting the need to prioritise the rights and needs of individuals accessing services. He also stressed the importance of being alert to potential unintended consequences of policy changes and ensuring consistency across different parts of the system.

**Action:**

- **Kirsty Naysmith to be invited to share her report on training.**
- **Continue this discussion!**

## **7. Data collection and performance information**

This had been fairly well covered earlier on the agenda. Sarah underlined the importance of collectively agreeing on the narrative desired from the data before exploring data collection methods. A further action point was agreed.

**Action:**

- **To continue the discussion when we know what we want our story to tell and important to agree on the narrative before agreeing on data collection methods.**

## **8. Future developments/sustainability**

- Sandy commented that given some of the themes that had been raised, it's clear that there is a need to have a broader conversation about the future long-term

sustainability of the service, the National Appropriate Adult Project and where we go from here.

## 9. AOB

- Sandy feedback on the draft annual report, prompting comments from Sarah about potential miscommunication regarding the Appropriate Adult Action Plan's status at the end annual report.

### **Action to add in 'DRAFT' to the Action Plan and circulate Appropriate Adult Annual report.**

- Sarah proposed circulating a survey on trauma-informed approaches within Scotland's workforce to support the Scottish Government's vision for a trauma-informed justice system. Sandy Riddell and others expressed support for this initiative.
- Fran mentioned the COSLA Excellence Awards for local authority work noting that one of the categories was around supporting vulnerable people and that people be encouraged to nominate Appropriate Adult services.
- Sandy Riddell thanked Fran for her contributions as it was her last meeting, acknowledging her hard work and support in managing the project and best wishes for her future endeavours.
- Sandy Riddell concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their input, highlighting progress made, areas needing attention, and promising to schedule the next meeting soon.

## 10. Date of next meeting

(TBC)

**Action: COSLA /SG to send out invites**

**Request from Stephen to amend.**

**In relation to "Additionally, he mentioned a drop in referrals to appropriate adult services within police divisions, speculating about potential causes such as increased use of investigative techniques."**

**Could this please be amended to "Additionally, he mentioned a drop in referrals to appropriate adult services within police divisions, with speculation this may be as a result of an increase in use of Investigative Liberation, but added this unlikely to be the cause as relevant suspects would still require an appropriate adult for interview before being released on Investigative Liberation."**

**Also, in relation to “Finally, he noted a positive collaboration with Dundee Perth /Kinross to explore the use of appropriate adults for witnesses in investigations.”**

**I think I was referring to the Police Investigations & Review Commissioner (PIRC) approaching us and asking about an input on the use of appropriate adults when interviewing witnesses for police complaints. Could this please be changed to “Finally, he noted a positive engagement with the Police Investigations & Review Commissioner (PIRC) to explore the use of appropriate adults for witnesses in police complaint investigations.”**

DRAFT