

**ENGAGEMENT TITLE: Visit to Children’s Hearings Centre, Bell Street , Glasgow.**

<b>Date and Time of Engagement</b>	Thursday 1 June 2017 10:00am – 12:00pm
<b>Where</b>	SCRA Children’s Hearings Centre Merchant Exchange 10/20 Bell Street Glasgow G1 1LG
<b>Who</b>	<p>██████████ – SCRA – Head of Planning and Performance</p> <p>██████████ SCRA – Locality Reporter Manager</p> <p>██████████ SCRA - Participation Manager</p> <p>██████████ and ██████████ – SCRA – Kilmarnock (former MAs)</p> <p>██████████ - CHS Lead Panel Rep</p> <p>██████████ CHS Area Convener</p>
<b>Key Purpose / Message</b>	<p>The Minister preparing his response to the Scottish Parliament’s Education and Skills Committee’s ‘taking stock’ report.</p> <p>Keen to see redesigned hearings room, to meet hearings-experienced young people and to pick up on current Glasgow themes and issues with children’s panel / children’s reporter practitioners.</p>
<b>Top Facts / Figures</b>	n/a.
<b>Sensitivities</b>	<p>████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████</p> <p>████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████</p> <p>████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████</p> <p>████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████</p>
<b>Media Handling</b>	Not necessary.
<b>Case Studies</b>	n/a
<b>Stakeholder Support</b>	<p>██████████</p> <p>SCRA Locality Reporter Manager</p> <p>██████████</p>
<b>Official Support</b>	<p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p> <p>██████████</p>

<b>Dress code</b>	n/a
<b>Greeting Party and specific meeting point on arrival</b>	n/a
<b>Specific entrance for Ministerial car/parking arrangements</b>	Underground parking accessible from Albion Street. Gordon Brechin can arrange access – call mobile on arrival .

**Briefing Contents**

<b>Annex A</b>	<i>Summary Page (key issues, lines to take if pressed and issues to avoid)</i>

## Annex A – Summary Page

SCRA content with outline and running order - some elements tbc.

10.00am – **Arrive at reception.**

- Met by **Gordon Brechin** and **Lisa Bennett**.

10.10am – **Discussion in remodelled Hearing room 5**

- With former Modern Apprentices ██████████ and ██████████ both now working in SCRA's centre in Kilmarnock. ██████████ and ██████████ will look at their own hearings experiences, their care and Modern Apprentice journey and how that informed their work in redesigning these hearings rooms.

Commented [u1]: Names redacted - exemption under section 38(1)(b) of FOISA

10.30am - **Children's panel perspectives.**

- Volunteer Lead Panel Rep and Area Convener ██████████ and ██████████ [CHS Chair Garry Coutts is on hand to support, and possibly new CHS Care-Experienced Board member Beth-Anne Logan].

Commented [u2]: Names redacted - exemption under section 38(1)(b) of FOISA

**11.10 am - 'Better hearings and corporate parenting' progress**

- **Lisa Bennett**, Head of Planning and Performance, SCRA.

**11.30am - Legal representatives in hearings / court challenges**

- **Gordon Brechin**, Locality Reporter Manager, SCRA.

12 noon -depart

## KEY MESSAGES

- Hugely grateful to our partners, especially to panel and other volunteers, for supporting 'better hearings' for children and families.
- Strong partnerships at the national level to pick up issues and to address them. We need to see that reflected at the local level across Scotland - **'Glasgow CHIP' starting soon, following up December 2016 trial?**
- My focus as Minister is to enable the hearings system to better meet the needs of the children and young people we serve.
- We need to be united around delivering better experiences, and better results, for children and young people.
- We will get there on the basis of measuring our efforts, demonstrating our successes, and by always being ready to take any chances to improve.
- The modernised children's hearings system is a key enabler of Getting it right for every child – preventing harm through legal intervention, promoting wellbeing and improving children's lives.
- Child-centred, timely decisions, comprehensively implemented, supported by professionals, agencies, families and our communities, give children and young people the opportunities that they need.

## Background Material

Link to SCRA's 2017-20 Corporate Plan:

<http://www.scra.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CORPORATE-PLAN-2017-20.pdf>

Link to CHS's 2017-18 Business and Corporate Parenting Plan:

<http://www.chscotland.gov.uk/media/124936/CHS-Business-and-Corporate-Parenting-Plan-2017-18.pdf>

## Corporate Parenting Update

- SCRA published its three year **Corporate Parenting Plan in April**. This plan sets out the commitments that SCRA is making to children and young people to improve their individual experiences of the Hearings System.
- To support the Corporate Parenting Plan, SCRA have also launched a website aimed at young people. The website – **www.mycorporateparents.co.uk** – is a joint initiative with Children's Hearings Scotland and the Modern Apprentices.

## Young Person's Board

- SCRA is taking the lead on the setting up of a Young Person's Board for the Children's Hearings System. CHS, along with a number of organisations sit on the Steering Group for this. A member of the Sponsor Team attends these meetings providing support as necessary.

## Digital Strategy – Enabling Participation

- The Digital Strategy for the Children's Hearings system is high on our agenda. Bid for additional funding of [REDACTED] under the Spending Review has been supported by Mr McDonald.

Commented [u3]: Amount redacted – Policy Development exemption.

## Current CHIP Focus

- The aim of the CHIP is to develop and deliver an ambitious yet focused programme of specific activities, prioritising initiatives that

would benefit from multi-agency action. Four priority sub-groups have been set up:

- **Getting it Right in the Hearings System** - Objectives include developing revised guidance on referral to the Reporter, creating clear understanding of roles of Named Person and Lead Professional within the hearings system and clarifying how the child's plan can be used to best effect. In addition, ensuring that GIRFEC and the children's hearing system belong to the same continuum of decision making to promote the wellbeing of the child and redeveloping the Blueprint on Processing of Children's Hearings to modernize and widen scope.
- **Learning and Development (L&D)**– Deciding on a 'common core' approach to L&D across the partners, and exploring the development of a national systemic model of L&D delivery.
- **Generating Evidence and Promoting Improvement** – Objectives include identifying how to generate the right evidence and how that is understood, shared and used to more effectively support and promote improvement.
- **Permanence** – Objectives include devising a response and action plan in relation to the publication of the permanence research carried out by the SCRA, improving permanence practice and policy and initiating a targeted review of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 in relation to the permanence process.

#### Other areas of focus

- **CPIP** - As part of the review CHIP has been tasked with scrutinising practice in and around the hearings system and with reporting on its findings.
- **Better Hearings** - Improving services for children and young people is a key priority and a significant way this can be achieved is by improving the children's hearings experience. SCRA have produced a draft report with a set of proposed standards for 'Better Hearings' which CHIP have discussed and agreed upon.
- **Aims, Visions and Values** – The aim was to capture a common commitment for all the CHIP partners to work together to improve the outcomes of Scotland's most vulnerable and at risk children and young people.

[REDACTED]

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**Subject:** FW: Briefing for Ministerial visit to Bell Street Hearings Centre, Glasgow - 1 June 2017

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 31 May 2017 19:39  
**To:** Minister for Childcare and Early Years <MinisterCEY@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Briefing for Ministerial visit to Bell Street Hearings Centre, Glasgow - 1 June 2017

A short update to the briefing –

**Garry Coutts**, Chair of Children's Hearings Scotland, will be joining the 10.30 'children's panel' element of the morning in support of Jennifer Phillips.

**Mike Burns**, CHIP member and Social Work Scotland vice-Chair on their Children and Families Committee will attend the later session.

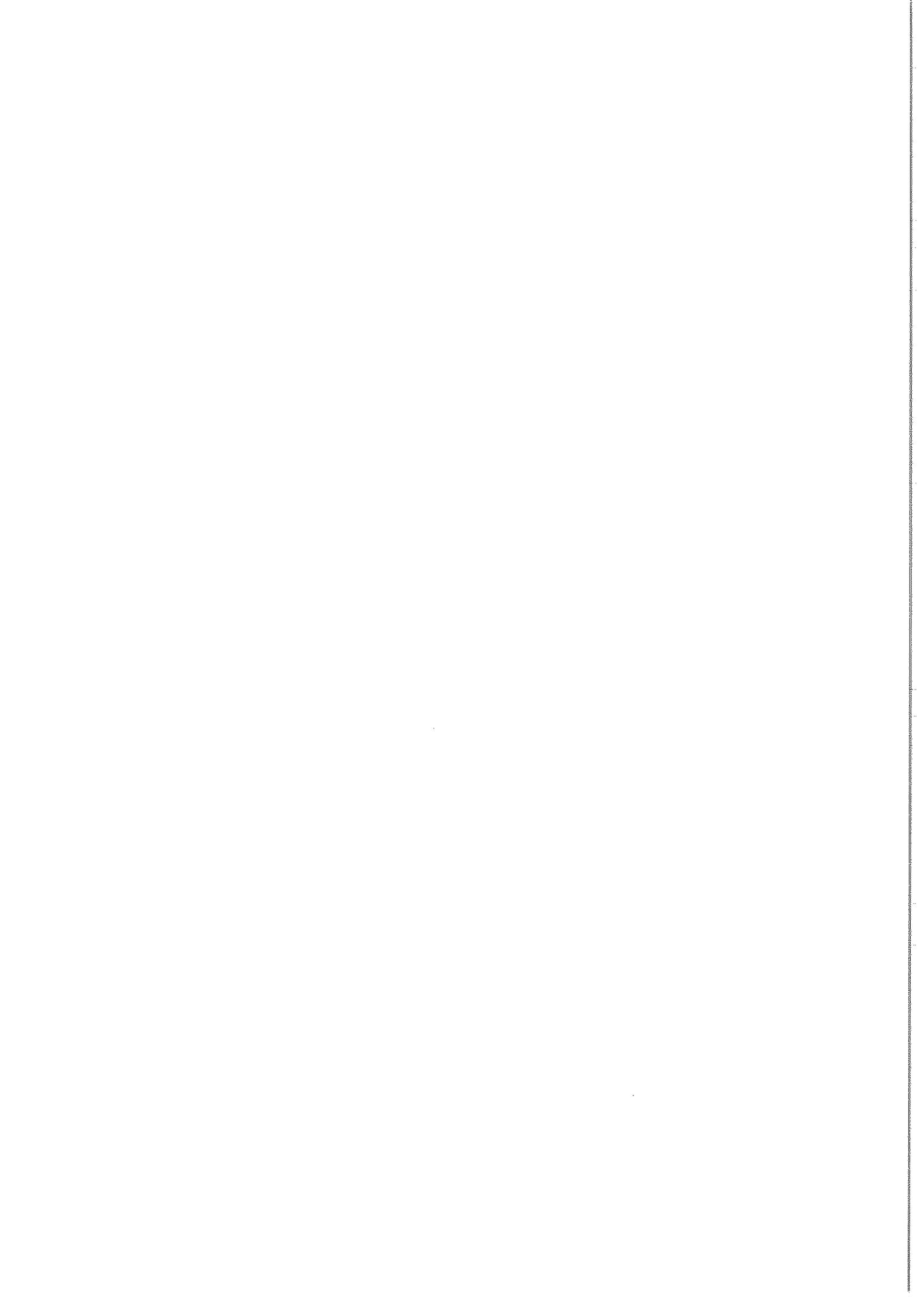
I should be at the Bell Street centre for 9.45 tomorrow.

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 30, 2017 12:03 PM  
**To:** Minister for Childcare and Early Years  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Briefing for Ministerial visit to Bell Street Hearings Centre, Glasgow - 1 June 2017

<< File: Briefing for Ministerial visit to Bell Street Hearings Centre, Glasgow - 1 June 2017.doc >>



**Subject:**

FW: Thank You Letter for Minister's Visit to Glasgow Hearings Centre - 1 June 2017

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 08 June 2017 12:53

**To:** Minister for Childcare and Early Years <MinisterCEY@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Thank You Letter for Minister's Visit to Glasgow Hearings Centre - 1 June 2017



Minister's Thank  
You Letter - ...

Please see attached a letter that the Minister might wish to consider sending to Gordon Brechin as a thank you for arranging his recent visit to the Children's Hearings Centre in Glasgow.

Kind regards  
Catherine

[REDACTED] | Policy Officer

Children's Hearings Team | Children and Families Directorate | Scottish Government

[REDACTED] | Area 2B North Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

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1

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Minister for Childcare and Early Years  
Mark McDonald MSP



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000  
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Gordon Brechin  
Scottish Children's Reporter Administration  
Merchant Exchange  
10/20 Bell Street  
Glasgow  
G1 1LG

Your ref:  
Our ref:  
June 2017

Dear

I wanted to send a quick note to express my gratitude to you and your colleagues from SCRA, CHS and the Glasgow City Area Support Team for organising my visit to the Bell Street Hearings Centre on Thursday 1 June.

I particularly appreciate your putting together a diverse and interesting programme for me at such short notice.

I would be grateful if you could also pass on my thanks to [REDACTED], who is a credit to your organisation. I very much enjoyed learning about how her experiences, and those of [REDACTED] and your other former Modern Apprentices of going to their own hearings, helped her add real value to the design of the new model hearing rooms.

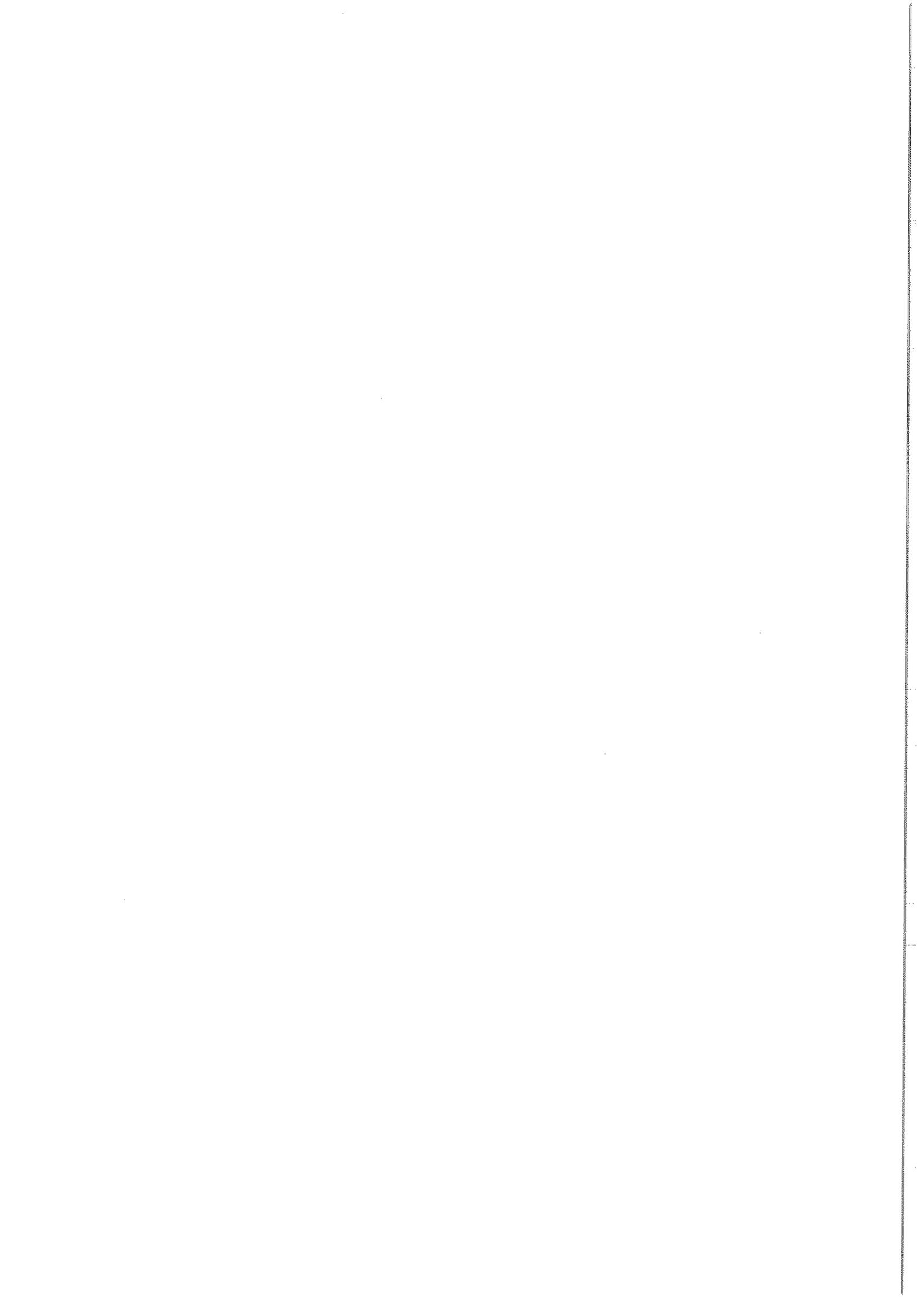
I left with a good few thoughts, challenges and ideas from a very worthwhile morning with you and your team. Thank you for taking the time to support the visit.

I should also reiterate my appreciation for the challenging and intricate work you and your Locality colleagues do every day with and for vulnerable children and families.

«Signature»

Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ  
www.gov.scot





[REDACTED]

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**Subject:** FW: Thank You Letter for Minister's Visit to Glasgow Hearings Centre - 1 June 2017

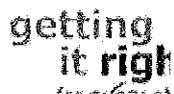
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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 08 November 2017 16:17  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Thank You Letter for Minister's Visit to Glasgow Hearings Centre - 1 June 2017



u102130\_08-11-...

[REDACTED] | Policy Manager  
Children's Hearings Team | Children and Families Directorate | Scottish Government  
[REDACTED] | Area 2B North Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ



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**From:** [REDACTED] ) **On Behalf Of** Minister for Childcare and Early Years  
**Sent:** 15 June 2017 14:40  
**To:** [REDACTED] Minister for Childcare and Early Years  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Thank You Letter for Minister's Visit to Glasgow Hearings Centre - 1 June 2017

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for the draft letter, this has now been issued. Please find attached a copy for your records.

<< File: Gordon Brechin.pdf >>

[REDACTED] | **Private Secretary** | **Minister for Childcare and Early Years**  
Tel: [REDACTED] | Mobile: [REDACTED] | St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to another official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

[REDACTED]

*My working days are Tues, Wed, Thurs*

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 08 June 2017 12:53  
**To:** Minister for Childcare and Early Years  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Thank You Letter for Minister's Visit to Glasgow Hearings Centre - 1 June 2017

<< File: Minister's Thank You Letter - Visit to Glasgow Children's Hearing Centre - 1 June 2017.docx >>  
Please see attached a letter that the Minister might wish to consider sending to Gordon Brechin as a thank you for arranging his recent visit to the Children's Hearings Centre in Glasgow.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Policy Officer  
Children's Hearings Team | Children and Families Directorate | Scottish Government  
[REDACTED] | Area 2B North Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

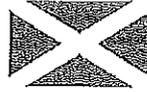
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Error! << OLE Object: Picture (Device Independent Bitmap) >>

Minister for Childcare and Early Years  
Mark McDonald MSP



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000  
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Gordon Brechin  
Scottish Children's Reporter Administration  
Merchant Exchange  
10/20 Bell Street  
Glasgow  
G1 1LG

Your ref:  
Our ref:

15 June 2017

*Dear Gordon*

I wanted to send a quick note to express my gratitude to you and your colleagues from SCRA, CHS and the Glasgow City Area Support Team for organising my visit to the Bell Street Hearings Centre on Thursday 1 June.

I particularly appreciate your putting together a diverse and interesting programme for me at such short notice.

I would be grateful if you could also pass on my thanks to [REDACTED] who is a credit to your organisation. I very much enjoyed learning about how her experiences, and those of [REDACTED] and your other former Modern Apprentices of going to their own hearings, helped her add real value to the design of the new model hearing rooms.

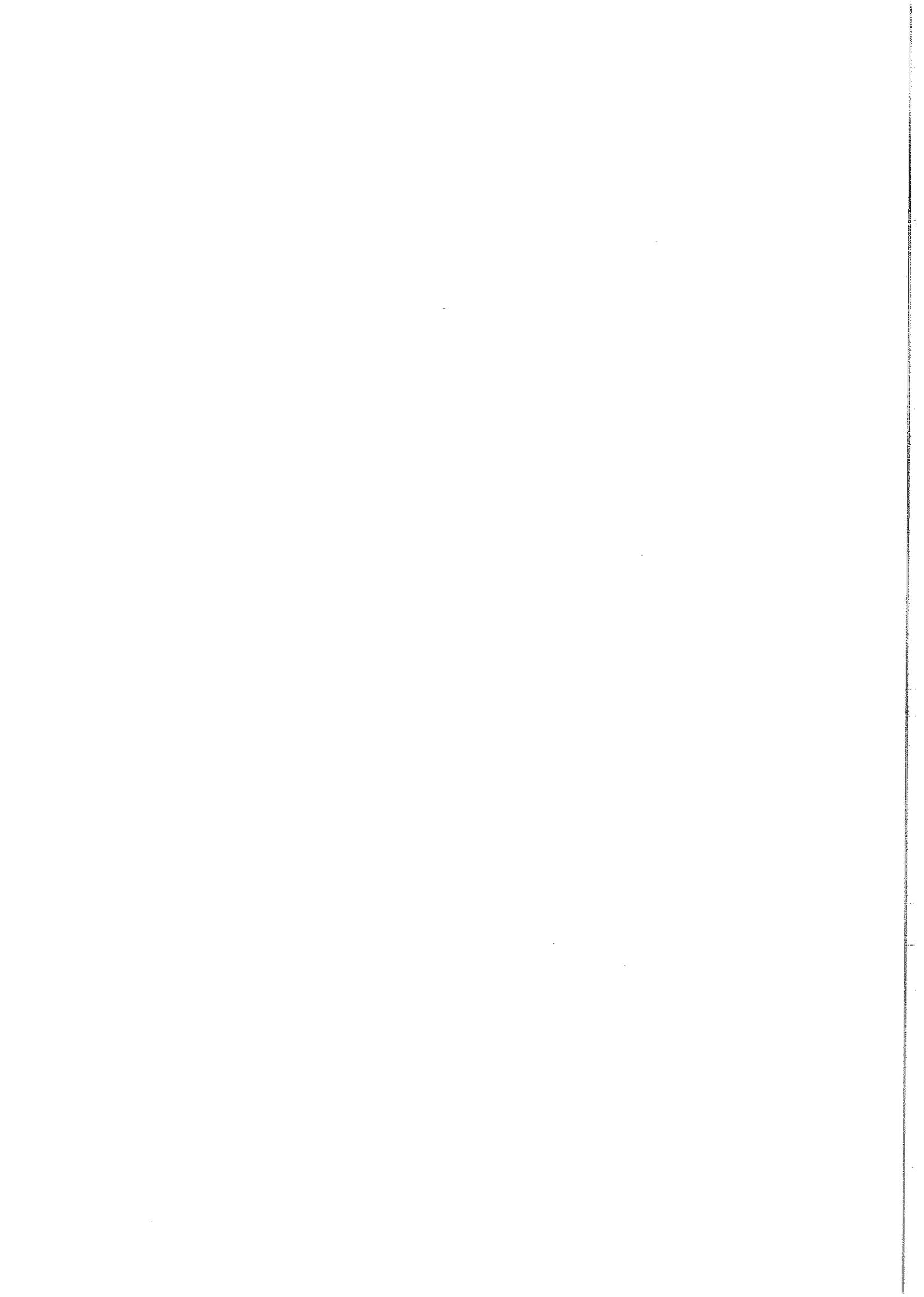
I left with a good few thoughts, challenges and ideas from a very worthwhile morning with you and your team. Thank you for taking the time to support the visit.

I should also reiterate my appreciation for the challenging and intricate work you and your Locality colleagues do every day with and for vulnerable children and families.

*Yan Aye  
MCD*

**Mark McDonald**  
Minister for Childcare and Early Years





Ministear airson Cùram-chloinne agus Tràth-  
bhliadhnaichean  
Minister for Childcare and Early Years  
Mark McDonald BPA/MSP



Scottish Government  
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gov.scot

F/T: 0300 244 4000  
E: [scottish.ministers@gov.scot](mailto:scottish.ministers@gov.scot)

Donna Manson  
Service Director Children & Young People  
Scottish Borders Council  
Council Headquarters  
Newton St Boswells  
Melrose  
TD6 0SA

14 June 2017

*Dear Donna*

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, has recently brought to my attention a number of parental complaints regarding the quality of educational provision for young people attending the Secondary Support Centre at Galashiels Academy. The main issues of parental concern are the poor quality learning environment and staff skills in working with young people with severe and complex needs. Concerns were also raised about the school's arrangements for communicating with parents about their children's progress and ensuring wellbeing and inclusion.

I am aware that the inspection in 2013 led to continuing engagement and further inspection by Education Scotland. I also understand that at the request of the Area Lead Officer, the school has recently produced a detailed improvement plan for the Secondary Support Centre which includes plans for a new purpose-built resource centre and ongoing staff development. It would be helpful if this plan could be shared with all parents in an appropriate way soon so that their views are considered as an important element of the school's improvement journey.

I have asked Education Scotland to continue to monitor the delivery and impact of this improvement plan and to provide me with an update in 6 months. In the meantime, I understand that Mr Wheelhouse will be in touch with you to discuss the local authority's overall strategy to provide services for those with severe and complex needs across the Scottish Borders Council area.

*Yours Aye*  
*MM*

**MARK MCDONALD**





**BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE  
MSP, FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2017**

<b>Date and Time of Engagement</b>	Friday 2 June 2017 10:00 – 11:00
<b>Where</b>	Constituency Office 8 Sandbed Hawick Roxburghshire, TD9 OHE
<b>Who</b>	Paul Wheelhouse MSP Parents
<b>Key Purpose / Message</b>	<p>Key purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with Mr Paul Wheelhouse, MSP and a group of constituents who are parents of children educated at the Secondary Support Centre (SSC) within Galashiels Academy. The SSC provides education for young people with severe and complex needs.</li> <li>• The purpose of the meeting is to reassure parents that Education Scotland is working closely with Scottish Borders Council to ensure the quality of educational provision for young people attending the SSC improves.</li> </ul> <p>Key messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of educational provision and outcomes is the statutory responsibility of the local authority.</li> <li>• Education Scotland has the statutory obligation to inspect schools.</li> <li>• Education Scotland is working closely with the local authority to provide support for this school.</li> </ul>
<b>Top Facts / Figures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Scotland inspected Galashiels Academy in 2013 and evaluated the school's overall arrangements for meeting learners needs to be <b>weak</b>. This included aspects of the SSC provision.</li> <li>• Since 2013, Education Scotland has maintained continuous and regular engagement with the school and the local authority to support improvement (as detailed in Annex B).</li> <li>• Following recent parental complaints in April 2017, Education Scotland undertook a scrutiny visit which focused on the quality of learning provision in the SSC. As a result of that visit, the school was asked to prepare a detailed improvement plan. This plan has now been received by Education Scotland and plans are in place for ongoing monitoring of progress with the plan.</li> <li>• The local authority has committed to the development of a new, purpose built SSC to be located within the main school building. Building works are due to begin during the 2017 summer holidays.</li> </ul>

**BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE  
MSP, FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2017**

<b>Sensitivities</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Official Support</b>	[REDACTED] HMI, Area Lead Officer for Scottish Borders Council. Tel - Office: [REDACTED] Mobile [REDACTED]
<b>Dress code</b>	Business
<b>Greeting Party and specific meeting point on arrival</b>	[REDACTED] will meet you at the entrance. Mobile [REDACTED]
<b>Specific entrance for Ministerial car/parking arrangements</b>	Details to follow.

**BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE  
MSP, FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2017**

**Briefing Contents**

<b>Annex A</b>	Meeting programme
<b>Annex B</b>	Summary Page (key issues, lines to take if pressed and issues to avoid)
<b>Annex C</b>	Complaint response ( <i>23 March 2017</i> )
<b>Annex D</b>	Meeting Attendees
<b>Annex E</b>	Reference material
<b>Annex F</b>	Directions

***BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE  
MSP, FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2017***

**Annex A  
Meeting Programme**

Meeting with Paul Wheelhouse MSP and parents to discuss their issues and concerns regarding Eildon Secondary Complex Needs Provision, Galashiels Academy.

## **BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE MSP, FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2017**

### **Annex B Summary Page**

- The school was inspected week commencing 22 April 2013. The Record of Inspection Findings from the April 2013 inspection was shared with the headteacher, the local authority and the Chair of the Parent Council in June 2013. It noted that: *there were positive, respectful relationships between staff and young people in Additional Support Needs (ASN) department; effective use of symbols and some use of technology for communication, young people enjoy a range of positive learning experiences in school and in the community. Children appear happy and comfortable. Lessons too teacher- led, scope for better feedback. IEP targets and tracking and monitoring need to improve, improved partnerships required to enhance learning experiences although college and Howdenburn placements are noted positively. Almost all young people achieve Access 1 and 2 units – recognition this could be extended. Need to widen access to opportunities across the school. Accommodation and range of resources needs to be reviewed – does not meet needs of those requiring sensory curriculum.*
- The areas for improvement identified were significant enough to warrant a return inspection visit week commencing 12 January 2015. Prior to this, Education Scotland undertook a number of support visits to help the school to improve. The first of these visits, in October 2013, noted that progress was slow on account of the absence of the headteacher and the principal teacher for additional support needs. A further four visits were carried out by HM Inspectors. Slow/lack of progress was noted.
- Through ongoing discussions with the local authority throughout 2014, the school was monitored by Education Scotland's Area Lead Officer.
- In January 2015, a new headteacher took up post.
- A return inspection to evaluate progress took place in January 2015. The Record of Visit from this further inspection was shared with the headteacher, the local authority and the Chair of the Parent Council in March 2015. Inspectors noted that: *there remained scope to improve access to a greater range and level of qualifications and awards for young people in the Unit (now called SSC). The Unit had been moved to an annexe to provide more space, increased teaching areas, improved access to transport and sensory room being developed. Young people were receiving more aspects of BGE, first residential experience and two-day work experience in local shops have been completed. A number of young people would benefit from more mainstream integration. Need for fully functioning sensory room and independent living area. Scope for increased access to opportunities within the local community. Staff should focus on more skills development and refine transition between BGE and senior phase.*
- Through ongoing discussions with the local authority from March 2015 – September 2016, the school is monitored by Education Scotland's Area Lead Officer.
- The local authority undertook a return quality visit to the school, accompanied by HM Inspectors, in September 2016, although inspectors did not visit the Unit on this occasion. In December 2016, Education Scotland published a letter to parents and carers, providing a link to the local authority report to parents. The visit resulted in inspectors and local authority representatives *being satisfied that the school was showing sufficient overall improvements to be signed off, albeit*

**BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE  
MSP, FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2017**

*with continued monitoring by the Education Scotland Area Lead Officer, as well as a further joint review visit. The LA report notes that the “HT has clear vision for developing an inclusive school.”*

- In March 2017, Paul Wheelhouse MSP wrote to Bill Maxwell. The email contained serious allegations about care and welfare, safeguarding and poor learning and teaching for young people attending the unit. Education Scotland responded as attached (please see Annex C).
- In March 2017, Education Scotland inspectors visited the school spending the day in the Unit. *They noted some improvements in IEPs and other planning for the young people. A new principal teacher for Additional Support Needs took up post in December 2016. Access to qualifications had been broadened but there remained scope to be more ambitious about what the young people can achieve. All staff in the Unit were trained in de-escalation techniques deployed when young people are experiencing difficulties in exercising self-control. Communication with parents was improving. A parent forum had some scope for improvement – plans for new Unit within the main school building had been drawn up and the local authority intends for this to be developed by August 2017. All staff, parents and young people need to be involved in plans for new Unit and in continuing to take forward the school’s work on inclusion. Staff need to explore and make better use of technology for learning. PT requires more support and self-evaluation needs to be significantly improved. School needs to be more systematic in recording use of “safe-spaces” and improve communication with parents regarding such. Local authority was able to demonstrate appropriate responses to previous parental complaints and ongoing work with the school.*
- The ALO asked for a detailed action plan for improvement over the next year. We (Education Scotland) has agreed to provide support through a specialist Associate Assessor to act as a mentor to the PT/DHT and to identify some further examples of establishments where good practice can be observed/shared. The Area Lead Officer will visit the school again in May 2017 and will keep the school high on the agenda for continued discussion with local authority and monitoring of progress with the action plan.
- In May 2017, Education Scotland’s Area Lead Officer met with the headteacher and senior staff. The draft improvement plan was discussed and, after advice from the Area Lead Officer, the headteacher agreed to submit a revised version by the end of May 2017.
- Education Scotland inspection reports for this school can be found at:  
<https://education.gov.scot/inspection-reports/Scottish-Borders/5619734>

**BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE  
MSP, FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2017**

**Annex C**

**Complaint response – issued 23 March 2017**

Dear Mr Wheelhouse

**Re: Eildon Secondary Complex Needs Provision; Galashiels Academy**

Thank you for your email of 14 March 2017 to Dr Bill Maxwell, Chief Executive, Education Scotland, regarding concerns from parents and a former staff member about the health and safety of children who attend Eildon Secondary Complex Needs Provision, Galashiels Academy.

I am sorry to hear of the challenges that the parents and former staff member have experienced. While Education Scotland does not have the authority to investigate specific concerns such as those you have described, it may be useful to highlight the following information.

In Scotland, the *Additional Support for Learning Act 2004* (as amended) supports our children and young people by placing duties on education authorities to make sure that learners with additional support needs have their needs fully met through the right support and planning. In this case, Scottish Borders Council is responsible for identifying, assessing and making provision for these children's additional support needs. The education authority also has responsibility for ensuring that any concerns about schools in its area are dealt with appropriately.

The Code of Practice, which is part of the Additional Support for Learning Act, also includes a useful framework in Chapter 7 covering ways to resolve disagreements. If, following meetings with the school and the authority, there is no progress being made then this framework may be useful. It can be accessed through this [link](#).

The correspondents may also wish to contact Enquire which is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning. Enquire is managed by Children in Scotland and is funded by the Scottish Government. They offer independent and impartial advice and information through:

- a telephone helpline - 0345 123 2303;
- an online enquiry service;
- by email - [info@enquire.org.uk](mailto:info@enquire.org.uk); and
- their website - [www.enquire.org.uk](http://www.enquire.org.uk).

If the correspondents remain unsatisfied with the response from the council, they have the right to contact the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO), who handle complaints about public services in Scotland, for advice. The SPSO will consider complaints which have been through the formal complaints procedure of the organisation concerned. Contact details for the SPSO are as follows:

In Person: SPSO, 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS  
By Post: Freepost SPSO  
Freephone: 0800 377 7330  
Online contact: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us>  
Website: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/>

**BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE  
MSP, FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2017**

Mobile site: <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

You may find it helpful to note that the school was recently inspected and the published letters can be accessed through this [link](#).

Our Area Lead Officer is liaising with Scottish Borders Council to ensure that the concerns you have brought to our attention are suitably addressed.

I hope this information is useful to help you address the concerns of the parents and former staff member.

Yours sincerely



**BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE  
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**Annex D  
Meeting Attendees**

Mr McDonald, Minister for Childcare and Early Years.

Mr Paul Wheelhouse, MSP for South Scotland.

Official support: Education Scotland

 Area Lead Officer – Scottish Borders.

Parents of children who are educated at the Secondary Support Centre within Galashiels Academy.

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**Annex E  
Reference Material (from March 2017 complaint)**

██████████:

- Not one parent would recommend the unit.

**Comments from all parents:**

- Can't wait for child to leave.
- Promised the world by professionals at SBC. Staff trying their best but not equipped to deal with autism.
- Using safe space has caused behaviours to rocket. Non-verbal behaviours through the roof.
- Levels of violence between children and staff not being reported home. Siblings reporting, videoing in mobile phones.
- All parents report over-eating of wrong snacks to keep kids quiet.
- Kids traumatised having to be put on double doses of psychotic drugs. Verbal ones able to say what they've seen – don't jump on me, don't put me in the blue room. Last teacher said she would not send her own child to the unit. No-one ever disagrees it's a shit hole.
- Children previously never harnessed are treated like dogs.
- Communication is non-existent especially when attempting to complain.
- School is nothing but a cause of stress and anxiety. NO PROGRESSION. Once you get through the years of regression you hope to have a child who is at the level they started at. They are losing their right to an education by being placed in Gala Support unit.
- Children labelled as a problem, not an individual.
- Battling with school has finished me off. Nothing left to fight with.
- Staff don't understand children being violent to them as they can't tell them any other way. They are failing them.
- Referrals to child panel not happening for ASD kids if not in school.
- Borders wide issue.

**Comments from all parents:**

**SAFE**

- Question how safe kids are.
- Grounds are not and safe and I don't trust staff near main roads. I had to buy a harness for staff and eventually stopped staff taking child out after assaulting a member of the public.
- Managed to get himself out of the bus and into the unit himself whilst the rest went horse riding. Don't listen to child as staff, after three years, don't understand him.
- Unsafe at school, flight risk. Don't trust staff. Things have happened that we were never told about like him being restrained and a teacher shouting in his face (brothers witnessed).
- Don't take any notice of the young person's views or ours unless we complain higher up.
- Been injured at school. Now they limit visits and do what's easy to get the, through the day.
- Sent home to an empty house early without contacting parents. Child struck escort as knew unsafe situation. Assaulted by other kids.
- Lack of supervision as not enough staff. Safety is compromised as lack of resources (Gala Academy has no idea of what's going on in the unit).
- We were promised 1:1. How are our kids getting injured and assaulted.
- Certainly not safe, staff lie, can't trust staff.
- Don't trust staff. Their behaviour is not good. Misusing safe spaces.
- They can't manage our children. Staff aren't fast enough to keep our kids safe. Child managed to drink water from the toilet. Promised 1:1 at all times. This doesn't happen.
- No trust in the staff.
- They can't de-escalate any behaviours. Call us to come and get them.
- Left in safe space, which is "manky" – reported it t [REDACTED] Admitted they were just containing him.
- Don't listen to young person or my views. Just pay lip service. Staff not trained.
- They couldn't get my child out of the building during a fire drill. Took it in turns to order a (?) Board. Hasn't been another drill since.
- Takes 30 minutes to get child into school daily. Staff walk over him.
- Absolutely not safe – three teachers have jumped on my child. They admitted they worry about his safety. Kids video my child. Discrimination by his peers. I have no idea who looks after my child. REVO REPORTS demonstrating child is not safe.
- Staff don't have a clue about what they are doing.

**HEALTHY**

- Scared of what she has experienced at school. Comes home crying about assaults, traumatised, visibly shaken.
- Not enough exercise. Don't see light of day.
- Horse riding stopped. Swimming only if enough staff.
- Not meeting developmental milestones.
- Overweight after starting school – they bake to placate them.
- Heavily sedated in order to manage school as so stressed before. Now like a zombie. How anyone could function or care on that amount of drugs this is not healthy.
- Not meeting milestones.
- Not actively involved in school. Promised to meet peers/PE horse riding, residential in S1, art, woodwork – all lies.
- Taken to the lunch hall before mainstream kids. Has to wear a harness like a dog.
- Never smiles/laughs, Won't put school clothes on. Lots of behaviour problems. Temper, lashing out at home and teachers. New since started in Gala.
- Son spends life in tears. Staff shouting in kids' faces. Brushed under the carpet.
- My son is unhappy. He is isolated not integrated, even in the unit. Doesn't get out.
- Regressed since starting in Gala. Levels of aggression have rocketed. We hear what's being said because he mimics staff. It is not positive.
- Not asked to Christmas concert – we complained and children were asked as an after-thought.
- Has holes in all school clothes. Keep asking for kids to get some walking and to be measured and they refuse.
- No stimulation.
- Bake cakes and stodge. Sent to Costa daily in car for treats.
- Child's behaviour is off the scale.
- Children were celebrated at special schools.
- Complete lack of autistic structure in unit, timetables change. They make it up as they go along.

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**ACHIEVING**

- Child doesn't want to go to school. SaLT withdrawn.
- Teachers are so stretched they can't recognise where child can progress.
- Not being pushed as no resources.
- Trying to get child to leave school early as kept back previously.
- Cognitive and language skills have gone backwards. School has destroyed him developing emotionally.
- Learning targets same as when started. No participation in school life. No access to trips.
- It's a babysitting service. Achievement is how many bowel movements he's had.
- Same PECs (?) as in primary. Promised electronic.
- Same targets as primary.
- No extra-curricular.
- No developments in emotional, social, core and life skills, independence.
- School don't motivate. We kept him off for months. No referral to panel. We hoped they would help. They don't care if he's at school. Easier for them if he's not there.
- No evidence of work.
- Not included in mainstream – as promised.
- No evidence of meeting targets. They forgot to invite us to the meeting.
- Was promised by [REDACTED] after school activities.
- Constantly let down by SALT. They all leave. No social development. Keen for him to see seniors. That's not happening.
- No progression.
- I fight for a regular IEP.
- I invite other people like transition workers in school. Not interested in a positive destination for your kids.
- Not progressed in three years since primary.
- Not achieving in anything, they just focus on behaviour, He is just so unhappy. Promised he would get horse riding and SaLT.

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<b>NURTURED</b>	<b>ACTIVE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not nurtured, they are just failing them.</li> <li>• They don't meet our child's needs. They are cruel to the child as they don't understand them. There's no choice for us but to send them to Gala.</li> <li>• My child's behaviour isn't for no reason. He's miserable.</li> <li>• Sedated in order to cope with being placed in a unit that doesn't meet his needs.</li> <li>• Environment is horrible – no resources, no ipads, no evidence of encouragement, no certificates. Doesn't cope. So frustrated and angry.</li> <li>• When comes in from school has to isolate himself. I'm sure they are scared of my child at school.</li> <li>• Not stimulated – lashes out at staff. They don't understand autism. They are winging it.</li> <li>• School has caused my child's anxiety. He's stressed, withdrawn, anxious, flares into violence. Different child during the school holidays.</li> <li>• Sucks the life out of our children.</li> <li>• No achievements, no ceremonies. They just get through the day. It's a shit hole. Not fit for purpose. Staff don't disagree when I say this.</li> <li>• They can't cope with school.</li> <li>• Non stimulatory, under resourced, no specialist equipment, doesn't meet the kids' needs (smart boards, IT, ipads etc).</li> <li>• They will do anything for a quiet life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No active activities. They make excuses like the weather is bad, glass on the path (how many paths are there in Gala?).</li> <li>• PE kit has never been worn.</li> <li>• No access to purpose-built garden.</li> <li>• Haven't been out in the school grounds in the last year and a half</li> <li>• Didn't go to Tweedbank sports last year. Have been there the last 17 years with Spectrum. PT said they didn't think the boys would want to go.</li> <li>• Don't get to take active risk as stuck in unit.</li> <li>• Why are they not out in all weather? Parents provide waterproofs, wellies. Never seen again.</li> <li>• Children lose weight in the holidays.</li> <li>• Only choice is swimming which we have to pay for and only when enough staff.</li> <li>• Strapped into a wheelchair for most of the day.</li> <li>• Even though parents repeatedly ask to channel energies into their kids' chosen sports or activity nothing ever happens.</li> <li>• Doesn't mix with peers. Two years with the same boys in class.</li> <li>• Won't let kids do anything they are interested in.</li> <li>• Don't get opportunity to assess/manage risk in play related settings.</li> </ul>

## **BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE MSP, FRIDAY 2 JUNE 2017**

### **RESPECTED**

- Child is beyond not being happy.
- Never got the autism expert for Gala we were all promised.
- Wrong placement for my child. I lie awake at night wondering how I can get him out of Gala.
- We only went as [REDACTED] there but even he couldn't survive the place.
- No respect for medical, physical and emotional needs. Sending kids home to empty houses. Gala demonstrated their lack of respect then.
- If better calibre of staff they may be able to be meeting some needs of kids but teachers come and go and parents are not consulted.
- We are thinking of moving authority to get out of the place.
- Got no choice to send them. Nothing else in the Borders.
- Not part of Gala Academy. No recognition on social media.
- They have no aspirations for our kids as no resources.
- Not treated as individual. Clubbed together with kids of different ages. All receiving is trauma.
- No children consulted in any IEP/CSP, not even verbal ones.
- Not supported through challenges, just put back on parents on a situation that school have caused. Decisions are made behind backs. Sticking plasters are put over huge cracks.
- No access to independent advice. Just keep getting same people [REDACTED] an [REDACTED] making promises that never happen.
- Do bare minimum with children.
- No drive to give kids a skill.
- You complain to SBC it gets held at a school level and they remove anything negative from social media. Treated as a label. We are in school every week trying to help them understand. Three years now.
- Kept child off for 3 or 4 months due to situation. Nobody bothered.
- At least the ANAs at Spectrum know our kids. Gala is winging it.
- No support to fulfil child's potential.
- Child in soaking nappy isn't respected.
- Once your child starts Gala the professional retract.
- Asked y teachers to ensure child is not at CS (?).
- Told by professionals if they want better provision out of authority you will need to find £40,000 a year.
- Very disappointed Cog Group would place a child here. Even the ed psych said it wasn't suitable. Felt bullied into it. They played on my vulnerability.
- Respite only thing keeping most families together. Wish I had fought for residential.

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<b>RESPONSIBLE</b>	<b>INCLUDED</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work.</li><li>• No aspirations – didn't even get invited to careers day.</li><li>• Going to buy a staff members window wipes is not an education.</li><li>• Kids can make a crispy cake, nothing useful like a sandwich.</li><li>• Many children have a talent. No opportunities to develop it.</li><li>• We have suggested little jobs for praise. This never happens.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No socialisation outside unit. No youth groups.</li><li>• How can they include a child they don't know or understand?</li><li>• No extra-curricular.</li><li>• Not encouraged to attend Christmas dance/concert. Don't even have an event for the unit.</li><li>• Mainstream concert – only some there. Like something from the dark ages. They are hidden away.</li><li>• Unit doesn't even have a name or anything outside it to find it.</li><li>• No partnership with parents. Constantly asking for meetings. They ignore my questions in home/school diary.</li><li>• When child is anxious/disturbed they don't have anyone to turn to only the safe space.</li></ul>

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**Note of meeting with [REDACTED] – former staff member (specialising in autism) at Eildon Secondary Complex Needs unit, Galashiels Academy**

Worked there for almost 10 years. She was the only staff member trained in autism. She was bullied into leaving last August. None of her concerns were taken seriously by senior management. She worked with three boys in the unit who were severely autistic. She was subjected to them pulling her hair, scratching and head-butting her. Much of the time she felt the heightened behaviour was as a result of the attitude of staff members to the young people.

[REDACTED] is in charge of the unit [REDACTED] felt she was bullied out because she was good at her job and [REDACTED] took a dislike to her. [REDACTED] was off with stress for three weeks and on her return she walked into the unit and decided she couldn't stay working there.

[REDACTED] – name kept cropping up with regard to incidents and inappropriateness during our conversation. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] says there was a child protection investigation carried out in 2012 by a former PE teacher from Gala Academy but according to Scottish Borders Child Protection Committee annual report for 2012/13: "there was no social work or child protection inspection in the year 2012/13."

[REDACTED] says this was as a we boy had tried to hit a staff member and the staff member had kicked his legs out from under him commenting: "that's him sorted then".

Also an incident was investigated recently when [REDACTED] had been assisting with showering boys and had apparently commented to someone else: "have you seen the size of his hard on". Staff are no longer allowed to shower the children but no disciplinary action was taken.

One of the pupils was afraid of dogs and on an outing [REDACTED] had been running up behind him barking like a dog and nipping his bottom.

[REDACTED] onfirmed there is no integration between the unit and the mainstream school. She said the pupils from the mainstream school used to come over and try to crack the code for the door entry system and often would. This was reported but never remedied.

[REDACTED] tates that children are frightened and withdrawn and very nervous of the staff at the unit.

[REDACTED] says the record keeping for distribution of medication is also very poor. Medication is often crushed up and put into the pupils' food without parental consent.

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**Timeline of events:**

**2007/2009**

- Pupils being called names by staff member - stupid, smelly, doughnuts.
- Pupil's chair being kicked by staff member when pupil did not bring that staff member an Easter egg.
- Pupils being shouted at by staff member in an aggressive manner.

**2010/2011**

- Pupil with severe complex needs being kicked to ground by staff member when this pupil hit this staff member.
- Pupil being restrained on changing bed for personal care. Staff member holding pupil's legs. Severe and complex need pupil with autism.

**2012/2013**

- Child protection investigation all staff

**2014/2015**

- Staff member touching a pupil inappropriately.
- Staff member sitting on a boy's knee and fondling him inappropriately.

**2015/2016**

- Pupils being locked in save space by staff members. Autistic pupils.
- Teacher undermining and bullying staff member and isolating that staff member not letting them go for breaks with other staff member.

**Staff in the unit (may have been updated):**

**Managers:**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Additional Needs Assistants**

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**BRIEFING FOR MARK MCDONALD: MEETING WITH PAUL WHEELHOUSE  
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**Annex F  
Directions**

From Scottish Parliament Building to:  
Constituency Office  
8 Sandbed  
Hawick  
Roxburghshire, TD9 OHE

Via A7

Distance: 50.2 miles ([show in km](#))

Time: 1 hr 27 mins

1 hr 27 mins / 55.1 miles

Via A68

1 hr 41 mins / 55.8 miles

Via A7...

- 0.0 Start: 23-25 The Royal Mile, Edinburgh EH8 8BR, UK  
Head east on Canongate/The Royal Mile
- 0.0 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit onto Horse Wynd
- 0.3 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit onto Queen's Dr  
Go through 1 roundabout
- 1.1 At the roundabout, take the 1st exit
- 1.2 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit onto Holyrood Park Rd
- 1.5 Turn left onto Dalkeith Rd/A7
- 2.3 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit onto Old Dalkeith Rd/A7
- 5.3 At the roundabout, take the 3rd exit and stay on Old Dalkeith Rd/A7
- 5.8 At the roundabout, take the 4th exit onto A7 heading to Berwick Upon  
Tweed/A1/Edinburgh East & North/Musselburgh/Leith
- 6.2 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit and stay on A7
- 6.7 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit
- 6.8 Continue onto A7
- 7.2 At Eskbank Rd Roundabout, take the 3rd exit
- 7.3 Continue onto A7
- 7.7 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit and stay on A7
- 8.4 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit and stay on A7
- 9.8 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit and stay on A7
- 32.8 At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit onto Currie Rd/A7
- 32.9 At the roundabout, take the 3rd exit onto A7  
Go through 3 roundabouts  
At the roundabout, take the 2nd exit and stay on A7
- 34.0 Hawick  
A7
- 38.9 Turn left onto Market Pl/A7  
Continue to follow A7

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- 38.9 Turn right onto Tower St/A7  
Continue to follow A7
- 48.5 At the roundabout, take the 1st exit and stay on A7
- 49.6 At the roundabout, take the 3rd exit onto Commercial Rd/A7  
Continue to follow A7
- 50.2 Enter the roundabout  
Destination will be on the left
- 50.2 Arrive: 11 A7, Hawick TD9 0HE, UK  
Section time: 1 h 27 min, Total time: 1 h 27 min