

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 27 AUGUST 2008

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD (GIRFEC) PRE-REFERRAL GROUP

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the recent establishment of a Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Pre-Referral Group.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At recent meetings of the Council's Child Protection Committee and the associated Child Protection Chief Officers' Group, it was agreed to establish a multi-agency pre-referral group as a mechanism for considering early information around individual cases of children potentially at risk. This approach has been adopted by a small number of other Local Authorities in Scotland and the remit and working arrangements are based on best practice identified from these other examples.
- 2.2 Both the Child Protection Committee and the Chief Officers' Group identified the potential merits of this approach following discussions around a current Significant Case Review. This highlighted the range of multi-agency involvement in individual cases and the extent to which early discussion across all agencies on cases of this nature could bring immediate benefits. The measure is also seen as potentially addressing some of the pressures in frontline services by more effective use of vetting and allocation of resources.
- 2.3 It is, indeed recognised that the resources available to social services are under increasing pressure. This standard approach linked to the application of the eligibility criteria which are the subject of a separate report will compliment the budget sustainability work already agreed by Cabinet.

3. GIRFEC CHILD PROTECTION PRE-REFERRAL GROUP

- 3.1 The Group has met on a number of occasions since its first meeting at the beginning of June 2008. Early feedback from those participating in the meetings has been very positive with all agencies commenting favourably on progress to date.
- 3.2 The establishment of the Group is initially for a six month pilot period during which time monitoring of its effectiveness will be undertaken with a final review taking place by the end of the year.
- 3.3 The membership of the Group, which meets on a weekly basis, includes representatives from the following organisations:-
- Strathclyde Police (Chair);
 - NHS Ayrshire and Arran;
 - East Ayrshire Council
 - Children and Families;
 - Educational Psychology;
 - Early Years;
 - Housing, and
 - Legal Services.
- 3.4 The remit of the group, which is being refined as the pilot progresses, is focused on quickly aligning and identifying support services needed to meet the individual needs of presenting caseloads. In addition, the group provides a systematic approach around meeting risk assessment for children at risk. It is also hoped it will minimise backlogs in dealing with caseloads by dealing with referrals on a weekly basis.
- 3.5 The group facilitates close collaboration across key partner agencies around the children and families agenda and improves arrangements for securing speedy and effective preventative inter-agency solutions to individual cases.

4. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The establishment of the group is in accordance with leading practice and there are no identified legal or policy implications for the Council.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nil.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The multi-agency, partnership approach complements the established principles of the Council's Community Planning Partnership and builds on existing strong working relationships with the other agencies.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes the establishment of the GIRFEC Pre-Referral Group and that a report will be prepared at the conclusion of the six month pilot period to assess its effectiveness.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

4 August 2008

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

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