

Action for Sick Children Conference Report 19th November 2009 'A Celebration of Platt 1959-2009 Past – Present – Future'

The conference was held at the Chancellors Hotel and Conference Centre, University of Manchester. It was opened by Action for Sick Children's Chairman Pamela Barnes. The focus for the conference was to celebrate the publication of the document, *The Welfare of Children in Hospital*, in 1959, fifty years ago. The then Department of Health and Social Security, commissioned Sir Harry Platt to chair a committee looking into the needs of sick children over and above their clinical needs.

Sir Harry Platt both lived and worked in the city of Manchester so it was fitting to have held the celebration conference in his home town.

It is possible that this document may never have been published had it not been for the research, including films produced by James and Joyce Robertson. The Robertsons highlighted the plight of sick children separated from their parents.

When the document was produced in 1959 it remained on a shelf. A group of mothers became concerned that nothing was being done to implement this report so they set about the task. They involved other parents and professionals and so Mother Care for Children in Hospital came into being in 1961. Gradually the movement gained momentum and changed its name to the National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital (NAWCH). During this time the Manchester Branch of NAWCH had the largest number of members within their group from the whole of the country. Later as children began to be treated more often in the community it seemed appropriate to change the name to Action for Sick Children.

Action for Sick Children is celebrating this important document; being mindful of the past, taking into account the present position and looking to the future.

A very warm welcome was extended to Sir Harry Platt's family who made a special effort to be at the conference.

The charity was honoured by a reception given by the City of Manchester for which grateful thanks to the Lord Mayor were given.

Thanks were given to Professor Ann Keen MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary for Health for endorsing the celebrations by fitting in a visit to the conference.

The Conference Chairman was Dame Elizabeth Fradd, an independent health service adviser, with a focus of her work being on the continuous improvement of health care for children.

The following presentations were received with great interest:

Dr Stella Butler

Deputy University Librarian and Associate Director, The John Rylands University Library, Manchester

“Harry Platt – The Man”

Synopsis: Harry Platt chaired the group that produced in 1959 the report that forced significant change in the way children were cared for in hospital. Platt was a distinguished orthopaedic surgeon, responsible for introducing the first fracture clinic to the UK and had considerable experience of treating sick children. During the Second World War he became a consultant adviser to the Emergency Medical Service, the wartime civilian hospital system that formed the basis for the organisation of the National Health Service in 1948. He continued to advise the Ministry of Health until the 1960s and was particularly interested in the development and operation of hospitals. He died, having achieved his century in 1986.

Dr Stella Butler is Deputy University Librarian and Associate Director of The John Rylands University Library and is currently responsible for Special Collections as well as Research and Learning Support

Dr Mary Lindsay FRCP, FRCPsych, FRCPCH (Hon)
Child Psychiatrist

“The Platt Report (1959) Fifty Years On – The Most Humane Document every issued by the Department of Health”

Synopsis: The war was over, survival in general and in hospitals was more certain, and the NHS was new; it seemed a good time to try and understand and assess the social and emotional needs of children in hospital. James Robertson’s research, starting in 1948 at the instigation of John Bowlby, showed how young children in hospital who saw little or nothing of their parents became distressed (film “A Two Year Old Goes to Hospital” 1952). This research contributed to professional and lay concerns about these young children and later disturbances, which could be reduced by admitting mothers with the, (film “Going to Hospital with Mother” 1958). The situation before the Platt Report will be considered, and the Report and some of its recommendations discussed. Change in hospital conditions for young children was slow but eventually came about because of Robertson’s research and films, the Platt Report itself and NAWCH (The National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital) formed to implement the Report’s recommendations.

Dr Mary Lindsay spent five years in paediatrics, which included working at Amersham and taking part in James Robertson’s film “Going to Hospital with Mother” (1958), and with Dermot MacCarthy and Ivy Morris described this work in the Lancet (1962). After three years each in General Practice and Adult Psychiatry, she became a Child Psychiatrist.

Launch of Action for Sick Children DVD

The launch of Action for Sick Children DVD '50 Years After Platt Where Are We Now? The DVD looks at the impact of the Robertson Films which were instrumental in the government setting up the Platt Committee. Mothercare for Children in Hospital through to NAWCH helped healthcare professionals and parents implement the Platt recommendations. The DVD also focuses on what Action for Sick Children has helped achieve within children's healthcare services since the time of the Platt Report to where these services are now and what needs to continue.

Jacqui DGLISH

“Park the Car, Park the Charges”

Synopsis: Action for Sick Children's initial 2004 campaign to raise the awareness of the prohibitive costs of parking for parents visiting children in hospital was initiated by the Birmingham branch of Action for Sick Children. This year it was re-audited. The 2004 campaign issues and the findings of this years re-audit will be discussed.

Jacqui DGLISH has been a member of Action for Sick Children since 1990. She trained as a Paediatric Nurse in Birmingham and joined the well established Birmingham Branch of Action for Sick Children.

George Stenson

Transport for Sick Children

Synopsis:

- How the charity came into existence.
- What we do.
- How we grew.
- The need for our service.
- What we intend to do.

Transport for Sick Children transport children to health appointments using volunteer drivers. Health professionals who are best positioned to assess the needs of the child and the family refer the children to the charity. They focus on areas of deprivation and areas of health inequality. The beneficiaries of the service are:

- The children – their medical needs receive timely attention.
- The family – have the worry of transport and time etc. to hospital removed.
- The NHS – has reduced wasted appointments.
- The volunteer – enjoys the help given to children and their community.

Dr Sheila Shribman

National Clinical Director for Children, Young People and Maternity Services

“Where we are Now”

Synopsis: "An outline of current policy and practice in relation to children and young people and ways forward for the future".

Dr Sheila Shribman was appointed National Clinical Director for Children, Young People and Maternity at the Department of Health in December 2005, following twenty-two years as a Consultant Paediatrician with diverse experience in children's health services.

Leila Williams

Director, Children, Young People and Families Network, North West Strategic Health Authority

“Making it Better for Children in Greater Manchester”

Leila Williams is Director for the Children, Young People and Families Network based at North West Strategic Health Authority. The network has the responsibility for co-ordinating the development of primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services for women, babies and children across the NHS organisations in Greater Manchester, East Cheshire and High Peak.

The Network has multi agency membership including health, education, social care and the voluntary sector. Its main project at present is the public consultation on the service redesign of paediatric, maternity and neonatal services which is believed to be the largest ever undertaken by the NHS.

Professor Tony Long PhD, MA, BSc(Hons), SRN, RSCN, RNT

Professor of Child and Family Health, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Salford

“Future Shock – Solutions from the Past for 21st Century Child Health Nursing”

Synopsis: In his 1970 book “future Shock”, sociologist and futurologist Alvin Toffler described his view of a world in which change would accelerate to the point where most individuals simply could not keep up with the pace of change, drowning instead in a flood of bewilderment and stress, overcome by “information overload”, and becoming dysfunctional and demotivated. The rate of change in health care and nursing might seem to validate Toffler's predictions. Major developments in practice, increased demands from multiple stakeholders, and pressure to internalise the recommendations from a plethora of studies and inquiries, threaten to engulf nursing in a relentless maelstrom. When solutions to these difficulties are examined, it becomes clear that some arise from the impact of an eminent orthopaedic surgeon who practised in Manchester and chaired the 1966-1959 Committee on the Welfare of Children in Hospital.

Professor Tony Long is Professor of Child and Family Health in the University of Salford School of Nursing and Midwifery and leads a multi-professional group on research with children and families at the interface of health and social care.

Professor Terence Stephenson DM, FRCP, DRCPCH

Professor of Child Health, University of Nottingham

President, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

“The Future for Paediatrics”

Professor Terence Stephenson BSc, DM, FRCP, FRCPCH

President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Nuffield Professor of Child Health, Institute of Child Health, University College London
Consultant Paediatrician, University College Hospital and Great Ormond Street Hospital,
London Council of GMC

Professor Peter E Clayton MD, MRCP, FRCPCH

Professor of Child Health and Paediatric Endocrinology, University of Manchester

“Engaging Children and Young People in their own Healthcare”

Synopsis: Children usually have limited involvement in their own medical care: professionals direct their comments to parents, who speak for their children, and the two together make all the decisions. The limited research on communication beyond young people and their doctors has indicated that young people can be reluctant to raise personal or sensitive issues or to ask questions that reveal poor adherence. They report barriers to communication, including a “condition-centred” rather than “person-centred” approach in complex medical conditions. Such experiences of paediatric care are unlikely to prepare young people for taking charge of their own healthcare. There is also little evidence on how best to meet the needs of young people so that they can get the best out of health care interactions.

Research being undertaken currently at the Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital is focussing on (1) identifying the skills children and young people require to move from paediatric to adult services (2) revealing the gaps in care that can arise from inadequate attention to transition arrangements and the health care consequences, and (3) generating models for service development.

Peter Clayton is professor of Child Health and Paediatric Endocrinology in the Faculty of Medical & Human Sciences at the University of Manchester. He is an honorary consultant at the Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital and the Christie Hospital
A Question and Answer Session was hosted with Professor Terence Stephenson, Professor Tony Long, Professor Peter Clayton, Bharti Mevani and Pamela Barnes on the panel.

Dame Elizabeth Fradd summed up the day.

Dr Deepak Kalra, Vice Chair of Action for Sick Children completed the day with a very warm vote of thanks to all the speakers and to the conference chairman.