

CELCIS REACH: Steve Harte | When is a child no longer a child?

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In this video Steve Harte explains that the spirit of corporate parenting has been there for a long time, but it's not moving fast enough. It's not just the responsibility of local authorities, it takes a joined-up approach. The challenge for all Corporate Parents is to get better at logging data on unmet needs of young people in care and leaving care. A staggered approach to services is not helping and needs to be standardised with an assumption of entitlement of continuation of support.

I think that corporate parenting in terms of its intent and in terms of the spirit has probably been there for a long time. Integrated services has been an ongoing issue for many years within the whole of the UK, never mind Scotland. I suppose my position on that is it's not going nearly fast enough. I think the corporate parenting provides a welcome focus to that. But I think that there is still the nuance that, at the end of the day corporate parenting is a local authority responsibility. I'm still not fully getting a culture of change from other key partner agencies that I would like to see. I don't necessarily see the strategic planning and thinking devolving out to the real delivery of different services. I think there are there are notable differences - we've got some integrated health workers that come on board, we've got literacy workers that come on board to walk alongside social workers, we've got housing officers based within throughcare and aftercare services - all very welcome, but again I think there's an element that it needs to be much wider thinking than that. I think that some of the health provision still has a massive way to go in terms of how we actually design and deliver those services. There's probably a big responsibility on me and local authority areas to provide much greater data about unmet need. I think that we're quite good at giving examples of cases. I think we're good at saying I'll tell you about Johnnie, or I'll tell you about Jeannie, but actually saying 40 percent of the young people coming through our door have mental health difficulties and therefore you need to provide us with real support and help around that, I think that's the challenge for us, for social workers, for professionals, for police and for the Scottish Prison Service and for housing providers to all contribute to.

This nonsense about for some children aged 16 you get access to certain services in a certain way, for other things it's 18, for other things that's into adult mental health services or whatever it would be. You talk about the justice system has a quirkiness about it, you talk about health services that are designed around a quirkiness – when is a child not a child? The UNCRC says really clearly if you're under 18 then you are a child. Yet we have this staggered approach to how we offer or provide services based on different nuances are in that. And one of the things I was really late the Scottish government or the review group to do is to challenge that and just standardise it. Because this nonsense about trying to remember that a 16-year-old in is entitled to this, but not entitled to that, but they'll get this type of provision or not - we really need to address that quite quickly.

We also need to do that continuation of support - who is that relevant person? How do we make sure that if somebody's circumstances change for the better or worse - unless there's an additional specialism required - that the person stays with them? For example, we had a young person who for about a year was very chaotic from mental health difficulties, that affected the relationship with their parents. They couldn't live at home the relationship just continued to spiral. The young person was homeless and was therefore entitled to get some mental health support through a homelessness project. Great. They access the homelessness mental health support, begin to do better, so moves back home. You can almost guess what happens next... 'Well you're no longer homeless, so you cannot get the mental health support' and it's that kind of criteria-driven world that we still exist in, and we've absolutely got in blur criteria - a person in need is a person in need.

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