

International guide on child care commissioned to implement UN framework

The Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), at the University of Strathclyde, has been awarded the commission for an international implementation and monitoring handbook on the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, which were approved by the UN General Assembly in 2009.

The purpose of the handbook is to provide specific guidance on the how the guidelines can be practically implemented - a gap that currently exists among service providers and child protection specialists. By providing illustrative and realistic examples of existing practices that demonstrate the guidelines in operation across multiple countries and various regions, it is hoped that professionals will be given an impetus and innovative means for implementing them around the globe.

Under the leadership of CELCIS Director Jennifer Davidson and Nigel Cantwell, an independent consultant on child protection based in Geneva, CELCIS will draw upon a strong project team of international experts to develop the handbook.

Ms Davidson is an established leader in professional development and its role in the effective implementation of knowledge into-practice in children's services. She said: "The guidelines recognise that children out of parental care are amongst the most vulnerable people in our communities to having their rights violated.

"The handbook will be instrumental in making the guidelines real at a local level. It is a tool with the potential to make a critical contribution to this very complex area, to ensure that the systems that impact on children function in the best interest of children first and foremost, and assist children to achieve their full potential."

Mr Cantwell, an internationally-recognised expert on child protection and a prime actor in the development of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, said: "Reaching consensus on the guidelines has ensured that the rights of these particular children take a decisive step forward around the world.

"The handbook will reflect the heart of the guidelines' message that children must not find themselves placed in alternative care unnecessarily; and where care has to be provided out-of-home, it is appropriate and tailored to each child's specific needs, circumstances and best interests."

Jean Zermatten, Chairperson of the international monitoring body the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, said: "This handbook will be an important tool in providing practitioners, organisations and governments across the globe with practical advice that can be applied in different countries, regions and cultures, to inspire the best possible rights-based care for children."

The handbook was commissioned by an international consortium of funders, comprising UNICEF, Oak Foundation, International Social Service, and SOS Children's Villages International – all of whom have a resolute commitment to the realisation of children's rights in the context of alternative care.

With the aims of providing understanding, inspiration and resources, the handbook will be an important tool to enable policy makers as well as practitioners to find practical approaches to complex challenges, enabling them to best implement the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children in their international, regional and country contexts.

The handbook will be designed to be useful to all concerned parties – from care providers and civil society to government bodies and legislators – as well as for reporting to national and international

monitoring bodies.

This will be underpinned by the overarching principles and individual articles of the UNCRC. It will provide contextual information, links to policy and inspiring practice examples and will signpost other resources.

The project team is supported by an international steering group consisting of [ATD 4th World](#), [Better Care Network](#), [EveryChild](#), [International Social Service](#), [RELAF](#), [SOS Children's Villages International](#) and [UNICEF](#).

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Notes to Editors:

The Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELSIS), University of Strathclyde, improves the experiences and outcomes of children and young people in public care ('looked after' children) and care leavers through a collaborative and inclusive approach to partnership working. CELCIS act as a force for change by advancing innovative service development and workforce planning; providing learning and development opportunities; and developing a sound evidence base which incorporates the views of stakeholders and service users. CELCIS promotes children, young people and their families at the heart of services. www.celcis.org

UNICEF is the UN's lead agency for children, with a presence in more than 190 countries and territories. UNICEF works with local communities, partners and governments to ensure every child's rights to survive and thrive are upheld. www.unicef.org

Oak Foundation commits its resources to address issues of global, social and environmental concern, particularly those that have a major impact on the lives of the disadvantaged. <http://www.oakfnd.org>

International Social Service (ISS) helps individuals, children and families confronted with social problems involving two or more countries as a consequence of international migration or displacement. As an international not-for-profit organisation, it is active in around 140 countries through a network of national branches, affiliated bureaus and correspondents. Each year, it provides services to more than 50,000 persons throughout the world. www.iss-ssi.org

SOS Children's Villages International is the umbrella organisation for over 130 SOS Children's Villages National Associations globally. SOS Children's Village programmes focus on strengthening and empowering parents and caregivers to guarantee the child's right to quality care either within their family of origin or in alternative forms of care. As such, the focus is on guaranteeing the rights of children who have lost, or are at risk of losing, parental care. www.sos-childrensvillages.org

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