

Northern Suburbs Street Children’s Meeting

18 April 2017

9:00 – 12:00

Durbanville Council Chambers

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Present: Nick Van Rooyen (TEAHMO), Theresa Uys (COCT), Jacque Pietersen (VRCID), Janice King (WCSCF), Cornette Roodman ( Durbanville Library), Magdalene Koch (Durbanville Children’s Home), Wendy Bosse (Olympians), Wilmot Arends (SD &ECD CCT), Pheneous Mvakwendlu (SDECD), Lorraine Waterboer (Badisa Scottsdene), Lily Frank (MES), Amber –Rose Canfield (Badisa Scottsdene), Colleen Brookes-Gain (WCSCF)

Apologies: Wilma Piek (VRCID)

1. **Welcome and introductions**. Janice welcomed everyone and said thatthe NS Street Children’s Sub-Forum will be partnering with the Durbanville LNOC to form a ‘Collaborative Connection’. This would be taking place at the Durbanville Council Chambers every 2nd month. This was aimed at reducing the number of meetings that Roleplayers have to attend, but still allow people to get together to talk about the issues on the street. Street Children matters will be discussed in the first half of the meeting, and then after a break, Street Adults matters will be discussed. WCSCF will coordinate the arrangements.

Since nobody present had been at the last meeting, Janice decided to skip point 2 and instead continue with point no 3.

1. **Last Meeting: Poverty Stoplight**
2. **Current Issues On The Street**

Jacque said they currently have about **15 children in their area**; some are regulars (hardened) and some new day strollers.

He is also working hard in **Leonsdale Elsies River** with a lady **Elizabeth** from the **KRAC (kids rising above crack**), a community based org, trying to get kids who have dropped out back to school. Elizabeth works closely with schools, afterschool care and also with kids who have dropped out. She is dedicated to assisting children with behaviour problems and keeping children occupied, off the street and even works weekends by including sport into her programs. She’s in the process of registration.

**Janice asked Jacque to forward WCSCF her details so she can be connected to the network and be invited to our meetings.**

**Janice** asked Magdalene **(a**) if Durbanville children’s Home took children off the street **(b)** if they drop their children off at schools since that was where most abscondments takes place and lastly **(c)** if their children stayed for 2 years .

**Magdalene** replied that:

1. They only work with referrals and SC firstly goes to Lindelani. They have worked with 1 child who came to them from Lindelani for 6 months and had not experienced problems.
2. Their children attend 33 different schools: Primary scholars are taken to school and High school scholars walk to school.
3. They try not to have a child too long as their focusison family reintegration and assisting with the families; they reason that a child’s reality is ‘outside’ and not inside the Children’s home.
4. They have age appropriate programs where they focus on the children’s needs/ wants. **They work closely with SA YES in the Mentee/ Mentor program with independent living care programs**. The program has in the past assisted older children, those who are employed or have nowhere to go, to find their feet.

**Theresa** added that she could vouch for Durbanville Children’s home not experiencing problems as the community of Durbanville had embraced the Children’s Home; which has added to its success. She is tries to channel as much as possible from the “**responsible giving”** to them. The Durbanville community has “great spirit” and would be hosting a “HARMONIOUS HYMNS” festival on the **23rd June** where the local church choirs, solo singers and Durbanville Children’s Home choir will be singing. An actor (a great success story) from Binnelanders and Jay, an up and coming singer from Morning star will also be a part of the festival. The idea is to create even more community spirit and bonding. If anyone was interested to take part, they could connect with her.

**Magdalene:** The children at the home are doing very well. Have 3 children doing rock climbing as an extra mural. One of the girls (a 15yr old) made National Championships which will be held in Austria in September 2017. The Home is trying to raise the R10 000 deposit needed to secure her position on the Tour. There is also a lot of paperwork to be done to get her an ID/ passport and the necessary permission from the department for her to travel overseas. Although this has added much work for the Home, they are very excited that the child is doing so well and has this opportunity.

**Theresa** suggested that Magdalene should write a special request to the Mayors Fund has certain grants for times and for children like these. The request should be headed Attention: The Mayor at the Mayors fund, giving all the details about the child at the Durbanville Children’s Home, **highlighting her amazing achievement** etc. This is a national and provincial achievement.

Janice redid introductions again for those who had arrived late and reminded everyone that **meetings would start at 9am as it was now a joint meeting where some people would come for the one or another meeting or for both.**

**Theresa** thenrequested if the meeting times could be shifted to start at 10 or 10:30. This is not possible as this is the only time we could be allocated. (Unless we change the venue) But we would look into it with the Chambers.

**Back to point 3: Current Issues on the Street**

**Theresa:** 2 children in the CBD Durbanville, but reported to Badisa. Very few problems with SC in Durbanville however there were new kids from Fisantekraal in Durbanville. The problem is quite well controlled, **thanks to Badisa.**

**Wendy:** There’s a big difference happening in Fisantekraal - The principal of the school actually went looking for the children on the street.

There were 3 families that they currently working with. **1**. wrt a female SC, Badisa Bellville removed her to Fisantekraal in foster care. The mother has 3 months to find her feet and is being assisted by DSD. **2.** There is a mom who is from Worcester and has 3 children with her. They are trying to assist her by sending the 3 children back to her mom in Worcester; so she can concentrate on finding work and get on her feet. **3**. Another mom with a baby from Fisantekraal.

There is also an instance where a SC who is on and off the streets (they think he is Shaun Noble), is being used by the drug lords who are all older guys.

**Theresa** thinks that Shaun Noble could be the one that DNHW was currently talking about. There’s also a family that arrived about 3 weeks ago living under the overhang of the Living Faith church. Word on the street is that every Tuesday evening people are being fed there, but the church actually doing the feeding is coming in from Stellenberg. Outreach groups find this an easy way to feed the street people who become dependent on that feeding. This isn’t a way of giving responsibly.

**Nick** suggested that another alternative to make it more “responsible giving” would be to link the faith based orgs with MES.

**Janice** **asked if Theresa could follow up on this.**

**Wilmot:** There were a few young ladies prostituting in Kraaifontein near Shoprite. Working with young children isn’t part of their job; but they don’t know if these girls are minors or not. The girls don’t want to show there ID’s. He would appreciate any advice or suggestions on how to follow through.

**The suggestions were:**

* If they are minors, then Law Enforcement could be called in.
* Or Fill out a form 24 and they could investigate.
* This could be done via Badisa as well.
* **Connect with Capt. Niemandt wrt this issue, as they would know what to do.**

**Pheneous** said that they had a case of a girl who was sleeping at the garage. She’s born in 1996, has no family but didn’t want help either. What could be done about this girl?

**Suggestions from the floor:**

He could contact one of the following orgs:

1. Madri from Straatwerk in Parow as she is in Northern Suburbs
2. Embrace Dignity in Woodstock
3. Badisa

**Theresa** asked if the city had a database of all the orgs working on this side.

**Pheneous** said the shortage of  **orgs on this side** in comparison to the amount of orgs in CBD and the Southern Suburbs was a challenge. **Janice offered to connect Pheneous with the lady from Hope in Fisantekraal and hopefully that lady could then connect him to other orgs in the vicinity.**

**Janice** asked Amber if they were having any joy working with Lindelani.

**Amber** replied that they have a 14yr old and other children who needs permanent placement in Lindelani. They were however hopeful. Some of these children have since gone back to school.

Janice said she had a meeting with Robert and where they spoke about the operation in **Muizenberg Street Children ‘Operation’ and its challenges.** Marion Thomas from KBSJSRA had given feedback relating to the ‘operation’ that entailed the removal of 6-7-9 long term, ‘hardened’, drug-addicted children living, working and begging on the streets of Muizenberg. The planned operation involved the local MID, SAPS, DSD Desig Social Workers, Fieldworkers and members of the community, working together. Facilities had been informed of the operation so that preparation could be made in advance, but had said initially that only 3 children and then later 6 could be placed at Lindelani. The 3 remaining children not placed, had begged the team to not take them home. The one child, once dropped off at home, ran 5km to catch-up with the Lindelani-bound vehicles and insisted on being taken along. This high number of children were objected to by ‘Facilities’, putting immense pressure on the team in the field. The team stayed until the early hours of the morning to help with the placement paperwork and were then back at 7am to take the children to Simonstown Court, again returning the children to Lindelani at the end of the 24 hour operation.

**The main challenges were: Still a serious lack of placement options. Also one cannot** take more than 3 children per day, but apparently can take three anyday and everyday. (Although this is in principle, as there is not always space. … The Problem!)

**Amber** said. They work with the children at school but then a month later the child drops out of school and that’s where the problem lies when the children end up on the street, where drug usage is high. However not all these children belong at Lindelani. Some of them are decent children who are just experiencing circumstances which draw them to the street.

Other homes were needed for this kind of children. They have a 15yr old girl whose life is in danger, but they can’t get her into a safe place. They worked with the family but the situation was dire.

**Magdalene** said that the bottleneck was at Lindelani.

**Janice** asked if Amber had contacted Leanna Goosen about this young girl. If she had not then she should and she should also **write down the** **time frame and how she has worked up the chain of hierarchy.** They need this kind of info so they could see how you have worked in other ways with the family and are not just trying to place as a first option, but also how urgent the situation has become. Robert needs those details. In the case of Gansbaai, they never actually applied for a space, just talked about it, and that’s why they experienced a hiccup. Bottlenecks needed to be reported. This is a child who is in desperate need of help**.**

**She asked that Amber keep the Forum updated on progress.**

1. **Discussion: The best interests of the child**

Janice reported to the meeting that the Executive Committee are busy with a strategic planning process. Prof Gerrie, who the Forum consults, spoke about the street being a venue for the children. He said it’s a place where they get what they are seeking. He however didn’t like the term “hardened” and would prefer to use the term “street connected”. He suggested we discuss in our groups the question “What exactly **is in a child’s best interest?** Because this can be different for many different Roleplayers and through discussion, we can come to a better understanding of this.

**THE DISCUSSION:**

**Amber:** Each child is different, so the specific needs would be different. As the schools Aux Social Worker doing Awareness and LifeSkills programs, her case load is supposed to be 30 but she currently has 60. When working with one child, she would discover that there would be 5 more children in this family that need placing.

**Theresa**: Years ago, DSD used to place children in a school hostel as a solution to tricky situations at home. These children got the best care. This doesn’t seem to be done these days, but seemed to work really well. Could it not be done now? **Magdalene**; There were still hostels in Bonnievale and Barrydale which were government funded. She’s just not sure how difficult it is to get into these hostels. She also feels stroingly that one should not place a child back into their family if the reasons for removing the child from the family have not been addressed. There must be family intervention done.

**Magdalene:**  Another issue is that if a child has been out of school for 6 months, then no school wants to take that child back.

**Janice** had a meeting with DSD Dr Lesley Corrie values the Prevention and Early Intervention work done by Drop In Centres but noted that **there isn’t sufficient connection between DIC’S and Designated Social Workers** to take on the urgent cases. The same would apply to social workers and schools – **there’s not enough ‘attention’ given to these ‘prevention centres’ by the Social Workers** - once again because **their case loads are too high**. So the children in need of care and protection get ‘left’.

**Theresa**: This needed to be taken up with Minister Fritz, as rural schools could also be used to accommodate these children.Min Fritz recently had a meeting with the all the major role –players; she felt that they needed another one, specifically focused on the issues around intervention with children in need of care and protection. Janice agreed this would be very good, and brought up the discussed WCSCF Indaba as a similar thought. **Nick**: We have all these organisations doing good work, but even so, we have hit a cul de sac. With an Indaba at least we can get answers. That way we can see how far a particular minister can really assist us. **Theresa** **offered to escalate this to the powers that be about these “on the ground” issues.**

**Janice:** Roles of Social Workers are still being confused – Designated and School. WCED SW’s should be doing the programs in the schools that Amber is currently doing. The heads of WCED and DSD are apparently working on an MOU but it has not progressed in the last 2 years!

**Lorraine**: There’s a boy who had a placement in Ottery but because he turned 16 they couldn’t accept him. He could do night school but because of the gangsterism he isn’t able to.

**Jacque:** Gangs are openly coming to the schools to intimidate the children.

**Nick:** As Prof Gerrie says… **the best interest of the child is a dynamic** and **too much red tape is hindering the process.**

1. **Any other business:**

Theresa Uys: Durbanville Community “**HARMONIOUS HYMNS**” festival on the **23rd June.**

1. **Next meeting: 6 June 2017**

Executive Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Executive Member: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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