Police fears over state guardians

EXCLUSIVE

By Ben Borland

THE SNP’s controversial state guardian scheme is facing its biggest crisis after police revealed that vulnerable children are being left in the hands of abusers due to red tape.

Police Scotland have warned ministers that youngsters are being exposed to “further criminal acts” due to the “significant time delay” created by the extra layers of unwieldy bureaucracy.

The force has said “specific examples can be provided”, suggesting an unknown number of children have been subjected to physical or

TURN TO PAGE 2

Teachers worry about increased workload as named person for pupils

TEACHERS who will become state-appointed guardians to their pupils fear the policy will leave them facing unmanageable workloads, including having to carry out the work during the school holidays.

A letter sent from Scottish Government officials, seen by The Herald, includes draft questions asking whether schools’ existing on-call arrangements outside term time for senior staff could ensure the “continuity” of the named person service.

The EIS, the country’s largest teachers’ union, said that while it backed the scheme in principle it would have “serious concerns” about any related workload demands during holidays.

It added that its members were becoming increasingly worried at the new burden set to be placed on them and criticised a lack of clarity over how the policy will work.

From August next year, everyone under 18 will be assigned a named person, usually a teacher once children reach school age, who will act as a single point of contact for parents and authorities regarding serious concerns.

The EIS, which said its salaries committee was examining the implications of the legislation, is the latest to express disquiet over the implementation of the controversial scheme, after Police Scotland said there was a “lack of clarity” and almost half of organisations responding to a consultation said guidance was unclear.

An EIS spokeswoman said the union would have “serious concerns about any workload demands being placed on teachers to fulfil the named person role during the holiday period.”

Minister falters over SNP ‘state snoopers’ plan

Confusing: Fiona McLeod

By Mark Howarth

THE SNP’s controversial ‘named persons’ scheme was plunged into confusion yesterday after the Children’s Minister failed to answer simple questions about it.

Radio phone-in listeners left baffled

\ntag \n
\ntag
Ministers under pressure to rethink state guardian plan

Concerns raised over Named Person scheme to monitor every child’s welfare

EXCLUSIVE

MINISTERS are under pressure to rethink controversial plans to appoint a state-appointed guardian to look after the welfare of every child in Scotland after dozens of groups raised concerns.

Many of the bodies and charities involved in the Scottish Government’s Named Person scheme are unsure of their roles little more than a year before it is due to roll out across the country.

Individuals that answered the consultation were overwhelmingly opposed to the compulsory scheme, with 98 per cent saying guidance on the policy was not clear. Many took the opportunity to attack the scheme.

Confusion over the results of the Named Person was a recurring theme with some organisations warning of terms such as “relevant and proportionate” were open to interpretation.

It meant rules as simple as how names could end up with “too much power” Named Persons would safeguard the “well-being” of children, but there was criticism that the term was not strictly defined while some said it was unclear when it was inappropriate to exclude parents from contact.

The report said repeated concerns had been expressed over workload, with being a Named Person set to become an additional burden on teachers, and others in already busy jobs.

Meanwhile, more than half of organisations said they were unsure about what information about children could be shared with others and how the scheme was compatible with the Data Protection Act. “There was concern about potential breaches of privacy, and about confidentiality,” the report found.

The report said repeated concerns had been expressed over workload, with being a Named Person set to become an additional burden on teachers, and others in already busy jobs.

SNP’s child guardian guidelines ‘not good enough’

By Simon Johnson
SCOTTISH POLITICAL EDITOR

MORE than half the officials charged with implementing the SNP’s plan to appoint a state guardian for every child think the Scottish Government’s guidance on how they should exercise their duties is not good enough, according to a survey.

Parents oppose plan to give every child a guardian

Ministers have been urged to reconsider plans to appoint a state guardian for every child in Scotland.

The pressure rose after a consultation process revealed that many of the 400 bodies that would be responsible for implementing the proposals were unsure of their roles, little more than a year before it is due to roll out across the country.

Concerns were also raised about the “unrealistic” demands of the Government’s Child and Young People (Scotland) Act could place on busy professionals.

The legislation would assign a single point of contact, such as a teacher or health visitor, to look out for the welfare of children under 18.

The measure is the subject of a legal challenge at Edinburgh’s Court of Session, with a judgment expected later this year. The No To Named Person (NO2NP) coalition, whose supporters include The Christian Institute and the Scottish Parent Coalition, has appealed against a decision by Lord Pentland to refuse a petition for a judicial review of the legislation.

The Government carried out a consultation on draft guidance designed to help those implementing the act. A total of 149 organisations and 133 individuals contributed, with the majority of bodies generally supportive of the legislation, but the majority of individuals hostile to the plan.

The report, which focused on the views of organisations such as councils, health bodies and charities, said that many had sought clarity or additional guidance on a range of issues, including the role of the named person.

It said: “There was thought to be insufficient guidance in relation to accountability and governance arrangements which would underpin this legislation. This was most often requested in relation to the named person.”

These requests were sometimes prompted by the observation that the role of the named person and of the named person service was very wide-ranging, or by the observation that the powers of the named person were not clear.

“Respondents therefore asked for accountability arrangements to be put in place to clarify the powers of the named person as well as aspects of the relationship between the named person and the lead professional, to ensure that any decisions made could be challenged, reviewed and appealed.”

It added: “There was a concern that the demands on busy professionals (especially health visitors and senior teachers) were unrealistic. Respondents questioned how they could take on this additional responsibility with...