

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 20 MAY 2004

#### CHILD PROTECTION REFORM PROGRAMME – PROGRESS REPORT

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

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members of latest developments in the Scottish Executive's Child Protection Reform Programme.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report to Social Work Committee of 18 March 2004 – Development in Child Protection- Progress Report, noted the priority workload for the programme, the main elements being:

- Preparation of a Children's Charter
- Development of National Standards for Child Protection
- Issuing of revised guidance on the role, remit and structure of Child Protection Committees

- 2.2 Social Work Committee of 6 November 2003 had previously approved the Council's response to the consultation on these items.

- 2.3 On 11 November 2003, Ministers wrote to all Local Authorities in Scotland requiring the submission of a *Joint Statement of Assurance* about Child Protection arrangements in their area.

### 3. CHILDREN'S CHARTER

- 3.1 The charter was launched by the Scottish Executive on 22 March 2004 and represents a clear statement of what children and young people can expect when they are in need of protection. The Charter was developed by Save the Children and was prepared with the involvement of children and young people. The charter is described as:-

- The voice of children and young people;
- What they can expect to feel safe and supported;
- A reminder of the importance of relationships rather than process ; and
- A tool to reflect on what those who have a role in the protection of children actually do.

- 3.2 A copy of the Charter is available at the Members' Information Point.

#### **4. FRAMEWORK FOR STANDARDS**

**4.1** Following extensive and focused consultation, the Framework for Standards was also published on 22 March 2004 and launched at a Ministerial Child Protection Summit which was addressed by the First Minister.

**4.2** The Framework is designed as a means of translating the commitments made to children in the Charter into practice and sets out what each child can expect from professionals and agencies to ensure that they are adequately protected and their needs met. The 8 standards are:

1. Children get the help they need when they need it;
2. Professionals take timely and effective action to protect children;
3. Professionals ensure children are listened to and respected;
4. Agencies and professionals share information about children where this is necessary to protect them;
5. Agencies and professionals work together to assess needs and risks and develop effective plans;
6. Professionals are competent and confident;
7. Agencies work in partnership with members of the community to protect children;
8. Agencies, individually and collectively, demonstrate leadership and accountability for their work and its effectiveness.

**4.3** A copy of the Framework for Standards is available at the Members Information Point.

#### **5. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE**

**5.1** The Joint Statement of Assurance requires to be lodged with the Scottish Executive in May 2004.

**5.2** Partner agencies under the auspices of the Child Protection Committee are currently developing the East Ayrshire Joint Statement of Assurance. A draft statement is attached for information.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** Nil.

#### **7. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

**7.1** Nil.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 It is recommended that Social Work Committee:-

- (i) requests the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services produce further updates on the progress of the Child Protection Reform Programme;
- (ii) note that this report will also be considered at Education Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2004; and
- (iii) otherwise note the content of this report.

**John Mulgrew**  
**Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**  
**28 April 2004**

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 1. Children's Charter
- 2. Framework for Standards

For further information please contact:  
Andy Macdonald, Performance & Development Manager on 01563 576991

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: JACKIE DONNELLY**

## **DRAFT STATEMENT OF PROGRESS, CHILD PROTECTION**

The Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council convened a discussion early in 2004 with Senior Representatives from Community Planning Partners and Senior Elected Members to address the issues raised by the First Minister with respect to a joint statement of assurance in respect of services to protect children.

The membership of the Child Protection Committee was reviewed and its membership has been strengthened. It will be subject to further review once final guidance is issued by the Scottish Executive to ensure that it meets national requirements and expectations. The Child Protection Committee has focused its efforts on the issues in the report "It's Everyone's Job to Make sure I'm Alright" as well as reviewing and agreeing action points from reports on child deaths.

In addition, each of the partner agencies involved have reviewed their services in light of the comments within these reports and action plans have been produced which will address the issues raised. These reports have been discussed at a senior level on an inter-agency basis and have also been presented to the respective governing bodies of each of the agencies.

The Children's Change Fund has been a great support allowing a number of key posts to be created to ensure greater scrutiny of intervention in child protection cases, the coordination of the work of the Child Protection Committee and more effective joint working between health and social services.

There has been a particular emphasis on staff training, both at a specialist level, in terms of the Certificate in Child Protection for front line social workers, and in multi-agency training as well as basic awareness training for staff on a single agency basis. A good start has been made in delivering training but it is a significant task given the range and number of staff to be covered across all of the partners.

Each of the partners have reviewed their quality assurance mechanisms and have made revisions to the level of scrutiny which cases of concern receive.

A number of areas are currently subject to ongoing work.

The three Ayrshire Councils and Health have jointly commissioned this development of an Integrated Assessment Tool which is currently in its pilot phase but which is expected to be rolled out by the end of 2004. As part of the development a joint information sharing protocol will be produced and agreed by all of the partners but we are not yet at the stage of having agreed a multi agency information sharing protocol and it is the view of the partners that further guidance from the Scottish Executive is required given the varying interpretations of the Data Protection Act. We are of the view that the guidance issued thus far is

not sufficiently robust and still leaves room for individual interpretation and potentially placing children at continued risk. This is not a matter which will be resolved solely by the partners issuing an information sharing protocol.

In order to support the development of the Integrated Assessment Tool, the three Ayrshire Councils and Health have also submitted a joint bid to MGF3 for the development of electronic information sharing which would include; the integrated assessment tool, information on children who are either currently on the Council Child Protection Registers, have been on the registers or about whom enquiries have been made to the registers and adults on the existing unified addictions data base who may be a risk to children. It is the view of the partners that the emergence of electronic information systems will also support the development a common record of incidents of concern. Progress will not be made on these matters without financial support from the MGF3 fund.

We note that the Executive has a number of recommendations which it requires to implement and as the partners are advised of the outcomes appropriate action will be taken.

There are impediments to meeting all of the expectations of the Executive in the immediate term. These partly reflect around the availability of resources, the current shortage of appropriately qualified staff and the numbers of staff who will require training. Action has been taken however to begin tackling these issues as highlighted above and the partners are confident that services have already improved.

The Framework for Standards has only been recently announced and work will be required to ensure that the framework we currently have in place is sufficient to address its requirements. Remedial action will be taken where necessary.

As partners we note that the Executive set a timeframe for service improvement and we are working towards improvement within the required timescales.