



Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership Area

Reporting on the effectiveness of public protection arrangements

1. Introduction

The Care Inspectorate has been asked to report to Scottish Government Ministers on the effectiveness of child protection and adult protection arrangements across Scotland

2. Context of the area

Argyll and Bute is Scotland's second largest area in terms of size, but also the third least sparsely populated area. It includes 25 inhabited islands. Some 45 per cent of the population reside in areas classified as remote rural. The 2011 census enumerated that the population of Argyll and Bute was 88,166 people, a small decrease from 89,590 in 2001. The population breakdown in the 2011 census was as shown below:

Age	Argyll and Bute	Scotland
< 16 years	16.4%	17.3%
16 – 64 years	61.7%	65.9%
> 65 years	21.9%	16.8%

Significant changes are predicted in the demographic profile of the area. Over the 25 year period from 2010, the proportion of 0 – 15 years olds are projected to fall by 8.7 per cent and the working age population by 14 per cent. In contrast, the population of pensionable age is projected to increase by 10 per cent.

The 2012 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation recorded that 10 (1%) of Argyll and Bute's datazones were found in the 15% of most deprived datazones in Scotland.

3. Basis of Report

This report is based on the following:

- A position statement provided by Argyll and Bute Council, prepared in co-operation with key partners and submitted along with supporting documentation.
- The findings of and the actions taken in response to the most recent scrutiny activity.
- A review of relevant local and national data and statistics.
- A meeting by the link inspector with senior managers on 20 March 2014.

4. Partnership structures and governance arrangements

A pilot joint inspection of services for children and young people in the Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership area took place in March – April 2013. The report of the inspection was published in September 2013. This found that the Child and Adult Protection Chief Officer's Group (CAPCOG) was delivering effective oversight and governance of the Child Protection Committee (CPC). It also found that the structures to support partnership working were increasingly effective in developing integrated approaches to improving the lives of children and young people.

Documentation provided by the Partnership included details of the governance arrangements for adult protection. These appeared appropriate and confirmed that adult protection was overseen at Chief Officer level was by the CAPCOG which met on a quarterly basis. The Independent Chair of the Adult Protection Committee (APC) was a member of the CAPCOG. In 2012, the APC took action to establish four local Adult protection Development Forums. The aim was to establish a more localised system for the development and management of adult protection. The Chairs of the local forums attend the APC. Senior Managers advised that the local forums are developing well and that this approach is leading to increased "ownership" of the adult protection agenda.

In December 2013, the partners reviewed the existing governance arrangements for public protection and decided to transform the CAPCOG into the Public Protection Chief Officers Group (PPCOG) which is responsible for overseeing all aspects of public protection. Whilst previously, CAPCOG did consider MAPPA (Multi Agency Protection arrangements), the establishment of PPCOG formalised these arrangements. As such, the PPCOG is responsible for child protection, adult protection, MAPPA and violence against

women. A further change has seen the inclusion of the Fire and Rescue service as part of the PPCOG.

Within Argyll and Bute, MAPPA is delivered on a partnership basis with the other local authority areas which make up the North Strathclyde Community Justice Authority (NSCJA) and the other responsible authorities as required by legislation. It is managed by the MAPPA Operational Group (MOG) which is comprised of representatives of the responsible authorities at Local Authority Service Manager and Police Detective Chief Inspector level

5. Scrutiny activity

The joint inspection of services for children in 2013 found that services were working very well together in partnership which was underpinned by a positive culture of respect and openness. Strong leadership and direction was supporting successful collaborative working. Staff were united with a common purpose within the Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach which in turn was having a positive impact on the well-being of children, young people and their families. Considerable improvements had been made in the immediate response to children in need of protection and providing help and support to children, young people and families at an early stage. Leaders were highly committed to consolidating these improvements and were clear about where to focus their work to build capacity and consistency. Together, services had made a positive start to leading and directing resources towards prevention and early intervention. Steady progress was being made against most performance indicators for children and services were highly committed to measuring the impact of their work together. There were plans to introduce systematic joint self-evaluation to support improvement.

Eight of the Quality Indicators were formally evaluated. One of these was evaluated as very good, four as good and three as adequate. The quality Indicator for assessing and responding to risks and needs was evaluated as being adequate.

There were four main areas for improvement identified and the report said that the Partnership needed to take account of the need to:

- secure further and continuous improvement in the quality of assessment of risks and needs and planning for individual children
- complete and implement the integrated children's services plan
- continue to develop rigorous and systematic joint self-evaluation to improve outcomes for children and young people
- ensure continued leadership and direction is provided to implement the planned improvements for services for children, young people and families.

Further to the inspection the CPP moved quickly to prepare a joint improvement plan and the Partnership's progress in implementing the plan will be monitored by the Care Inspectorate and its scrutiny partners.

There has been no specific scrutiny of adult protection arrangements and practice in Argyll and Bute. However, the Care Inspectorate's 2011 inspection report of the local authority's social work service did include a focus on adult protection. This found that whilst sound processes were in place, the quality of some risk assessments and risk management planning was inconsistent.

6. Analysis of local and national data

An analysis of the national statistics covering child protection for 2012 showed that for the most part, the statistics for Argyll and Bute were broadly in line with the national picture. The main exceptions to this were that:

- The rate of case conferences for Argyll and Bute was 8.1 per 1000 children compared to 5.9 for Scotland.
- The conversion rate of case conferences to child protection registration for Argyll and Bute was 55% compared to 77% for Scotland.

Senior managers were aware of this discrepancy whereby there was a relatively high number of case conferences which resulted in a relatively small number of child protection registrations. They had looked into the reasons for this, but could identify no complete explanation. However, the CPC had done some review and analysis of Initial Review Discussions (IRDs). This identified a number of cases which had been dealt with as child protection concerns which should more appropriately have been dealt with as broader child welfare needs.

The most recent national data was published at the end of March 2014. This showed that the conversion rate of case conferences to child protection registration for Argyll and Bute in 2013 had increased to 64% suggesting a more proportionate use of child protection case conferences. However, the data also showed a significant reduction in the number of children on the child protection register (and the rate of registration) in 2013 compared with 2012.

- The number of children on the child protection register had reduced from 48 to 17
- The registration rate had dropped from 3.4 to 1.2 per 1000 children (compared to 3.0 and 2.0 per 1000 for the equivalent period for Scotland)

The number of children on the child protection register in Argyll and Bute is relatively small. Factors such as the registration or de-registration of sibling groups can impact significantly on the statistical picture. However, the link

inspector will discuss this and any future significant fluctuations in the statistical data with the partnership.

An agreed nation data set for adult protection in Scotland is still under development. However, the Adult Protection Committee collects a good range of information. A review of available data shows that:

- The number of adult protection referrals rose significantly from 124 in 2009-10 to 447 in 2011-12. However, the number of referrals held steady in 2012-13 at 446.
- There is some significant variation in the number of referral across the four localities in Argyll and Bute.
- The highest proportion of referrals have come consistently from the Police and concerns about self-harm has been consistently the highest referral reason.
- As with other parts of Scotland, there had only been a relatively small number of referrals from Health staff.
- The proportion of referrals specifically relating to financial harm is less than in many other areas in Scotland.
- In 2011-12, twenty three adult protection case conferences were held and seventeen people were the subject of adult protection support plans.

Analysis of available Care Inspectorate data shows that there have been 118 cases in Scotland of potential protection issues since August 2013. The majority of these related to privately operated care homes for older people. There were two such instances in Argyll and Bute

7. Strategic leadership and direction

The joint inspection of children's services (JICS) evaluated the leadership of improvement and change as good. It found that strategic direction was appropriately focused on improving services in order to keep children safe. There has as yet been no equivalent inspection of services for adults. However, documentation provided demonstrated a strong commitment to adult protection as part of the PPCOG's agenda. It is positive that the APC provides an annual report in addition to the biennial report required by statute,

Services in Argyll and Bute have worked closely with Police Scotland as part of Operation Dash. However, the number of children and young people potentially affected by child exploitation was relatively small. The screening process undertaken as part of Operation Dash confirmed that all these children and young people were already known to services and receiving appropriate levels of support. Action has been taken to review the procedure

for when and how children who are looked after and accommodated are interviewed after when they return after a period of absconsion. The aim of the revised procedure is to better support children to allow them to disclose if they have been subject to any exploitation. The council has also revised its contracts with external providers to ensure that they adopt a similar approach.

The JICS found that joint self-evaluation was at a very early stage of development. However, there was a firm commitment to ensure this becomes systematic and based on accurate evidence. The CPC had commissioned self-evaluation through "Taking a Closer Look "at families affected by domestic abuse and mental health issues. The inspection found that this led to demonstrable improvements in practise. The CPC has a Business Plan and this dovetails appropriately with other relevant plans, for example the Community Planning Partnership's Improvement Plan for 2013-14 and the Integrated Children's Service Plan 2014-17. The CPC also has a multi-agency scorecard which as well being considered at CPC meetings is also reported to Area Committees.

The use of file audits as a means of quality assurance and improvement is well established for both child and adult protection and in recent years and these have been undertaken on a multi-agency basis. Argyll and Bute has been keen and active in seeking the involvement of the Care Inspectorate to provide some external involvement and validation to these activities. Multi-agency file audits for both adult and child protection are being arranged to take place during 2014.

As with child protection, joint self-evaluation is still developing in respect of adult protection. The adult protection committee holds an annual joint self-evaluation day. The most recent event was held in November 2013 and helped inform the APC Improvement Plan 2014-16, the draft version of which has been shared with the Care Inspectorate. From reports of previous self-evaluation activity and from discussion with senior managers, there was some evidence of learning and improvement being achieved as a result (albeit primarily by the social work service). One example of this was changes made to ensure that appropriate consideration and recording takes place using the "three point test" of people referred as being potentially in need of adult support and protection. Subsequent audit activity has shown that the desired improvements in practice are being achieved.

Senior managers acknowledge that joint self-evaluation required further development. However, they believe that they are "well beyond" the stage where self- evaluation was viewed as being a single agency activity, largely based around file audit. The documents provided for this report and the discussions which took place with senior managers reflected a strong

commitment to meaningful joint self-evaluation. In their view, staff recognise the value of this.

8. Key strengths and good practice

The Child and Adult Protection Chief Officers Group (now revised at the PPCOG) was identified as part of the JICS as having provided effective leadership. Whilst the focus of the inspection was in relation to children's services, it was evident from documentation provided for this report and from discussion from senior managers that similar approaches had been taken towards the leadership of adult protection. The action taken to review and revise the CAPCOG into the PPCOG appears to provide a solid basis for the overview and leadership of public protection. It was noticeable that the senior managers met with as part of the preparation of this report saw themselves as having a clear responsibility for progressing the broader public protection agenda, even if their specific remits were more adult's or children's services focused.

The JICS identified Getting It Right Antenatal as an example of good practice. It was described as a highly successful approach to identifying vulnerable pregnant women at an early stage and to providing co-ordinated support in partnership with other services to improve parenting skills. This support includes the provision of suitable housing. The inspection also found that good progress had been made in implementing GIRFEC. Senior Managers informed that this progress has continued since the inspection, including the roll out of the Universal Child's Plan.

For adult protection, senior managers indicated their view that they have made good progress, and in particular in the social work service, in achieving increased recognition that adult protection "is everybody's job". More broadly having adult protection as a standard agenda item on the meetings of the care home network had helped improve the level of shared understanding about protection issues between the council and care home providers.

9. Summary of key risks and challenges

Senior managers identified a number of key challenges:

- For both adult and child protection, trying to achieve consistency of practice is a challenge on both a single and cross agency basis. Adult social work services have identified Team Leaders as having a key role to play in achieving this. In children's services, there is a strong focus on the support and guidance provided to qualified social workers. Improving consistency was a key driver in a recent restructuring of the childcare service. The NHS is aware of the need to look further at the guidance available around risk thresholds.

- The geographic size and rural nature of Argyll and Bute also presents a challenge in terms of consistency and awareness of public protection issues. Managers pointed out for example that a health worker in one of the most rural areas may only very rarely encounter protection issues. They also consider that rurality is a factor in the relatively low level of adult protection referrals where financial harm is identified. Given this, It is positive that the governance arrangements for both adult and child protection included local groups and forums.
- Senior council managers identified pending changes to the process by which the Police submit Vulnerable Person's Reports (VPRs) as being a likely challenge. They anticipate that this will lead to a further increase in the already high numbers of VPRs, of which only a very small proportion currently meet the adult protection criteria. They are aware of the local Concern Management Hub which is being developed in West Dunbartonshire. They are considering a similar development in Argyll and Bute as a means of achieving a shared understanding with the Police locally about what constitutes adult protection.

10. Planned scrutiny and improvement

The Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People in Argyll and Bute took place relatively recently. The inspection included a focus on child protection and the findings of the inspection were mainly positive. The Community Planning Partnership has produced an action plan to address the areas for improvement identified in the inspection. Early indications are that the Partnership is taking appropriate action to implement the action plan.

There has been no equivalent recent external scrutiny of services to protect vulnerable adults in Argyll and Bute. It is therefore not possible to provide an evaluation on the effectiveness of adult protection arrangements. However, the Partnership has been able to provide documentation which indicates that it has appropriate governance arrangements in place and that it has an active Adult Protection Committee which is developing its approach to joint self-evaluation.

There are no significant concerns arising from an analysis of the available local and national data in respect of Argyll and Bute.