



AGENDA ITEM 3.1

EAST AYRSHIRE CHIEF OFFICERS GROUP (CHILD, ADULT AND PUBLIC PROTECTION) NATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN SCOTLAND

21 JUNE 2011

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise the Chief Officers Group of the proposed implementation arrangements for the new national guidance on child protection in East Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Scottish office guidance, 'Protecting Children – A Shared Responsibility', was published in 1998. The document provided guidance for all professionals working together to protect children.
- 2.2 Since this time the child protection landscape in Scotland has developed considerably. New legislation, improved standards of practice and enhanced partnership approaches have shaped activity both nationally and locally.
- 2.3 In December 2010, the Scottish Government issued new national guidance on child protection in recognition of the changes in child protection practice (National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland: 2010). The guidance has been developed by practitioners for practitioners and is aimed at setting a common standard of service for children across Scotland.

3. PURPOSE OF GUIDANCE

- 3.1 The guidance provides a national framework within which agencies and practitioners at local level, individually and jointly, can agree processes for working together to safeguard children. Improving outcomes for children and young people is a fundamental objective for all services and organisations.

4. THE NATIONAL GUIDANCE – KEY ELEMENTS- LOCAL CONTEXT

- 4.1 The changes set out in the guidance presents challenges and opportunities to all stakeholders involved in the protection of children and young people in East Ayrshire. This matter was discussed by EACPC on 03 June 2011 where they agreed the following approach to the key changes in East Ayrshire as follows:-

GREATER PROTECTION FOR UNBORN BABIES

- 4.2 In East Ayrshire, it is recognised that multi-agency assessment and support planning with pregnant women maximises the potential for a healthy pregnancy / child (Vulnerable Pregnancy Protocol).
- 4.3 In some circumstances, the risks to the unborn child will be significant and this will trigger the need for a pre birth case conference. It is therefore proposed that the pre-birth child protection case conference should take at the earliest appropriate date. The conference should take place no later than at 28 weeks of pregnancy, or in the case of late notification of pregnancy, as soon as possible from the concern being raised (and no later than 21 days of the concern being raised).
- 4.4 Within East Ayrshire, it was agreed that if the unborn child's name is placed on the child protection register, a core group be formed to implement the plan. The core group will meet within 15 days of the pre-birth conference.
- 4.5 Following the birth of the baby, a review case conference will be held when it is ready to be discharged from hospital to ensure that the plan for the baby remains appropriate and to review any key decisions if required. The conference will also review the need for registration.

CATEGORIES OF REGISTRATION

- 4.6 The existing categories of registration will be removed. The guidance proposes that a wider list of risk factors specific to the child are identified. One or more factors can be used.
- 4.7 East Ayrshire will adopt the proposed list of risks which include domestic abuse; parental alcohol misuse; parental drug misuse; non-engaging family; child affected by parental mental health; child placing themselves at risk; sexual abuse; child exploitation; physical abuse; emotional abuse; physical neglect; other concerns.

CHAIRING ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.8 The new National Guidance recommends that child protection conferences should be chaired by senior members of staff who are experienced in child protection and competent, confident and able to carry out the roles and responsibilities for the post. The guidance highlights the need for the chair to have a level of seniority within the authority and retain a level of independence to allow for the ability to challenge their own and other agencies lack of progress in implementing plans for children.

4.9 EACPC agreed that this recommendation would be taken forward by bestowing the responsibility for all pre-birth and initial conferences to the Social Work Service Managers (localities) who would consider the need for child protection registration and develop a child protection plan. Thereafter, all review conferences would be chaired by the independent reviewing officer. The independent reviewing officer does not have operational responsibility for staff and would be well placed to ensure that plans are being implemented. To allow for scrutiny and challenge, the post holder is now managed directly by a Social Work Senior Manager.

5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

5.1 A plan was agreed by EACPC for implementation of the national guidance on a single and multi-agency basis. The key aspects of this plan will be implemented in August 2011 in East Ayrshire.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Chief Officers Group is asked to
- i) Note the contents of this report.

Susan Taylor
Chair of East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee
15 June 2011

Reported compiled by Dianne Burns, Child Protection Co-ordinator