



REPORT TO: SMARTER STRATEGIC GROUP - 04 JUNE 2009

SUBJECT: HMle Joint Services for Children Interim Inspection
June 2009

BY: Susan Maclaren, Child Protection Inspection Co-ordinator

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of the group of the forth coming Interim Inspection of Joint Services for Children by HMle and of progress on the HMle Joint Action Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Group notes the process of the Interim Inspection and the progress made to date on the HMle Joint Action Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The HMIE Joint Inspection of Children's Services to protect children in the Moray Council area took place between June and September 2008. It covered the range of services in the area with a role in protecting children. These included services provided by The Moray Council, NHS Grampian, Grampian Police and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) as well as voluntary sector partners. The final report was published on Thursday 12 February 2009.
- 3.2 Inspectors found the following key strengths in how well children were protected and their needs met in the Moray Council area.
- Children and families benefiting from supportive relationships with staff that know them well.
 - Sure Start nursery nurses working with very young children and their parents in the family home to promote positive parenting.
 - Improved risk assessment and decision-making by police attending review child protection case conferences.

- Strong vision and commitment to protecting children within Grampian Police.
- Effective partnership working with the voluntary sector improving the well-being of vulnerable children and their families.

3.3 HMIE recommended that six areas for action were prioritised. These form the basis of this Joint Action Plan. Services were asked to take account of the need to:

- Ensure that assessments of risk are rigorous and appropriate legal measures are used, when necessary, for children in need of protection.
- Fully implement agreements and guidance to ensure the effective sharing of information.
- Introduce inter-agency discussions to manage effectively the investigation of suspected child abuse.
- Improve assessment, planning and decision-making for children whose names are on the CPR.
- Increase the involvement of children in decision-making about their lives and consult them on the development of services to protect children.
- Improve the effectiveness of the NHS Protecting Children Group, the NESCPG and the MCOG in protecting children and meeting their needs.

3.4 Following the publication of the report in February 2009 Moray Chief Officers Group produced and agreed the Moray HMIE Joint Action Plan in order to progress the action required.

3.5 Progress has been made by the Council in key areas of concern identified in the inspection report and these can be summarised as follows:-

- (1) An improvement team was established immediately following the initial verbal feedback from Inspectors.
- (2) All child protection cases referred to child protection case conferences since 1 October 2008 have been reviewed and all other files are being reviewed through a robust audit system which has been established.
- (3) The joint Child Protection Unit is now operational and Social Work, Police and Health will co-locate to a purpose built unit in Elgin during 2009/10, which will further enhance communication and investigative practice. A social worker has been seconded to Doctor Gray's hospital to improve communications links with Health.
- (4) Procedures have been reviewed:-
 - Social Work operating procedures have been completely revised.

- A new risk assessment framework has been adopted by Social Work based on the model developed by NESCP.
- Front-line staff have been trained in the revised procedures (Council and partner agencies in February and March).

(5) Investment to strengthen child protection services:-

- Three additional social workers have been appointed to the Joint Child Protection Unit, which is operated in partnership with Grampian Police and NHS Grampian.
- The Social Work Out of Hours service has been strengthened.
- All children on the child protection register have allocated social workers who are now visiting them more frequently.
- Finance has been allocated for three further social workers for child protection in the 2009/10 council budget.
- There has been further investment in the Children's' Rights Service.

(6) Best practice across Scotland has been reviewed and is being adopted in areas of weakness, for example:-

- Interagency procedures regarding Initial Referral Discussions and Information Sharing are being agreed and will be finalised as a matter of urgency. This process will improve the way in which agencies collaboratively make decisions for children and will ensure for example Health and Education are fully involved in decision making.

(7) Additional staffing has been allocated to audit arrangements to implement and support the developments identified in the Action Plan.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Community Plan / Theme Plans / Partner Plans

The Moray Council has statutory responsibilities to protect and promote the welfare of children and young people in need.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Joint Inspection of Children's Services and Inspection of Social Work Services (Scotland) Act 2006 forms the basis for the conduct of child protection inspections.

(c) Resources (Financial, Staffing and Risks)

There are none directly associated with this report.

(d) Consultations

Consultation has taken place with the Moray Chief Officers Group for Child Protection in the preparation of this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Moray Council notes the Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children and Young People in the Moray Council Area and actions planned and underway to address the shortcomings in services identified in the report.**

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Background Papers: With author