

**JOINT INSPECTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN
NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION IN ARGYLL AND BUTE**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report of the Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People in Need of Care and Protection in Argyll and Bute was published by the Care Inspectorate on 26th March.
- 1.2 The inspectors evaluated the quality and effectiveness of services in Argyll and Bute provided by the Community Planning Partnership to the quality indicators in their newly published quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection.
- 1.3 The Care Inspectorate and its scrutiny partners have evaluated services in Argyll and Bute as:
How good is our leadership - GOOD
Impact on families – GOOD
Impact on Children and Young People – GOOD
Improvements in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people - ADEQUATE
- 1.4 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee
- a) Note the findings of the inspection report into the Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People in the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership Area
 - b) Endorse the Improvement Action Plan which has been prepared and shared with the Care Inspectorate to address the key areas identified by inspectors.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The report of the Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People in Need of Care and Protection in Argyll and Bute was published by the Care Inspectorate on 26th March.
- 2.2 The inspection took place between August and November 2018. The Care Inspectorate and its scrutiny partners Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland and Education Scotland, looked at the differences the Community Planning Partnership is making to the lives of children and young people in need of care and protection and the lives of the children and young people for whom the Community Planning Partnership has corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 2.3 The inspectors evaluated the quality and effectiveness of services in Argyll and Bute provided by the partnership to the quality indicators in their newly published quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection.
- 2.4 The inspectors gathered and reviewed evidence in relation to all 17 quality indicators in the framework and used this understanding to answer five key inspection questions:
1. How good is the partnership at recognising and responding when children and young people need protection?
 2. How good is the partnership at helping children and young people who have experienced abuse and neglect stay safe, healthy and recover from their experiences?
 3. How good is the partnership at maximising the wellbeing of children and young people who are looked after?
 4. How good is the partnership at enabling care experienced young people to succeed in their transition to adulthood?
 5. How good is collaborative leadership?
- 2.5 In addition to answering the inspection questions, the inspectors used a six-point scale to provide a formal evaluation of three quality indicators that concern the impact of partners' work on the lives of children, young people and their families, and the outcomes partners are achieving. These are:
- 1.1 Improvements in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people

- 2.1 - Impact on children and young people
- 2.2 - Impact on families.

They also provide an overall evaluation for leadership, which comprises a suite of four quality indicators (9.1 to 9.4 inclusive).

- 2.6 The Care Inspectorate and its scrutiny partners have evaluated services in Argyll and Bute as:
- 9 How good is our leadership - GOOD
 - 2.2 Impact on families – GOOD
 - 2.1 Impact on Children and Young People – GOOD
 - 1.1 Improvements in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people - ADEQUATE

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Community Services Committee

- a) Note the findings of the inspection report into the Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People in the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership Area
- b) Endorse the Improvement Action Plan which has been prepared and shared with the Care Inspectorate to address the key areas identified by inspectors.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The joint Inspection of Children's Services looked closely at the support that is provide to children and young people who are currently, or have previously been, 'looked after', including those living with parents, having short periods of respite care, in kinship care, in residential care (including schools and secure care) and, in foster care. The inspectors also reviewed how services work together to protect children where concerns have been raised about their welfare or safety, including children who are currently, or have previously been, on the child protection register.
- 4.2 The inspection comprised of the following elements:
- a) The pre-inspection return, with information for the case analysis sample, organisation governance charts and significant and initial case review information. Argyll and Bute's return was submitted on 3rd August 2018.
 - b) The self-evaluation report answered the three reflective questions set out in the QIF and addressed the 5 inspection questions. 200 pieces of supporting documentation accompanied the comprehensive self-evaluation reports prepared by the partnership and was submitted on 13 August 2018.
 - c) A sample of 88 case files were requested from social work, education, health, police and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA). The inspectors reviewed these files during their first onsite week, w/c 10th September 2018.

- d) The inspectors met with children, young people, parents, carers and staff from across a range of agencies, including the third sector during the second half of onsite week 1. These participation and engagement sessions took place on islands and some of the more remote communities, as well as the larger towns.
 - e) 58 separate focus groups and one to one sessions took place with multi-agency groups of practitioners, managers, chief officers, partner agencies, children and young people, parents and carers from across Argyll and Bute during the second onsite week commencing 22nd October.
 - f) Inspectors met with the partnership on 5 occasions to provide feedback on progress, key high level findings and to discuss areas of uncertainty.
- 4.3 The staff survey was completed by 693 employees from Health and Social Care, Education, Police, SCRA and the third sector. The children and young people survey was completed by 21 children and young people. The parents and carers survey was completed by 13 parents and carers.
- 4.4 The team of 11 inspectors, including two young volunteer inspectors spent two weeks in Argyll and Bute meeting staff, children and young people, parents and carers from across the authority. The inspectors ensured that there is a greater emphasis than previously on the voices of children and young people in the inspection methodology.
- 4.5 The inspection report for Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership was published on the Care Inspectorate website on 26th March 2019. The inspectors said that they are confident that the partnership in Argyll and Bute has the capacity to continue to improve and to address the points for action highlighted in the report, this is based on:
- services working well together, underpinned by a collaborative, learning culture.
 - staff united in a common purpose, underpinned by GIRFEC and a strong, shared commitment to improving outcomes.
 - positive leadership from chief officers, providing direction and scrutiny to services for children and young people in need of care and protection.
 - notable improvement in the partnership's joint approach to self-evaluation.
 - a willingness on the part of all partners to actively engage with children, young people and their families in order to share power, identify need and improve outcomes.
 - evidence of significant improvement in priority areas, including the wellbeing of care leavers and the recognition and immediate response to children and young people in need of care and protection despite challenges facing the partnership.
- 4.6 The Strengths of Argyll and Bute's Partnership are:
1. The wellbeing of children in need of care and protection was improving, with most children and young people enjoying positive and caring relationships with staff and carers.

2. Children and young people were respected and listened to, at both operational and strategic levels, reflecting positive attitudes and significant investment on the part of community planning partners.
3. Other than one important area of practice (see priority areas for improvement), the inspectors found that overall, processes for recognising and responding to children and young people in need of protection were well established.
4. Children and young people in need of care and protection benefitted from well-managed, independently chaired reviews. Review meetings were providing quality assurance and accountability, adding to the prospect of better outcomes.

4.7 The priority areas for improvement are:

1. Risk assessments were not always being carried out where necessary. Similarly, risk management plans were missing from a small but significant proportion of the case files read.
2. Access to some specialist services was not consistent, particularly for children, young people and families residing in the more isolated areas of Argyll and Bute.
3. Although there were pockets of strong performance management, an inconsistent approach to the use of trend data, a lack of reliable data measures and outcome based reporting, meant that the partnership was unable to demonstrate sustained improvement over time in key areas.
4. The partnership needed to strengthen and develop its approach to strategic commissioning, in order to help decide how to allocate resources to get the best, most effective services for children and young people in need of care and protection.

4.8 The key messages in the report are summarised in appendix 1. The Improvement Action Plan which has been prepared to address the points raised and continue to make improvements in the services we provide to children, young people and their families is included in appendix 2. This was submitted to the Care Inspectorate on 3rd May 2019 with input provided by partners.

4.9 All partners are committed to implementing the improvement actions identified. The implementation of the Improvement Action Plan will be monitored by Argyll and Bute's Children Strategic Group which is made up of partners from across all organisations and services who have a role in providing services to children.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The publication on the inspection report concludes the inspection activity by the Care Inspectorate and its scrutiny partners. Argyll and Bute's Children Strategic Group will be responsible for ensuring that the Improvement Action plan is fully implemented. The effectiveness of these improvements will be tested through the ongoing process of self-evaluation which is well established with services for children and young people in Argyll and Bute.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

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| 8.1 | Policy | None at this time. |
| 8.2 | Financial | Preparing for and coordinating inspection activity did have a resource cost to all organisation involved. There are no additional resource implications anticipated with the delivery of the improvement plan. |
| 8.3 | Legal | Under section 115 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, the Care Inspectorate led a joint inspection of the provision of services to children and young people in the Argyll and Bute community planning partnership area. |
| 8.4 | HR | None at this time. |
- Fairer Scotland Duty:
- | | | |
|-----|---------------------|---|
| 8.5 | Equalities | Issues of equality were considered throughout the inspection process. |
| 8.6 | Socio-economic Duty | The inspection improvement action plan aligns with the Children and Young Peoples Service Plan. The Child Poverty child poverty action plan sits within this framework and seeks to address inequalities for children and young people. |
| 8.7 | Islands | Delivery of services in more remote communities will be explored as part of the inspection improvement action plan. |
| 8.8 | Risk | Failure to implement the improvement action plan will result in failure to embed improvements in the service to children and their families in need of care and protection. |
| 8.9 | Customer Service | The voice of children and young people has been central to the Care Inspectorate revised methodology. |

Appendices

Appendix 1 : Summary of key findings

Appendix 2 : Improvement Plan

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