

Appendix 1

Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People in Need of Care and Protection in Argyll and Bute

Summary of Key messages

Q1. How good is the partnership at recognising and responding when children and young people need protection?

- i. There were well-established professional relationships across disciplines and these contributed to the ability of staff to discuss initial concerns and thresholds for risk.
- ii. The approach and use of care assessment and reviewing officers (CARO), Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) advisors and child protection officers was an effective method of providing operational support, advice and guidance that enhanced both the confidence and ability of staff to respond effectively to child protection concerns.
- iii. Pre-birth planning processes were strong and effective in enabling the early identification and response to child protection and wellbeing concerns.
- iv. There was a need for improved recording of decision-making, supervision and quality assurance in order to facilitate communication, provide clearer governance and lines of accountability, and achieve better, safer outcomes for children and young people.

Q2. 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?

- i. Children and young people benefitted from trusting relationships, and they were confident that their views were heard and they felt listened to.
- ii. Targeted support was helping vulnerable young people stay healthy and recover from their experiences, but this was not always readily available. This was particularly so with services aimed at addressing the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in need of care and protection.
- iii. Well managed, independently chaired reviews had contributed to improved quality assurance and the participation of children and young people, which in turn had benefitted their wellbeing.
- iv. Across the services, support and supervision were available to staff on a regular basis. This provided staff with an opportunity to reflect upon, evaluate and improve their practice.
- v. In a small but significant number of case records, there was no risk assessment recorded. Furthermore, the quality of risk assessments we read in case records needed to be improved.

Q3. How good is the partnership at maximising the wellbeing of children and young people who are looked after?

- i. There was a positive, coherent and committed approach to corporate parenting being implemented by partners across Argyll and Bute.
- ii. Many care experienced children and young people experienced improved wellbeing that was supported by trusting relationships, strengthened universal services and individually planned measures of support.
- iii. The recent decision to regard children with disabilities in receipt of short breaks as looked after had introduced more robust review arrangements. This improvement in planning and quality assurance promised better outcomes for this group of children and young people.
- iv. Partners were not using performance measures to full effect in ways that highlighted trends, identified different groups and supported improvements in the wellbeing of care experienced children and young people.
- v. The influence of care experienced children, young people and families needed to be strengthened at a strategic level.

Q4. How good is the partnership at enabling care experienced young people to succeed in their transition to adulthood?

- i. Care experienced young people told us that the support they had received, particularly from staff working in the through care and aftercare team, had helped them to achieve positive outcomes in relation to housing, employment and education.
- ii. The partnership was able to demonstrate that over 70% of care experienced young people aged 16 to 24 (130 in total) were in positive destinations.
- iii. The partnership had embraced the Staying Put Scotland agenda and continuing care legislation. These were contributing positively to the support that care experienced young people received, adding to their sense of stability and self-worth.
- iv. The structured approach to identifying routes for care experienced young people to education, employment and housing was not consistently applied to the health of care leavers, including their emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- v. The corporate parenting strategy required greater momentum in particular areas. This included full implementation of the champions' board model, and further expansion of work experience and employment opportunities for care leavers, with all partners making a tangible contribution.

Q5. How good is collaborative leadership?

- i. The vision, values and aims in relation to children and young people in need of care and protection were clearly stated and commonly held.
- ii. The partnership benefitted at all levels from a positive, enabling culture and a supportive working environment.
- iii. The partnership benefitted at all levels from a learning culture, in which staff had opportunities to jointly develop skills and learn from each other.
- iv. There was a need for a more strategic approach to how leaders communicated with staff – particularly those providing services for children in need of care and protection in the front line.
- v. Work on developing a coherent commissioning strategy, in keeping with the partnership's vision for keeping children safe and meeting their corporate parenting responsibilities, needed to gather momentum.