

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CABINET: 16 SEPTEMBER 2009**

### **JOINT INSPECTION OF SERVICES TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EAST AYSHIRE COUNCIL AREA 2009**

#### **Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To advise of the HMle Joint inspection of services to protect children and young people in East Ayrshire Council Area which is scheduled to take place between Monday 26 October 2009 and 13 November 2009.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The HMle joint inspection of services to protect children and young people in East Ayrshire took place between June and September 2007, and the report of their findings was published in January 2008.
- 2.2 Within 2 years of the publication of the report, HMle stated that they would re-visit the local authority area to assess and report on progress made in meeting the recommendations. The follow up visit by the HMle will now take place in conjunction with the next planned inspection (as part of a new 3 year inspection cycle).
- 2.3 The HMle announced a 3 year cycle of joint inspections of services to protect children and young people and to support this new phase they have revised the quality indicators.

#### **3. STRENGTHS AND AREAS TO STRENGTHEN**

- 3.1 In January 2008, the key strengths were noted as:
- the quality of relationships between staff and children which helped children effectively communicate their needs and views.
  - the range of successful approaches used to raise public awareness of child protection.
  - children, especially vulnerable children and their families, were consistently involved in the development and design of services.
  - shared vision, values and aims which influenced the work of partnership services

- staff awareness and ownership of joint planning for improvement.
- planning and partnership working, at a strategic level, across all services.

3.2 The key areas which required to be strengthened were:-

- improve processes for identifying and assessing risks and needs of children where there are child protection concerns;
- more fully involve health in child protection processes and improve children's access to medical assessments and examinations;
- improve joint planning to meet children's needs; and
- ensure the work of social workers is monitored more consistently.

Following the inspection an action plan was drawn up by the Child Protection Committee (CPC) to address these points.

3.3 The inspectors will return to East Ayrshire on 26 October 2009 and the second week of the inspection will take place from 9 November 2009.

#### **4. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACIVITY**

4.1 The East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (EACPC) is in the process of finalising the annual report and business plan, which has included work to review progress. Achievements this year has included the:

- creation of the Initial Response Teams within Social Work
- development of the Early Information and Pre Referral (GIRFEC) Group
- hosting of the successful annual conference on "Protection": " Listening to Children's Voices and Corporate Parenting" (February 2009).
- success of the corporate parenting events, involving elected members, senior staff and community planning partners.
- opening of the new Sunnyside Children's Residential House in Auchinleck
- expansion of "Break the Silence" Project and the development of the In Care Survivors Service
- implementation of the Solihull approach to parenting in East Ayrshire
- active work of the practitioner's forum in ensuring that staff are involved in developing child protection practice across East Ayrshire

- completion of a youth on-line survey about their understanding of child protection
- hosting of a statistical seminar to assist to analyse data about child protection practice (January 2009)
- development of the “continuous opportunities for gathering and sharing (COGS)” system for gathering the views of the children and young people who are supported.

## **5. REVISED QUALITY INDICATORS**

5.1 The quality indicators have been revised to further enhance the level of self evaluation. The quality indicators focus on the key areas of: -

- Quality Indicator 1: Key performance outcomes
- Quality Indicator 2: Impact on children and families in need of protection
- Quality Indicator 3: Impact on staff
- Quality Indicator 4: Impact on the community
- Quality Indicator 5: Delivery of services to children and families in need of protection
- Quality Indicator 6: Policy development and planning
- Quality Indicator 7: Management and support to staff
- Quality Indicator 8: Partnership and resources
- Quality Indicator 9: Leadership and direction

5.2 The inspection report will focus on six quality indicators: -

1.1 Improvement in performance

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

2.2 Children and young people benefit from strategies to minimise harm

2.3 Children and young people are helped by the actions taken in immediate response to concerns

2.4 Children and young people's needs are met

## 5.5 Improvement through self-evaluation

### 6. THREE YEAR CYCLE OF INSPECTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

6.1 As inspection becomes increasingly proportionate, external evaluation will focus on fewer quality indicators and self-evaluation will help to determine the scope of each inspection. There will be a sharper focus on outcomes for vulnerable children.

6.2 The revised model will be in 3 phases over 2 weeks of fieldwork carried out by a Principle team of 4, which will consist of a lead inspector, deputy inspector and two other inspectors.

6.3 The methodology will include: -

#### **Week 1 - scoping phase (Monday 26 October 2009 and Tuesday 27 October 2009)**

(This phase will include a presentation by the Chief Officer Group, a review of documentation, including other inspection reports and self evaluation material)

#### **Week 1 – core phase (Wednesday 28 October 2009 to Friday 30 October 2009)**

(This phase will include file sampling)

#### **Week 2 – proportionate phase (Monday 9 November 2009)**

(This phase will include interviews with children, parents, staff and stakeholders)

6.4 The report compiled by the HMIE following the inspection will look at the key high level questions of: -

- How have the services improved?
- How well are the needs of the children and families met?
- How good is the delivery and management of services?
- How good is the leadership and direction?

6.5 Initial meetings with the Chief Inspector and Deputy inspector took place on Monday 1 September 2009. This included a meeting to plan the inspection with the Chief Officer Group with representation at a Chief Executive/Chief Officer level from East Ayrshire Council, NHS Ayrshire and Arran and Strathclyde police.

6.6 The East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee has been undertaking work to organise this inspection. A pre inspection return questionnaire was submitted

on 21 August 2009. This contained details of key personnel, organisational structures, significant case reviews and emergency legal measures taken.

6.7 In addition, staff briefings are planned in September and October 2009 to ensure that staff are aware of the focus of the inspection, and to brief them about the process involved.

6.8 As part of the information provided to HMle, work is taking place on summarising the self evaluation activity which has taken place on a single agency and multi agency basis since the last inspection. This will demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 It is recommended that Cabinet: -

- i) note that contents of this report;
- ii) notes the new HMle new 3 year inspection cycle for joint inspections to protect children and the revised quality indicators.

**Graham Short**  
**Executive Director**  
**Educational & Social Services**  
**3 September 2009**

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICE:**     **Susan Taylor, Head of Service: Children, Families and Criminal Justice**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**       **How Well Do We Protect Children and Meet Their Needs? (HMle, March 2009)**