

## **EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION CHIEF OFFICERS' GROUP**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2008 AT 1400 HOURS IN THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S CONFERENCE ROOM, EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, LONDON ROAD, KILMARNOCK**

**PRESENT:** Fiona Lees, Chief Executive; Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services and Kay Gilmour, Acting Executive Head of Social Work, all East Ayrshire Council; Fiona McQueen, Lead Director (Child Protection), NHS Ayrshire and Arran and Superintendent Dougie Robertson, Strathclyde Police.

**ATTENDING:** Gillian Hamilton, Administrative Officer, East Ayrshire Council.

**ALSO ATTENDING:** May Dunsmuir, Authority Reporter.

**APOLOGY;** Wai Yin Hatton, Chief Executive, NHS Ayrshire and Arran; Chief Superintendent William Fitzpatrick, Strathclyde Police and Elizabeth Morton, Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support, East Ayrshire Council.

**CHAIR:** Fiona Lees, Chief Executive, East Ayrshire Council, Chair.

#### **GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD – REFERRAL GROUP**

1. There was submitted correspondence dated 30 May 2008 by the Chief Executive, East Ayrshire Council and response dated 4 June 2008 from the Authority Reporter (both circulated) on SCRA's (Scottish Children's Reporter Administration) position in respect of the Getting it Right for Every Child Referral Group.

Superintendent Dougie Robertson reported on the Referral Group Pilot which had been established by the Chief Officers' Group following their meeting on 27 May 2008 as a result of discussion on an ongoing Significant Incident Review which had highlighted the need to introduce new arrangements for early multi agency assessment of child referrals to reduce the risk of the circumstances noted in the Significant Incident Review recurring.

It was noted that:-

- (i) the Referral Group met weekly to discuss referrals received by all partners during the course of the previous week, where concerns had been raised about children;
- (ii) there were challenges for those involved in the Referral Group in terms of the volume of referrals received and the tight timescales for researching background information for presentation to the weekly meeting, duration of meetings and consequential cost implications for agencies however, this was weighed against the benefit of advanced and open sharing of sensitive information across agencies involved in the protection of children and young people in East Ayrshire, which enabled identification of a lead agency and timeous and appropriate interventions, where necessary, for whole families;
- (iii) the existing management systems were running concurrently with the Pilot for the duration;
- (iv) the Group focused on identifying lead agencies to take cases forward, there being no provision for reporting back on actions. However, a

random sample of case outcomes had been submitted by agencies which was being analysed for evaluation purposes; and

- (v) currently the referrals and subsequent updates following the weekly meeting were stored on a shared drive which could be accessed direct by East Ayrshire Council agencies. Strathclyde Police and NHS Ayrshire and Arran did not have access to the shared drive and information was communicated by email. However, agencies were in the process of signing up to a new Gemini secure information sharing system which would strengthen current arrangements by enabling direct access for all involved.

The group then heard May Dunsmuir, Authority Reporter and it was noted that:-

- (i) in accordance with SCRA's national instruction, the Reporter was required to decline the invitation to be represented on the Referral Group on the basis that the Reporter may become the recipient of a referral being "screened" and accordingly should not be seen to influence the referral process;
- (ii) notwithstanding, the information produced by the Referral Group could be used as the Initial Assessment for cases subsequently referred to the Reporter;
- (iii) the Reporter was concerned about the sustainability of the Referral Group given that it was so resource intensive. In order to maximise benefit, it was hoped that the Pilot could become a platform for eventual case filtering/screening of referrals to the Reporter which in turn could reduce, where appropriate, the volume of investigations and consequential background reports; and
- (iv) the Reporter could assist with general criteria for case filtering and provide examples of appropriateness of non-referral.

It was then agreed:-

- (i) that given the benefits of the Referral Group Pilot, the Chief Officers' Group would not stand this down at the end of the pilot period;
- (ii) that the Referral Group was a good use of resources, not only enabling early interventions for children, but also providing information which could help develop services longer term;
- (iii) that the Pilot should continue for a further period of 3 to 6 months, leading to transition to screening and referring to the Reporter only those cases where compulsory measures were required;
- (iv) to note the Superintendent's concerns about potential consequences of subsequent incident when it had been decided not to make a referral to the Reporter. In this regard, the Reporter could assist in setting clear legal parameters for screening referrals, linked to compulsory measures;
- (v) to take up the Reporter's offer of assistance;
- (vi) that the Reporter and Superintendent would liaise regarding (iv) above in the first instance;

- (vii) to note that the Referral Group take account of pathfinder activity in other Local Authority areas and could also consider linking to MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) operating in North Ayrshire and involving a questionnaire and tariff which determined how to respond to domestic abuse incidents;
- (viii) that the Pilot evaluation include the following, viz:-
- resource requirements;
  - ADAT funding;
  - Time constraints;
  - Assessment of volume of work versus life changing decisions for young people;
  - HMIE quality indicator – are children getting help when they need it;
  - Case examples;
  - Statistical information on make up of cases e.g. age, residency, outcome;
  - Future operation i.e. pre-referral screening and what is required to go forward; and
  - Initial investment leading to fewer investigations and background reports.
- (ix) otherwise to note the correspondence.

### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

#### **2. EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION CHIEF OFFICERS' GROUP**

There were submitted and approved as a correct record Minutes of the previous meeting of the East Ayrshire Child Protection Chief Officers' Group held on 8 September 2008 (circulated).

#### **Matters Arising**

##### **2.1 SWIA (SOCIAL WORK INSPECTION AGENCY) INSPECTION**

It was noted that inspection of East Ayrshire Social Work Services was ongoing. The next onsite period was scheduled for the last two weeks in November 2008.

### **EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

3. There were submitted for information and noted Minutes of the previous meeting of the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee held on 3 June 2008 (circulated).

### **ADULT SUPPORT AND PROTECTION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2007**

4. There was submitted a report dated 29 October 2008 (circulated) by the Interim Child Protection Committee Chair which give an update on progress made towards the implementation of this legislation within East Ayrshire, and in particular the establishment of Adult Protection Committees.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the challenges associated with recruiting an independent Chair of the Adult Protection Committee and that this was not unique to East Ayrshire;
- (ii) that the Adult Protection Committee proceed with the Acting Executive Head of Social Work as Interim Chair;
- (iii) that the first meeting, which would concentrate on procedures, be convened prior to the Christmas break;
- (iv) to note that the Chief Officers' Group would oversee the work of the Adult Protection Committee, meeting to consider first child protection, then adult protection matters, albeit some would be common to both;
- (v) that the Acting Executive Head of Social Work report to a future Chief Officers' Group on issues linking child protection and adult protection;
- (vi) to note that Strathclyde Police had appointed an Adult Protection Referral Co-ordinator, Lesley Callaghan; and
- (vii) otherwise to note the report.

#### **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS**

5. It was noted that within the Council, Susan Taylor had been appointed as Head of Children and Families from January 2009, and Eddie Fraser had been appointed as Head of Community Care/Executive Head of Social Work Service from December 2008.

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

6. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Chief Officers' Group would be held week commencing 8 December 2008 (arrangements to be confirmed) for consideration of the evaluation report on the GIRFEC Referral Group Pilot.

The meeting terminated at 1521 hours.