

New Children's Interest Group Formed

As Commonwealth Day approaches on 14th March, we are proud to announce the formation of a Commonwealth Children's Interest Group, which will be working to bring forward children's rights and protections on the international Commonwealth stage. It is now more relevant than ever to utilise the Commonwealth's friendship, co-operation and common action to establish an interest group to protect children.

Those involved in setting up the group are organisations with a wide range of expertise, with conveners representing the International Social Service Network/UK-CFAB, the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW), and the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN). International Social Services-UK/CFAB will provide the point of contact for the group, acting as the Secretariat. Other Commonwealth accredited organisations supportive of the initiative to date include: Commonwealth Association for Health and Disability (CAHD), Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology, Mathematics and Engineering Educators (CASTME), Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation (CNMF), Commonwealth Consortium for Education (CCfE), Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPPA), Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA), Commonwealth Trade Union Group (CTUG), Commonwealth Women's Network (CWN), Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC), Rotary International, Royal Life Saving Society – Commonwealth (RLSS), Towards Zero Foundation (TZF), and The Commonwealth Equality Network/Kaleidoscope Trust (TCEN). The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) will assist with links to parliamentarians as appropriate.

The aim of the group is to advocate and provide expert, research-driven policy advice on specific subjects to improve the lives and welfare of children and families across the Commonwealth. With a large percentage of the Commonwealth population aged under-18, it has never been more vital to form a unifying position in the Commonwealth to consider the interests, needs, protection and care of children, including young carers and the specially challenged community and to protect the many children of Commonwealth families who cross international borders. Given that all Commonwealth countries are signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this group is an important step forward in upholding those rights. The group is open to any Accredited Commonwealth Organisation concerned for the

wellbeing of children and their families and expects to work with other Commonwealth and international bodies with shared interests and values.

The main objectives of the cluster are to:

- Represent diverse interests from across the Commonwealth.
- Focus on advocacy and making tangible change happen for children by utilising the collective that is the Commonwealth, including political platforms such as CHOGM and Ministerial meetings.
- Act as a forum for partnership between organisations within the informal and formal Commonwealth and without, such as the International Social Service, UNICEF and Plan International.
- Researching and advocating for policies to improve children's safety and wellbeing.
- Engage with the formal Commonwealth institutions, High Commissioners and other decision-makers within the broader Commonwealth.

The group will also utilise and seek to build on the mapping work that Commonwealth Accredited Organisations have already undertaken in policy areas such as modern slavery, early child marriage, child labour, child sexual exploitation and abuse, and child road and water safety. The group is looking forward to working in collaboration with other experts in the field of child protection to improve the welfare and safety of children and families across the world.

If you are interested in joining the group or would like further information, please contact:

Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB) at info@cfab.org.uk

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