

2 How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

Key Area 2: Impact on children and families in need of protection

Quality Indicator
2.1 Children and young people are listened to, understood and respected

Themes

- Communication
- Trust

Overall Evaluation The Child Protection Committee has **very good** arrangements in place to ensure the views of children and young people involved in child protection processes are actively sought. Multi-agency staff continue to foster excellent relationships and have sound communication processes in place to ensure that children and families understand when decisions are being made about them. They also work extremely hard to build relationships with children and families so that they feel respected, understood and able to trust multi-agency staff who are there to support and assist them.

Evaluation of current service and practice How good are we now?

Communication

- **Assessment and Decision Making Processes-** measures are in place, which informs progress in this area. Including:
 - The timely distribution of decisions and minutes is a key priority to ensure that improved communication between all agencies and ensuring that all professionals working with children and young people have up to date information on multi-agency discussions and decisions.
 - Social Work staff are actively encouraged to share reports with children and families before meetings and this forms an important part of the preparatory work that staff undertake with families and children to ensure their voice is held when they attend meetings.
 - Families know who their Health Visitor is and how to contact them, also written details in child red book of same.
 - A pilot project is taking place in relation to gathering the views of children/young people and families following initial child protection case conferences. This pilot will take place October 2009 to December 2009 in the Cumnock Area. The CPC recognises that it is essential that we continue to improve our practice in child protection and how we seek children and families views about their needs and effectiveness of services. At the end of each initial Child Protection Case Conference it will be agreed which worker will be best placed to meet with the family following the case conference to discuss the child protection process and complete the form. The information from these forms will be used to evaluate and improve child protection services. The forms are not seeking case specific information but focus on the child and families experience of the child protection process
 - Each school has a named school nurse and where the child has additional support needs their school nurse will be known to them.
 - Early Years staff work hard to foster positive relationships with parents, carers and children. There are regular opportunities for parents and carers to communicate with early years staff both on an informal and formal basis. This can take place at the start or end of the nursery session on a daily basis or through a planned appointment. Children have a named key worker in the nursery who knows each child in their group well. The key worker can identify changes in a child's behaviour or presentation through their regular contact and observations of a child or in their conversations with children.
 - A robust staff recruitment campaign has taken place to ensure that the social work teams are fully staff and that there is consistency in case management and that children and families get the opportunity to build relationships with their allocated workers
 - **Children and Families with a Disability** the children and adult support team and the learning disabilities team work alongside children and families social workers when there is a child or an adult with disability, if there is a child or adult protection concern.
 - **Children or family members, whose first language is not English or who have communication difficulties**, receive support to understand what is happening and to take part in meetings or interviews. Social workers access the National Interpreting Service which has been set up to ensure that communication issues do not act as a barrier to our services for our ethnic population. Officers conducting more in depth interviews arrange for a personal interpreter to be

present at interview. Individual departments make their own arrangements for personal interpretation services.

- **Vulnerable Witnesses.** The special measures provided for children within the VW(S) Act 2004 were fully implemented within Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) by April 2007. Cases are appropriately identified and special measures sought to support children appearing in Court as witnesses. When considering cases, where a child is cited to give evidence, Victim Information Advice (VIA), routinely write to the child and parent/guardian requesting information to inform our vulnerable witness application. The views of the child, where provided, are always considered fully in relation to the circumstances of the offence. Regular letters are sent updating the families and child (ren) with regard to the application and the particular measures granted by the Court. Strong multi-agency liaison relationships exist between the Police, Social Work, SCRA when considering the views of the child where a child is a witness or accused. Any decision regarding prosecution is dealt with by a fully trained legal member of staff working within the guidance issued by Crown Office, Edinburgh. Each Depute undergoes continuing training, an in particular vulnerable witness training, which considers the appropriate use of children as witnesses and how they can best be supported to give their evidence.
- Children and families are prepared by staff before hearings encourage full participation in this process. SCRA ensures that written communication is translated. If a meeting is required, or a person is required to give evidence as a witness, interpreting services are always made available by SCRA. SCRA also ensures that the appropriate facilities are available for vulnerable witnesses and this is informed by the liaison between SCRA, other agencies and the vulnerable witness and his/her family.
- **Return Missing Person/ Abscondee** child interviews: In accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for children reported missing, all children will be the subject of a 'return' interview when traced. A report will then be submitted to the Area Reporter outlining the circumstances.
- **Restorative Justice Warnings** - In accordance with Force Policy to provide an effective method of diverting young people away from offending, by encouraging them to take responsibility for their behaviour and to understand the consequences of their actions.

Trust

- **Assessment and Decision Making Processes** - when children not wishing to attend the meetings about them, or where it is not appropriate that they do so, they are supported to have their views represented in other ways. Including:
 - "Who Cares (Scotland)" regularly attend LAAC reviews and children are actively encouraged to use this advocacy service by staff in the Children's Houses. All children are encouraged to spend individual time with the independent Chair for Child Protection and LAAC prior to the meeting so the process can be explained to them.
 - Children are always provided with "Having your Say" forms when attending Looked After and Accommodated Children's reviews and Child Protection Case Conferences. When attending meetings about them, children are given the opportunity to speak, expressing their views and commenting on the views of other people. Additionally, the independent reviewing officers for Looked after and Child Protection will where the child wishes to spend time with the child or young person to ensure their views are heard, even if they do not wish to attend formal meetings. Children and young peoples views are recorded and clearly reflected in minutes.
 - All women who are pregnant have a named midwife responsible for their care. It is routine for mums to be, parents and young people to contact their named nurse/midwife when they need support and advice. Contact is made by telephone, text, email and in person.
 - Parents and carers whose children attend early years establishments seek advice and support from either the child's key worker, a senior member of staff or manager or a family care worker. Early Years services are particularly relevant because of the potential impact they can have on parents, children and local communities at a time when parents are very receptive to ideas and support. These services also provide excellent examples of collaboration across agencies which can be built upon as children move into other service provision i.e schools.
- **Children's Hearing** Heads of educational establishments talk through issues of what a Children's Hearing is about, who will be there, layout of room and what to expect. Information provided is age appropriate and children are supported through advocacy services, pastoral support in schools and pupil Guidance structures in secondary schools.
- **Relationship Building** children have been able to build up relationships with consistent adults and that they trust us enough to talk to us when they need help:-

- Youth work provides focus for developing relationships outwith the formal school setting. An open door policy helps children, young people and their parents/carers approach staff they can trust knowing that they will be listened to and their views taken into account.
 - Breakfast Clubs are one of the ways of providing a relaxed, informal atmosphere that allows for early identification of risk and disclosure of concerns to a trusted adult. Pupils in a number of secondary schools have been trained by Child-line in mentoring and buddying to support younger pupils. All staff in all sectors from pre-school and day carers to youth work and trained in these procedures.
 - Pupil support/guidance systems in school ensure sharing of Care and Welfare information.
 - Children’s and young people’s views are sought using the “My meeting, my views” support.
 - School nurses hold drop in clinics to enable school aged children to contact them for help and advice.
- **Title** - East Ayrshire is dealt with by the Kilmarnock Procurator fiscal office. Any decision regarding prosecution is dealt with by a fully trained legal member of staff working within guidance issued by Crown Office, Edinburgh. Each depute undergoes continuing training, and in particular, vulnerable witness training, which considers the appropriate use of children as witnesses and how they can be best supported to give their evidence in court.

How do we know? What key outcomes have we achieved? Impact and benefits

There is an inclusive approach across multi-agency sectors to empower and engage children and families in child protection process and challenge the decisions being made about them. This includes:

- Children have a designated member of staff responsible for their care plan.
- Families know who their Health Visitor is and how to contact them
- Specialist training and support is in place to enable children/ young people to feel confident in disclosing information in a safe environment.
- Additional support is available to children through specialist resources to communicate children and families where English is not their first language.
- The children disability disabilities team (CAST) provide support to child care social workers where there are child protection issues.
- The assessment and decision making processes takes account of the views of children and young people (appropriate to their age and stage of development) and their families.

Evidence - Please include evidence of policies, procedures, protocols, minutes of meetings, publicity material, reports, etc.

- Case Conferences Minutes.
- CP and LAC review and children’s hearing
- Reporter interviews of children and families.
- Reporter contact with children pre-children’s hearing and pre-court hearing.
- Reporter assessment of child’s views from reports submitted.
- Case Progression meetings.
- Problem solving group meetings.
- Regular cycle of meetings between Authority Reporter and Procurator Fiscal to discuss children who are jointly reported.
- Case file audit
- Named Nurse guideline
- Having your say booklets
- Staged intervention, as set out in Standard Circular 76, is the standard operating procedure for supporting vulnerable children and young people.
- Standard Circular 56 Child Protection is the key protocol for addressing protection and safeguarding issues. Care/Welfare policies – guidelines for staff
- Education and Social Work Service Quick Reference Guide – National Interpreting Service and Language Card
- Multi-agency Training records

Examples of Good Practice

Social Work provide further details

A social worker assisted a young person to attend a conference by role playing a “mock” case conference with them, the young person managed to attend and actively contribute to the conference.

- Family workers the “Huge bag of Worries” model to help children to express their anxieties and concerns??
- Advocacy Service – Who Cares Scotland???
- **Domestic Abuse** - *A temporary banning order with power of arrest was granted recently in relation to a high risk domestic abuse case involving two young people. The adult at risk was defined as the girl’s mother. The Local Authority’s legal services department will give increasing consideration to the use of this process to protect victims in domestic abuse cases as it does not require an ‘appropriate person’ as with exclusion orders which places the mother(usually, who is often the victim) in the position of responsibility for the child’s safety. The use of banning order removes the focus from the mother’s “failure to protect” and blaming the victim, and shifts the focus on to the actions of the perpetrator.*

How Good Can We Be? Areas for Improvement

Action points identified following self-evaluation:

- Consider more innovative use of council accommodation when children are having contact with their parents/significant adults in terms of providing a normalising environment.
- Strive to provide consistency in staffing of supervised contact so that children, young people and their families have the opportunity to build relationships with those workers who have a good understanding and knowledge of the issues within the family, and to minimise the child’s exposure to people that they don’t know.
- Continue to find other methods to ensure that all children are given the opportunity to attend meetings about them, where it is appropriate, and that they are prepared and confident to contribute to those meetings effectively
- Use a range of mediums for young people and children to contribute to meetings when they don’t attend should be revisited, and consideration given to the use of glossy, child friendly pamphlets and the use of technology such as texts and the internet.