

NEWS RELEASE

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Regional Seminar Debates the Rights and Protection of Children

The conditions, rights and protection of children and young people will be the focus of a regional seminar this Thursday, organised by the West Midlands Regional Assembly. The seminar is the first of six thematic events being held as part of the OPEN project - a pioneering new programme that works to strengthen social inclusion and protection.

“This seminar could not have come at a more opportune time. Following the distressing cases of child abuse being reported here in the UK, as well as the major economic challenges facing every region, child protection services are under considerable pressure to address some vital issues.” said Olwen Dutton, Chief Executive of the Regional Assembly.

“How might the recession impact on child poverty and children services? Who are the most vulnerable children and young people in the Region and how can local and regional strategies commit to safeguarding them? How do we better involve children and young people in the decision making process? These are some of the key issues that will be debated amongst practitioners, policy makers and young people themselves at this week’s seminar.”

The seminar presents a unique opportunity for those who work with children and young people to have their voices heard and identify key issues to raise at a policy level. The workshops will promote cooperative working across local authorities, regional bodies and the third sector.

Andrew Worrall, Children’s Services Advisor at Improvement & Efficiency West Midlands, who will be chairing the seminar added:

‘This will be a valuable opportunity for participants to share their concerns and solutions in helping to make children’s lives safer. There are many good things happening across the Region but policy-makers need to hear what the practical realities are and to plan accordingly.’

OPEN is a two year project funded through the Progress funding stream from Europe and works with partners from Italy, Spain and Germany. The programme begins with six thematic seminars in each of the partnering countries, based around children; the labour market; family policies; health for older people; job inclusion for people with disabilities; and ethnic minorities and immigrants.

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**For further information please contact:
Jo Kite, Head of Communications on 0121 678 1044 or
Hafsah FitzGibbon, Press & PR Officer on 0121 245 0181**

To attend the seminar or to arrange an interview with any of the speakers, please contact the above.

Notes to Editors

1. The West Midlands Regional Assembly ('the Assembly') represents a wide range of democratic, social and economic interests throughout the West Midlands Region.
2. The Assembly's membership consists of 100 nominated representatives, with 68 elected members representing the local authority, 16 representing the business sector and 16 representing other economic and social partners.
3. The Assembly provides a platform for organisations to consider matters of common concern including: regional planning, transport, economic prosperity, sustainability, culture and Europe. It also supports regional policy forums and task groups on social inclusion, faith, housing, life long learning/skills, health, rural and community safety/crime reduction.
4. The Assembly works in partnership with Advantage West Midlands (AWM) the regional development agency (RDA), the Government Office West Midlands (GOWM), Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM) the West Midlands Leaders Board (WMLB) and other regional and local organisations from across the West Midlands Region.
5. The Assembly is the Regional Planning Body.
6. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk