

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET: 2 JUNE 2010

JOINT INSPECTION OF SERVICES TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL AREA

Report by Executive Director of Educational & Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet of the publication of the second HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) report on the Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children and Young People in the East Ayrshire Council Area, and to seek approval of the proposed arrangements for progressing an action plan with partner agencies.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In March 2004, Scottish Ministers announced there would be a new multi-agency children's services inspection team, led by HMIe, but comprising of the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA), the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (Care Commission), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and the NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (NHS QIS).
- 2.2 The first task for the new inspection team was to undertake inspections of child protection services on a partnership basis in all 32 local authority areas in Scotland. This took place between May 2006 and March 2009.
- 2.4 The first Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children in East Ayrshire took place between June and September 2007. The final report was published in January 2008 and highlighted both strengths and areas for service improvement.
- 2.5 The second inspection took place in October/November 2009 and the findings were published on 11 March 2010. These are outlined at section 3 in this report.
- 2.6 The findings of the inspection were circulated to elected members on 11 March 2010, following the publication of the report. A seminar is being planned for elected members on child protection as part of the Social Work PR Strategy and to build on the success of the corporate parenting seminars/events.
- 2.7 Services are inspected against a framework of quality indicators. The reference quality indicators, which focus on impact on children and their families, are: -
 - Children and young people are listened to, understood and respected;
 - Children and young people benefit from strategies to minimise harm;

- Children and young people are helped by the actions taken in immediate response to concerns; and
- Children's and young people's needs are met.

2.8 A positive inspection is defined as one where the evaluations of the four reference quality indicators are satisfactory or better. HMIE adopts a word scale to make clear the judgements which inspectors make as follows:

- Excellent – outstanding, sector leading
- Very Good – major strengths
- Good – important strengths with some areas for improvements
- Satisfactory – strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- Weak – important weaknesses
- Unsatisfactory – major weaknesses

2.9 The second round of inspections differ from the first round, as they are more focussed on the achievement of outcomes for children and young people. The inspection process and the final report are more targeted at considering the impact of the work of services. The final report is written to be accessible to the public, and is therefore different in style and content to the first report.

3. INSPECTION FINDINGS

3.1 Our key strengths are highlighted as: -

- Providing support early to prevent difficulties arising or increasing;
- Staff working well together to keep children safe;
- Trusting relationships with staff;
- Commitment by staff to reviewing their work to improve services;
- Strengthened leadership and management of children's social work services.

3.2 Specific examples of good practice are also highlighted as follows: -

- Staff effectively supporting parents to develop their confidence and skills in caring for pre-school aged children.
- Services and opportunities make a positive difference to the lives of young carers affected by parental substance misuse.
- Improved well-being of young people living in residential children's homes through taking part in leisure activities.

3.3 This inspection is positive, providing evaluations in the following areas: -

REFERENCE QUALITY INDICATOR	EVALUATION
Children are listened to and respected	Very Good
Children are helped to keep safe	Very Good
Response to immediate concerns	Good
Meeting needs and reducing long term harm	Satisfactory

3.4 This highlights that positive progress has been made in respect of one of the key quality indicators - response to immediate concerns.

EVALUATION AREA	REPORT 1 (2008)	REPORT 2 (2010)
Children are listened to and respected	Very Good	Very Good
Children are helped to keep safe	Very Good	Very Good
Response to immediate concerns	Adequate	Good
Meeting needs and reducing long term harm	Adequate	Satisfactory

(Note: the term “adequate” has been replaced with “satisfactory”)

3.5 The following areas were identified as requiring further development: -

- Consistently involve health staff in the early stages of planning the response to child protection concerns.
- Further strengthen child protection plans to identify and monitor improvement in children’s health and well-being.
- Continue to review work jointly, focusing more on improved outcomes for children.

3.6 The following evaluations were provided in respect of self evaluation and improvements.

Self Evaluation	Good
Improvements in Performance	Satisfactory

4. ACTION PLAN

4.1 The East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee Business Plan 2008 – 2011 is reviewed annually, and an annual action plan ensures that progress is made on a year to year basis.

4.2 A planning session is organised in the spring of each year, and recently took place on 20 May 2010 involving members of the Child Protection Committee. The purpose of this session is to reflect on progress and to identify key actions for the coming year. This activity is based on self evaluation work which occurs throughout the year to identify strengths and areas for development and improvement. A subsequent planning session with Chief

officers has been arranged for 13 July 2010, which will consider the annual report 2009/10 and business plan 2010/11.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this inspection report. The East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee has an identified budget for associated developments and core costs. A financial framework is developed each year to support the implementation of the annual action plan, within the overarching three year Business Plan.

6. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Joint Inspection of Children's Services and Inspection of Social Work Services (Scotland) Act 2006, together with the associated regulations and Code of Practice provides the legislative framework for the conduct of joint inspections of the provision of services to children.
- 6.2 There are no specific policy or legal implications arising from the report. The work undertaken by services in protecting children requires to comply with existing policy and legislation, and this inspection provides assurance about compliance with these frameworks.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This inspection was conducted on a multi-agency basis as it covered all services to protect children. For this reason, coupled with the importance of developing shared understanding of arrangements made to protect children and young people from harm, it is suggested that the findings of this inspection report are reported to the Community Planning Board.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 On a multi-agency basis, child protection practice has a strong focus on identifying and managing risk. This report highlights that the arrangements in place to manage child protection practice are improving, which provides assurance about risks being managed appropriately.
- 8.2 The nature of child protection practice means that there is no room for complacency and given that this continues to be a challenging area of work, a strong focus on service improvement will be maintained in ensuring that risks are being effectively managed.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) note the improvements made in arrangements to protect children in East Ayrshire as confirmed in the inspection report
- (ii) agree that the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee progress the improvement actions, as part of the overall business planning approach.
- (iii) note that the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee reports directly to the East Ayrshire Chief Officers Group, which will approve the final action plan and ensure implementation of the actions.
- (iv) note that the findings of the inspection will be reported Governance and Scrutiny Committee and the Community Planning Board; and otherwise
- (v) note the contents of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
27 May 2010

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children and Young People in East Ayrshire Council Area (11 March 2010)
2. How Well Do We Protect Children and Meet Their Needs? How Good Can We Be? (Quality Indicators)

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER:

Susan Taylor, Head of Service: Children, Families and Criminal Justice
Telephone 01563 576597