

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE: 8 SEPTEMBER 2005

CHILD PROTECTION REFORM PROGRAMME UPDATE

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise committee of current developments in the Child Protection Reform Programme

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.2 The Scottish Executive committed to a three year reform programme for child protection services in 2002 as part of the response to the audit and review of child protection services in Scotland, "It's everyone's job to make sure I am alright".

The overall goal of the programme is to improve the protection of children at risk of neglect and abuse and reduce the numbers of children who need protection.

3. CHILD PROTECTION REFORM PROGRAMME UPDATE

3.1 Child Protection Committee

New guidance for Child Protection Committees was published in February 2005. Steps have been taken by East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee to ensure that it's membership and workings are in line with the new guidance. The Committee meets four times a year and is supported through the work of four sub groups in the areas of Performance and Audit, Training, Public Engagement and Information and a Practitioners sub group.

3.2 Multi- Agency Inspection

The Services for Children Unit within Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) have completed two pilot inspections on services for protecting children in East Dunbartonshire and Highland Council areas. The inspection team consisted of representatives from social work, the Care Commission, education, health and the police.

The range of activities undertaken by the team included:-

- reviewing practice through file reading;
- interviewing key staff;
- observation of child review meetings and Children's Hearings;
- obtaining the views of some children, young people, parents and carers;
- meeting a wide range of professionals from health, local authority services and police;

- meeting staff and visiting projects in a range of voluntary organisations involved in service provision for children.

A programme of seminars took place in June 2005 to discuss the inspections and a document on self evaluation using quality indicators was issued.

The Child Protection Committee Performance and Audit Sub Group has begun to look at how to carry out a self evaluation exercise in East Ayrshire and how to prepare for the inspection.

Local Authorities are currently awaiting an announcement of the inspection timetable from the Scottish Executive.

3.3 Hidden Harm

In October 2004 the Scottish Executive published a response to Hidden Harm, a report of the inquiry by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) on the needs of children of problem drug users.

Five regional consultation seminars were held earlier this year, with the main aim of informing the next stage of the implementation process. The information from this document will be disseminated to all staff through planned "Getting Our Priorities Right" briefings and training.

3.4 Training

A Child Protection Strategic Training Group has been established by the Scottish Executive. Its remit is to deliver a multi-disciplinary training framework and develop a national suite of training materials on child protection to underpin this. The group will agree the training levels or steps from awareness raising to specialist and managerial. It will also look at the associated learning outcomes required for each of the disciplines/agencies involved in child protection. This work is ongoing.

The Child Protection Committee Training Sub Group will continue to monitor the developments of this group and reflect this in the direction and development of a local training plan.

3.5 Integrated Assessment Framework (IAF)

Following the publication of 'For Scotland's Children', a paper called "A Way Forward for Information Sharing and an Integrated Framework for the Assessment of Children" was issued in January 2004 which set out the programme of work that the Scottish Executive would develop. Within East Ayrshire a working group has been actively developing the Integrated Assessment Framework which is currently at the pilot stage.

The Integrated Assessment Framework sets out a common definition and process for assessing a child across all services. It requires agencies to use a standard method of recording certain items of information such as addresses; names etc in order to ensure information can be shared when required. The IAF should be child centred and enable children and their carers to be involved as equal partners (unless there is good reason not to).

3.6 Information Sharing Protocol

Work is underway as agreed at Child Protection Committee on minor amendments to the existing Joint Information Protocol (as utilised in community care services). This will bring the protocol into line with the Integrated Assessment Framework and Child Protection processes.

3.7 Child Deaths and Significant Case Reviews

A review group has been established by the Scottish Executive to look at the current arrangements in Scotland for reviewing the deaths of children and other significant incidents. It will also develop proposals for future arrangements and indicate the form of enquiries that should be instituted; when enquiries should be triggered. The group propose to provide guidance on the new arrangements which is still awaited.

3.8 Disqualified from Working with Children List

The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 commenced on 10 January 2005. Section 11(3)(a) was deferred until 11 April 2005 and it is now an offence for an organisation to offer work in a child care position to, or procure such work for, an individual who is disqualified from working with children. (Commencement of Section 11(3)(b) which creates the new offence of failing to remove a disqualified person from a child care position is still deferred). Referrals to the list are now being made.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Implementing the Child Protection Reform programme has significant financial implications for key agencies in respect of delivering and managing robust child protection services and resourcing joint training initiatives.

5. PERSONNEL/LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nil.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Implementation of the key recommendations of the Child Protection Reform Programme are overseen at Chief Officer level by key Community Planning partners.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Members of the social work committee are asked:
- (i) to note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Executive Director of Educational & Social Services
8 September 2005
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

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