



EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE: 06 SEPTEMBER 2011

**REVIEWING PROCEDURES AND PRACTICE ACTIVITY
THE LEGAL SOLUTIONS FORM EVALUATIONS**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (EACPC) of the outcome of an evaluation of the East Ayrshire Legal Solutions Forum (LSF).
- 1.2 To seek the consideration and endorsement of the EACPC to the findings and recommendations of the evaluation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The LSF is a group of Social Work Managers, Council Solicitor and Mental Health Officers who provide proactive advice, guidance and assistance to practitioners who were becoming increasingly challenged by the developing laws in relation to the safeguarding of adults.
- 2.2 The LSF model featured in the East Ayrshire Adult Protection Committee Chairs Biennial report 2008-2010 to Scottish Ministers and received positive comments as an innovative and proactive approach to harm prevention.
- 2.3 The Adult Protection Co-ordinator for East Ayrshire Adult Protection Committee (APC) has been a key member of the LSF and undertook a review of the LSF as part of their post graduate studies in Adult care and protection at Dundee University.
- 2.4 The research methodology adopted a two phase design model approach to evaluation incorporating a quantitative survey and a follow up qualitative inquiry through practitioner focus groups.

3. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

- 3.1 The study (Appendix 1) focussed on identifying whether there is evidence that;
 - The LSF was effective in contributing to safeguarding adults and why.
 - The LSF had positively contributed to and supported improved practice
 - Any improvement in practice made a positive difference in providing adequate support and protection for adults when they need it.
 - Practitioners could identify factors that contributed to improved safeguarding therefore could be incorporated into local practice.

4. KEY FINDINGS

4.1 The legal framework

- Practitioners in the main were positive about having the Adult Support and Protection Act as a framework. However, the wider legal context of safeguarding adults made it difficult to navigate when considering the appropriate laws to use across client groups.
- Sharing good practice examples; real stories were crucial to the promotion of learning for practitioners.
- Challenges around how different agencies perceived the Act. However, joint procedures and protocols promoted an effective joint working culture.
- A single point of contact in each agency would promote consistency in identifying adults at risk and applying the law.

4.2 Workforce Implications

- The LSF provided practice consistencies in terms of advice at times of transition and change and was highly valued.
- Promoted a culture of challenge and debate and promoted effective practice while focused on the legal principles and protecting human rights of adults.
- Knowledge of the law in terms of the three main legislative acts were perceived as crucial in terms of identifying adults at risk and the prevention and or reduction of harm
- Multi agency attendance at training was a key element in bridging the gap between learning and practice and wider representation by agencies and departments would improve this resource.
- The LSF would benefit from considering how the pyramid model of intervention may assist practitioners to frame their intervention in tandem with the older acts while they develop expertise.

4.3 Strategic Vision

- A framework for a strategy should move from protection to safeguarding of adults and to be emphasised and respected as partners which is a gap identified in the East Ayrshire APC.
- The LSF has the potential to provide information on outcomes for individuals to contribute to policy, practice and legal reform.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The key points from the study identified that;

- Practitioners have attended training on various legislation, however still identify the LSF as a supportive learning tool that compliment formal training. It is recommended that the LSF model continue to be resourced by the APC in terms of the attendance of the Adult Protection Coordinator.

- The law does not always offer a straightforward answer to complex situations and respecting the underlying principles will restore the balance between care; control and authority for adults. It is therefore recommended that the Adult Protection Committee training strategy continues to develop multi agency training that enhances the skills and knowledge of practitioners of the wider legislative framework in regard to statutory interventions.
- The LSF promotes reflective practice particularly in relation to the legal principles and has a key role in reducing the likelihood of harm. It is recommended that the LSF Forum considers ways to promote the resource across the Council in particular Children and Families Services, Criminal Justice Services, Community Safety Partnership, NHS and Independent Providers.
- The LSF model would benefit from strengthening multi agency attendance and participation of the multi agency workforce. It is recommended that the Adult Protection Committee partners consider ways to secure membership from key partners identified in the previous paragraph of this report.
- Further consideration to routine monitoring of outcomes of the forum for practitioners and adults they are supporting would provide evidence based practice. The Forum should consider ways this can be integral to the forum process.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee;

- (i) recognise the significant role the LSF has in supporting practitioners in improving skills and knowledge of applying the wider legal framework and the benefits of this for the support and protection of adults at risk of harm.
- (ii) recognise the important role that children and family services can play in the LSF.
- (iii) agree that a multi-agency meeting be held to discuss the role of children and families services in the LSF.
- (iv) otherwise note the content of the report.

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