

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 31 JANUARY 2006

SOCIAL WORK INSPECTION AGENCY REPORT: INSPECTION INTO THE CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN EILEAN SIAR

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Education Committee members with further information in relation to the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) report on the care and protection of children in Eilean Siar.
- 1.2 To detail the position in East Ayrshire in relation to the report recommendations.
- 1.3 To highlight the main areas of work that need to be completed in 2006 to satisfy all of the recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A preliminary report regarding the investigations of the Social Work Inspection Agency report on the care and protection of children in Eilean Siar was presented to both Social Work and Education Committees in November 2005.
- 2.2 This report indicated that a subsequent report would follow once a more detailed analysis had taken place.
- 2.3 The report highlighted 31 recommendations for action.

3. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS IN REPORT

- 3.1 Highlighted below are the key recommendations from the Inspection report followed by the position in East Ayrshire.
- 3.2 Seven recommendations were made to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CNES) and Western Isles Health Board. The implications arising from three of these recommendations impact upon all Local Authorities and Health Services across Scotland as follows:
 - 3.2.1 **Recommendation 4: CNES should make sure that reviews of looked after children are not chaired by the first line manager of the social worker responsible for the case. The chair should be a senior member of staff with sufficient authority to be able to challenge current care planning and professional practice (paragraph 277).**

Position in East Ayrshire: An Independent Looked After and Accommodated Children's Reviewing Officer chairs review meetings for Looked After and Accommodated children and challenges current care planning and professional practice where appropriate.

- 3.2.2 Recommendation 6 NHS Western Isles should urgently put in place arrangements to retain and effectively use health visitor records. They must be able to retrieve them if required. Where there are child protection concerns about a child, the health visitor should prepare a summary and pass this and the inter-agency action plan to the school nurse when the child starts school (paragraph 250).**

Position in East Ayrshire: Within NHS Ayrshire and Arran accessing Health Visitor records no longer in use can be a problem on some occasions depending on the length of time they have been archived. This will be referred to the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Child Protection Team for resolution. Health Visitor passes complete record to School Nurse – guideline in place. Discussion between Health Visitor and School Nurse takes place to agree who will be Named Nurse.

- 3.2.3 Recommendation 7 Western Isles NHS Board should review its arrangements for the strategic management of child protection cases. A lead medical and a lead nursing professional should be identified to oversee the health input to them all. The roles of lead professionals should be clear to all health staff and to staff in agencies involved in protecting children. All health staff should know where to obtain specialist advice on issues of child protection. Arrangements should be put in place to make sure that visiting health professionals are informed of any child protection concerns about their patients (paragraph 255).**

Position in East Ayrshire: Within NHS Ayrshire and Arran Lead Nurse for child protection and Lead Director (Child Protection) are in post. Child Protection Advisors are directly involved via the case conference in all Child Protection cases and monitor progress. Case supervision is to become mandatory. All staff have a copy of accountability framework and have access to manuals and are issued with cards advising on contact numbers for support and advice.

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- 3.3 Fourteen recommendations were made to all local authorities, health boards, agencies involved in protecting children, child protection committees and to the police.

- 3.3.1 Recommendation 8: All local authorities should make sure that when a child is known to them moves to a different authority with their family, all the files or copies of the files are transferred immediately. Staff in the receiving authority must be given time to read them fully and must appreciate the importance of doing so.**

Position in East Ayrshire: When a child moves to another area procedures are in place within Educational and Social Services to ensure that the full case file is quickly transferred to the receiving local authority. Head Teachers have received information on the Children Missing Education Project.

3.3.2 Recommendation 9: Local authorities should make sure that all foster carers have access to training appropriate to their caring role. The needs of foster carers' own children should be considered and if necessary additional help offered to them through group or individual work (paragraph 207).

Position in East Ayrshire: Foster carers currently receive comprehensive training appropriate to their caring role. Relevant training on child protection matters as it affects foster carers and day carers will be rolled out in 2006.

3.3.3 Recommendation 10: Local authorities should make sure that there is a senior member of staff in every school responsible for recording and passing on to social work or other agencies any information about a child or their family where there are concerns about child protection. If they record specific concerns in a child's file which are not passed on to the relevant agency, the reasons for this must be recorded in the child's file (paragraph 242).

Position in East Ayrshire: Procedures are in place within schools to ensure that concerns about a child are appropriately recorded and shared.

3.3.4 Recommendation 11 Local authorities should make sure that all pre-school, primary and secondary school staff regularly participate in child protection training appropriate to their particular roles (paragraph 245).

Position in East Ayrshire: Annual training takes place in all schools in relation to standard circular 57. The 'Safe and Well' guidelines have been issued by the Scottish Executive and the pocket guide will be distributed to all teaching staff in East Ayrshire. In addition the Executive Head of Social Work has presented protection briefings to all primary and secondary head teachers in East Ayrshire.

3.3.5 Recommendation 12: All local authorities should make sure that their policies and practice on supervising social work staff comply with the Scottish Social Services Council's codes of practice. Directors of Social Work and Chief Social Work Officers must make sure that staff who work directly with children are regularly supervised. The responsibility of the supervisor should include exploring any issues which may affect the social workers objectivity. The supervisor should be satisfied that the social worker's judgements are based on an analysis of the evidence. Current events should be examined in the light of previous patterns in the family history. Decisions made in supervision should be recorded in the case file and cross referenced to discussion noted in supervision records (para 262).

Position in East Ayrshire: Supervision policy is in place for Social Work staff in East Ayrshire which details minimum frequency of formal supervision and matters to be considered in supervision sessions. Processes are in place to monitor supervision records. All social workers in East Ayrshire are registered with Scottish Social Services Council are in the process of doing so.

3.3.6 Recommendation 13: Primary Care teams should agree when a family with child protection concerns registers with the practice how they will strategically manage the health care of the family and how they will communicate effectively about this on an intra-agency and inter-agency basis (paragraph 248).

Position in East Ayrshire: The Inter Agency Child Protection Procedures provide arrangements for effective inter agency working when a child has been the subject of a formal child protection referral. The NHS Ayrshire and Arran Child Protection Team have been requested to examine procedures and responses to children for whom there are potential child protection concerns but who have not been the subject of a formal child protection referral. Progress in this matter will be reported to the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee in due course.

3.3.7 Recommendation 14: NHS Regional Planning Groups should work together with National Services Division and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to develop managed clinical networks for child protection that ensure access to specialist advice in all NHS Boards with appropriate use of telemedicine. These managed clinical networks should be linked to the national resource for staff working with complex child protection issues outlined in recommendation 27 (paragraph 248).

Position in East Ayrshire: NHS Ayrshire and Arran are part of the West of Scotland Managed Clinical Network and have signed up to the standards.

3.3.8 Recommendation 15: Every NHS Board should make sure that all children with complex needs have a health professional who takes an overview and provides coordination of their needs (paragraph 249).

Position in East Ayrshire: NHS Ayrshire and Arran have Named Nurse guidelines in place.

3.3.9 Recommendation 16: Where agencies know that a convicted sex offender is acting as a parent, social work managers and frontline staff should be informed. They should make sure that risk assessments of the offender's behaviour form part of a comprehensive assessment of the care and protection needs of the children. Particular attention should be paid to the risks which the person presents in a family context and how this will be managed. The assessment should also address the ability of the other parent to protect the children if necessary (paragraph 116).

Position in East Ayrshire: Procedures for managing sex offenders in the community are in place to protect and minimise any potential risk posed to

children and vulnerable adults by sex offenders. Within these procedures arrangements are in place to ensure clear communication between the Police, Social Work and Housing staff in relation to sex offenders. Future developments in the management of sex offenders need to include Health as a partner agency. Relevant social work staff are jointly developing an assessment tool for use in cases where a sex offender is involved in parenting a child.

3.3.10 Recommendation 17: All of the agencies involved in protecting children must gather the information they have on individual children at risk into a chronology of key events and contacts, review it regularly and make sure that it is passed on to the professional with the lead role in protecting the child. The professional with the lead role must co-ordinate this into a multi agency chronology on a regular basis (paragraph 153).

Position in East Ayrshire: A procedure is in place ensuring that a chronological history is in all Social Work Child Protection casefiles. An agreement has been reached to introduce a multi agency chronology in all Children and Families casefiles. The draft chronology template from the Integrated Assessment Framework will be used for this.

3.3.11 Recommendation 18: All agencies should make sure that staff engaged in work protecting children have access to confidential counselling which is separate from their line management. Staff working in very distressing circumstances should be expected to have an initial meeting with an independent person outwith their organisation to discuss available options for support (paragraph 263).

Position in East Ayrshire: East Ayrshire Council has a confidential counselling service for all staff. Further consideration to be given by East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee to commissioning specialist counselling services for staff and carers involved in complex child protection cases where appropriate.

3.3.12 Recommendation 19: All child protection committees should develop guidance on how best to care for and protect children when their parents are arrested (paragraph 369).

Position in East Ayrshire: A guidance note will be developed by the Child Protection Committee stating how best to care for and protect children when their parents/carers have been arrested by the police. Consideration will also be given to a guidance note for when a child or young person is arrested.

3.3.13 Recommendation 20: In major crime or protracted investigations where a witness or potential suspect is a vulnerable adult, the police should commission a psychological assessment to advise on the person's capacity to give evidence and on the length and number of interviews which should be undertaken with them (paragraph 304).

Position in East Ayrshire: Strathclyde Police are currently considering this recommendation and collating a central response in relation to the

recommendation. The outcome of this will be reported to East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee in due course.

3.3.14 Recommendation 21: Managers in social work agencies and in police forces must make sure that they have staff who are appropriately trained in joint investigative interviewing or can arrange to recruit such staff temporarily either from another authority or elsewhere. All staff who take part in joint investigative interviews should have completed appropriate and up to date training in joint investigative interviewing (Paragraph 297).

Position in East Ayrshire: Experienced Children and Families Social workers are selected to be trained through the West of Scotland Joint Investigative Interviewing Training prior to being involved in joint child protection investigations with the police.

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3.4 Ten recommendations were made to the Scottish Executive and have already been reported to Social Work Committee. East Ayrshire Council have decided to progress 3 of the recommendations whilst awaiting implementation plans from the Scottish Executive.

3.4.1 Recommendation 22: The Scottish Executive should urgently develop guidance to help professional staff determine the most appropriate course of action where a child is found to be living in a household with a convicted sex offender (paragraph 116).

Position in East Ayrshire: A risk assessment tool is being jointly developed by relevant social work staff where a sex offender is involved in parenting a child.

3.4.2 Recommendation 26: The Scottish Executive should provide guidance for professionals on how to help children express their views. This should be developed in consultation with practitioners and must take account of the diverse communication needs of all children (paragraph 186).

Position in East Ayrshire: The Child Protection Committee Training Sub-Group will develop a module to increase skills in communicating with children in 2006.

3.4.3 Recommendation 28: The Scottish Executive should make sure that all chairs of child protection case conferences have access to a national training programme (paragraph 271).

Position in East Ayrshire: Training has been provided in East Ayrshire for all persons who may chair child protection case conferences and core groups. Social Work Services has commissioned an independent consultant to provide this training.

4. POLICY/LEGAL/PERSONNEL ISSUES

4.1 Nil

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Key Child Protection posts in East Ayrshire Council are funded from Changing Children's Service Fund allocation. The successful implementation of the recommendations of the Social Work Inspection Agency report on the care and protection of children in Eilean Siar relating to counselling services, training and the work of key Child Protection posts will need additional and sustainable financial solutions which are currently being developed.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are clear links between the recommendations from the Inspection Agency report and the developments in the Community Plan. In particular the development of a further risk assessment tool for sex offenders clearly supports the aims of Community Safety.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Members of Education Committee are requested to:

- (i) note and agree the response to the recommendations from the Eilean Siar report;
- (ii) note this report will also be considered by the Social Work Committee; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Executive Director of Educational & Social Services
10th January 2006

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Social Work Inspection Agency report "An inspection in to the care and protection of children in Eilean Siar" August 2005
- 2 Scottish Executive's Response to Child Protection Report in Eilean Siar

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