

**MULTI AGENCY CHILD PROTECTION BUSINESS AND IMPROVEMENT
PLAN**

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1** During 2011, the Care Inspectorate led a multi agency inspection of child protection in Argyll and Bute. The inspection report presented to the Council's Executive in November 2011, whilst noting progress on a number of measures, highlighted on area of weakness other areas of improvement. The Executive Director of Community Services convened a child protection improvement group to consider the findings of the inspection and to develop an improvement plan to address the required areas of improvement. A copy of the plan was agreed by multi agency Child and Adult Protection Chief Officers Group (CAPCOG) in December 2011 and is presented to the Council's Executive for noting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Executive.
- (a) Note the content of the Multi Agency Child Protection Business and Improvement Plan attached as Appendix A.
 - (b) Request that progress reports be brought to the Executive at 6 monthly intervals.

3. DETAIL

- 3.1** Interagency arrangements for the protection of children are inspected across all Scottish Council areas as part of a rolling cycle of inspection. Argyll and Bute had its second full inspection in June 2011 with the report of inspection finding being published on 6th October 2011.

A team of inspectors from the Care Inspectorate looked at services provided by health, the police, the council and the children's reporter as well as voluntary and independent organisations.

The inspection involved inspectors reading the records of a sample of children, meetings with a number of parents and children receiving services, interviewing staff providing services to vulnerable children and their families, and interviews of senior managers.

The report identifies a number of strengths in services to protect vulnerable children and their families including: -

- High quality support to children in schools,
- Staff persistence in building relationships with families and helping them understand what they need to do to reduce risks.
- Helping vulnerable children to keep safe.

The report noted that children benefited from planned and regular contact with staff that know them and understand their needs. Improvement in key processes were starting to make a positive difference for children and families and longer term outcomes were thought to be good.

Staff were found to understand the priority for protecting children and as a result most take appropriate action to ensure that children are safe. However the report did highlight a weakness in the initial responses to concerns which needed to improve. This applied to the response of all partners and gives rise to changes in procedure for each agency and in how they develop joint responses using all available information to ensure children's needs were appropriately considered.

Inspectors identified that Chief Officers and the Interagency Child Protection Committee (CPC) were strongly committed to improving services, to achieving better outcomes for children and that planning for individual children had improved. It also commented that clearer direction should be given to staff about agreed priorities for improvement.

The following areas for improvement were agreed with inspectors;

- Improving the initial response of staff to children in need of protection and the impact of immediate

actions to keep children safe.

- Continue to develop approaches to self evaluation, ensuring it is based on robust evidence.
- Identify key priorities for improvement and ensure that staff have sufficient direction, support and challenge to take these forward.

3.2 The Executive Director of Community Services convened a multi agency child protection improvement group involving representatives of NHS Highland and local CHP; Strathclyde Police and the Council's Children and Families Service and Education Service. Over a two month period the group produced a series of improvement actions that directly address the findings of the inspection. The actions are as detailed in the plan attached at Appendix A to this request. (Version 3 as at 9th February 2012).

3.3 A number of the improvement actions have already been implemented or are being taken forward at present. The impact of these actions will be evaluated and scrutiny on progress with the plan will be undertaken by the Improvement Group who will in turn provide update reports to both the Child Protection Committee and the CAPCOG. It is proposed that progress reports are submitted to the Executive at 6 monthly intervals.

3.4 The plan is divided into tiers to reflect the prioritisation of the improvement actions to ensure greatest and most immediate attention is given to the most important actions. This is also in line with the Inspector's advice.

3.5 The partner agencies anticipate a follow through inspection in 2012 from the Inspectors although the exact scope of the inspection is still to be confirmed and may be wider than child protection.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The partner agencies have moved quickly to address the issues highlighted in the Child Protection Inspection Report and have identified the key actions required. The Improvement Group established to develop this plan will continue to monitor progress and will report to the Child Protection Committee, CAPCOG and the Executive to ensure focused scrutiny. It is anticipated that this work will

ensure the key priorities are addressed to improve the processes for child protection in Argyll and Bute.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Policy:	None
Financial:	All financial implications arising from the implementation of the Improvement Plan will be met from within partner agencies' existing budgets.
Personnel:	None
Legal:	Child protection is a statutory duty
Equal Opportunity:	None

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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