



HMIe - How Well are Children Protected and their Needs Met?

HOW GOOD CAN WE BE?

What is our capacity for improvement?

Healthy: having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare, and support in learning to make healthy and safe choices.

Achieving: being supported and guided in their learning and in the development of their skills, confidence and self-esteem at home, at school, and in the community.

Nurtured: having a nurturing place to live, in a family setting with additional help if needed or, where this is not possible, in a suitable care setting.

Active: having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport which contribute to healthy growth and development, both at home and in the community.

Respected*: having the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions which affect them.

Responsible*: having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles in their schools and communities and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision.

Included: having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn.

Key Area 3: Initial Response Team

What triggered this development/initiative? How was the need for improvement identified and initiated?

In January 2008, HMle, published their report into the Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children and Young People in East Ayrshire. The report was positive with many examples of good practice across all agencies, key strengths identified included: the quality of relationships between staff and children; public awareness of child protection, and children being actively involved in the development and design of services. The inspectors found weaknesses in the recognition and assessment of need. Immediate action was taken to address this area this included, a review of frontline duty processes, including consideration of the appropriateness of referrals to social work. It became apparent that in order to retain social work as a targeted service that clear criteria for accessing the service would need to be considered, Eligibility Criteria was devised and agreed by social work committee in October 2008 (Appx1).

Following on from the Review of Duty, Workforce Development Days were held with all Children and Families fieldwork Staff. These days were used to consult with staff on the findings from the HMle report and to consider how the service was structured to meet the increasing demands for initial assessments. The development days focussed on the shape of the service, which generated a great deal of innovative ideas and proposals from frontline staff on how to strengthen the recognition and assessment of vulnerable children, young people and families requiring a social work service. Follow up meetings (6 x 3hour sessions) took place with the Service Manager and Team Managers to consider the feedback from the consultation with staff. The outcome of the development days (Appx2) and the sessions with managers has informed the planned redesign of service and the initiation of the Initial Response Team. The initial response team was built around the core components of the Scottish Governments, **Getting it right for every child** approach

Getting it right for every child is founded on 10 core components which can be applied in any setting and in any circumstance. They are at the heart of the Getting it right for every child approach in practice and provide a benchmark from which practitioners may apply the approach to their areas of work.

- A focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and their families based on a shared understanding of well-being
- A common approach to gaining consent and to sharing information where appropriate
- An integral role for children, young people and families in assessment, planning and intervention
- A co-ordinated and unified approach to identifying concerns, assessing needs, agreeing actions and outcomes, based on the Well-being Indicators
- Streamlined planning, assessment and decision-making processes that lead to the right help at the right time
- Consistent high standards of co-operation, joint working and communication where more

than one agency needs to be involved, locally and across Scotland

- A Lead Professional to co-ordinate and monitor multi-agency activity where necessary
- Maximising the skilled workforce within universal services to address needs and risks at the earliest possible time
- A confident and competent workforce across all services for children, young people and their families
- The capacity to share demographic, assessment, and planning information electronically within and across agency boundaries through the national eCare programme where appropriate

All staff were consulted and given a choice as to their preference to be part of the Initial Response Team, or to retain a generic approach to children and families casework. The team has a very balanced mix of knowledge, experience and skills. The support assistants have a key role in the functioning of the team and are all experienced and trained staff. The social workers have a mix of experience, post qualifying training and skills. The team is a very good learning experience for newly qualified staff given the diverse nature of the tasks they perform on a daily basis, there is also potential for social work students to be part of the team. The team has a strong identity and the ethos, the redesign of office accommodation to allow the team to be located together and has ensured good communication.

Team working has been achieved by the drive of the team manager, appointed specifically to take on this role. An integral part of the formation of the team was to ensure that electronic systems were in place to record, assess, prioritise and allocate, referrals, a great deal of time, effort and innovative practice from the *social work information system* support staff has enabled each team member to be fully aware and operate a complex social work information system both efficiently and effectively. A Process Map has been devised to ensure new staff to the team are conversant with the key processes. (Appx3)

How good are we now? Overall Evaluation (Brief Summary) of development/practice imitative.

The team came into effect in January 2009, a mid-point evaluation meeting was held in March and a Self-evaluation with the team, and separately with partner agencies was carried out in July 2009 (Appx4) The team pride themselves on their flexibility and ability to carry out an "Immediate response" to need, to illustrate: every referral is prioritised and assessed on the day it is received, this is achieved by two workers within the team assuming this responsibility on a weekly basis, should an immediate visit be required this is carried out on the day. The eligibility criteria has assisted the team to signpost service users and other agencies to the most appropriate service to meet the required need, allowing the team to target their services towards the most vulnerable and to ensure that they get the help they need, when they need it. Partner agencies have commented on the improvement in service, highlighting that the efficient response they now receive inspires confidence. When service users are referred to the team they are always contacted and given information about how social work will proceed, the team use a written response letter to members of the public who report child protection concerns, and a similar letter is used for agencies reporting concerns. (Appx 5)

The team are involved in all initial child protection enquiries, the independent child protection chair has commented that this has enabled an excellent record of parental involvement in

conferences and core groups, and the sharing of reports with children and young people and importantly the encouragement of young people to attend conferences, one of the team members proudly spoke of individual work with a young person to enable them to attend the conference and express their views, she empowered the young person to do this through carrying out a “*mock*” conference with the young person.

The team also contribute to the wider Public Protection agenda; the manager’s responsibilities include the preparation and presentation of cases at the multi-agency pre-referral *Girfec* group on a weekly basis and the dissemination of information to social work staff thereafter if they are identified as the lead agency. This assures a consistent, timely multi-agency response to all domestic abuse referrals involving children in East Ayrshire. The team manager contributes to the process of level one *Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements*.

The team are currently actively involved in a process of job shadowing and information/system sharing to assist the formation of the initial response team in the south of the authority. This will ensure that service users across the authority receive the same level of service regardless of location, good practice examples are being shared and continuous professional development, team work and self-evaluation are fundamental to the process of replicating the good work and better outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and their families who require the services of social work in East Ayrshire.

How do we know? What key outcomes have we achieved? How has it improved outcomes (reference to front sheet) Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected and Responsible, Included

Safe: Children and young people get the help they need when they need by receiving an immediate response when they are at risk the team ensure consistency of approach and relationship building with young people to improve outcomes for them

Healthy: The team have built on and strengthened relationships with professionals, this has been evidenced by assisting universal service providers e.g., early years and health taking on the role of Lead Professional the team have contributed to multi-agency meetings held and chaired by health and early years professionals, this has ensured an approach that is compliant with the *Girfec* principles of tiered intervention and allowed for social work services being targeted at the most vulnerable.

Achieving; the team link closely with their colleagues in education and alternative education provision to ensure young people achieve their potential both academically, socially and emotionally. The team manager has line management of the support assistants from the learning communities to ensure consistency and seamless access to services within educational establishments when required.

Nurtured: The close links established with health and early year’s staff ensures that children who require a safe secure and nurturing environment get access to it either via health or early years interventions.

Active: The team manager also has line management responsibility for the support assistants from the learning communities, this ensures that young people who may be socially isolated are encouraged and at times accompanied to take part in extra-curricular activities

Respected the team manager places a high emphasis on respect, equality and diversity, she has close supervision with her team both formally and informally and high standards of practice are an evident contribution of her management and leadership.

Responsible children and young people are actively supported by the team and the support assistants from the learning communities to actively participate in decisions affecting them. They are made aware of their rights and their voices are heard, they are reminded of their responsibilities, and encouraged to be active contributors in all areas of their life

Included where possible and safe to do so children and young people are actively supported by the team to be included in all key processes affecting them. This is done in a myriad of ways, either via enabling young people to participate, use of having your say forms, and encouraging the use of independent advocacy services.

Supporting Evidence: Please ensure that your written submission is supported by sound evidence and is readily available for inspectors if required. Examples included policies, procedures, protocols, minutes of meetings, publicity material, reports, management / performance information etc.

- Swift Process Mapping
- Staff development days
- Self-evaluation IRT Team
- Self-Evaluation Partners
- Eligibility Criteria
- Standard Letters to members of the public
- Information leaflets for children and their parents involved in Child Protection processes

Example(s) of Good Practice Illustrates children's experiences for example results have improved outcomes including: Partnership working, Evaluation Report findings, How has it made an impact - more efficient practice, What difference has it made? Tackle inequality? If adopted more widely would it increase life chances of children's experience?

- Example of social workers preparing child for conference
- Self-evaluation of the team

- **How Good Can We Be? Areas for Improvement** Following self-evaluation the areas identified include the following action points:
 - We need to develop a wider family support strategy across authority which meets the needs of children from birth to young adults
 - We need to further develop and build on the good work delivered from Intensive support services, community youth support
 - We need to have a more robust service for our young people who move on from our children's houses and foster care
 - We need a targeted service for adults with addiction issues, that resources social workers by contributing to care plans for vulnerable children
- We need to further promote the use of Advocacy for younger children
- We want to develop child friendly complaints leaflets and supporting material
- We want to get feedback from the users of our service and would like to design questionnaires
- We want to actively promote the Social Work identity, across the authority and with partners. We want to *Showcase* the good practice that takes place in our team and in the other children and families teams
- We want to continually evaluate our service and where required change to meet need
- We need to further promote the work of the Initial Response Teams– across the wider Educational and Social Services, other departments and partner agencies

