

**REPORT TO: EDUCATION & SOCIAL WORK SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 13
FEBRUARY 2008**

SUBJECT: PREPARATION FOR CHILD PROTECTION INSPECTION

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises Committee on the forthcoming inspection of Child Protection Services in Moray. The report outlines the scope and timetable associated with the inspection, summarises the action being taken to prepare for the inspection and considers the process for taking matters forward post-inspection.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section D (23) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the exercising of the function of the Council as a Social Work Authority under Social Work Scotland Act 1968.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Committee:

- (i) note that an inspection of Child Protection Services in Moray will take place between June and August 2008 and considers the work currently being undertaken on a joint agency basis to prepare for the inspection.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of the Child Protection Reform Programme set up by the Scottish Executive, the Services for Children Unit of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) are inspecting Child Protection Services across Scotland. Moray is scheduled to be inspected between June and August of this year.
- 3.2 These inspections are inter-agency and focus on:-
- The frontline delivery of services within Police, Social Work, Health, Education and the Voluntary Sector.
 - The operational management and linkages between these services.
 - The strategic direction given to these services through the auspices of the Chief Officers (Chief Executives, Local Authorities, Health & Police), and the Child Protection Committee (the inter-agency forum which co-ordinates and directs child protection work).
- 3.3 The methodology of the inspection measures performance against the quality indicators contained in the document "How well are children and young people protected and their needs met?" In summary, the quality indicators pose the following questions:-

- How effective is the help children and young people get when they need it?
- How effectively do agencies and the community work together to keep children and young people safe?
- How good is the delivery of key processes?
- How good is operational management in protecting children and young people and meeting their needs?
- How good is individual and collective strategic leadership?

3.4 The inspection will focus on the efforts being made in the prevention of child abuse, the effectiveness of intervention and the extent to which services are meeting needs and supporting recovery. The inspection process will involve:-

- Detailed reading of each agency's files relating to representative samples of children and their families.
- Discussions with some children and families from the sample and the staff from those agencies involved with them.
- Individual meetings with relevant elected members, operational managers and senior staff from all agencies.
- Focus groups made up of a variety of staff involved in the protection of children.
- Visits to particular services involved with children and their families.
- Oversight of all agencies' procedures, guidance and policies around the protection of children.

3.5 The inspectors will spend three weeks in Moray. Verbal feedback will be given to Chief Officers shortly after the completion of the fieldwork with the final report being published around twelve weeks later. A joint action plan, co-ordinated by the local Chief Officers Group, will be finalised no later than eight weeks after the publication of the inspection report. Follow through activities will be undertaken by inspectors to evaluate the extent to which the quality of services has improved and to assess progress on the main areas requiring improvement identified in the report.

4. PREPARING FOR INSPECTION

4.1 A Chief Officers Group, chaired by the Chief Executive, meets regularly to provide strategic leadership on child protection issues and to retain overview of the preparation being undertaken for the inspection. The group has representatives from Health, Social Work, Education, the Police and the Reporter's Administration.

4.2 Moray Council published its own Child Protection Policy in Moray in 2007 and the North East of Scotland Child Protection Committee (NESCPC) has recently published updated Child Protection Guidelines. Procedures for Children's Services Staff responding to Child Protection concerns are being updated in light of both these publications.

- 4.3 An accountability framework for child protection matters has been agreed which clarifies remits of and the strategic relationship between the NESPC, local Chief Officers, the Child Protection Practice Group and other key strategic and operational forums. A copy of this framework is attached in **APPENDIX 1**. Historically, the Child Protection Practice Group has been a sub-group of the Moray Child Care Partnership Implementation Group. However in view of the remit of Moray's Chief Officers Group and as child protection is a complex area requiring robust strategic and operational management, it was decided that the Child Protection Practice Group should report directly to Chief Officers. The Practice Group will however retain strong policy and strategic links with the Moray Child Care Partnership Implementation Group.
- 4.4 A Child Protection Preparation for Inspection Group has been established to co-ordinate activity in the run up to the inspection. This group, chaired by the Director of Community Services, has representatives from Education, Health, Social Work, the Police, the Voluntary Sector and the NESPC. This group is developing an action plan outlining activity that requires to be progressed on an inter-agency basis for the inspection. Progress in relation to this action plan is reported to the Chief Officers Group.
- 4.5 Training needs are being identified and a training calendar is being developed with events being opened up where possible to all agencies. The Corporate Training Team, as part of a Social Awareness Programme that was run in 2007 for Moray Council staff, included a module entitled 'an introduction to Child Protection'. This programme is due to be repeated early in 2008. Training offered by agencies in Moray will be supplemented by a training programme provided by the NESPC.
- 4.6 An audit of child protection case files has been undertaken across Social Work.
- 4.7 The Child Protection Practice Group undertook a cross agency audit of a small sample of Child Protection files involving Children's Services, Education Services, Grampian Police, Grampian Health and key partner agencies in the voluntary sector.
- 4.8 A Child Protection Inspector Co-ordinator has been recruited under delegated authority to co-ordinate activity and support the inspection process. Contributions are currently being sought from partner agencies towards the funding of an administrative post to support the inspection process.
- 4.9 The Child Protection Practice Group and the Chief Officers Group will be undertaking a self-evaluation exercise early in 2008 to identify gaps and weaknesses in current strategic and operational arrangements in order to inform targeted development in advance of the inspection.
- 4.10 A communication strategy is being finalised which will ensure regular communication, including leaflets and newsletters with staff and stakeholders

in advance of, and during the inspection process. This will include briefings for elected members.

- 4.11 Planning for a Co-Located Child Protection Unit is at an advanced stage and is the subject of a separate report before Committee.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

There are strong strategic links between the Child Protection Service and the Community Planning Theme of Investing in Children & Young People. There are also strong links between Child Protection and the Corporate Plan and Child Protection also features in Service Improvement and Development Plans across the Council

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no direct Policy or Legal implications in relation to this report.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

Preparation for the inspection is being undertaken within the existing resources of the agencies involved.

(d) Consultations

Consultations have taken place with Karen Wiles, Principal Solicitor, Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant and with members of the Chief Officers Group and the Preparation for Child Protection Inspection Group.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This inspection by HMle is not an inspection of any individual agency. It is very clearly focussed on considering the level of collaborative and joint work undertaken in order to provide services that protect children. The inspection process should be viewed as a positive tool which will be used to strengthen a number of areas and consolidate others in order that services within the Moray area are in a position to provide a high quality of service to individuals and their families. Although this inspection is clearly focussed on Child Protection, it will be a significant objective assessment of the extent to which Moray Council and its partners have been able to deliver an integrated response to the public.**

Author of Report:

Background Papers:

Ref: