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<i>report:</i>	CYP02/07

INSPECTION OF INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES by Bill Alexander

Summary

This report provides an update on national developments regarding the inspection of integrated children's services, and highlights the recently published guide to self-evaluation. It proposes that Chief Officers begin to plan to use a common approach across children's services in Highland, building on the evolving child protection process.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Executive has committed to an implementation timetable for integrated children's services inspections by the end of 2008.
- 1.2 In November 2005, HMIe Services for Children published the consultation paper *A Common Approach to Inspecting Services for Children and Young People*. This set out proposals for developing and implementing an outcome-focused, intelligence-led and proportionate approach to the inspection of services for children and young people.
- 1.3 That consultation document made clear that generic quality indicators should contribute both to inspection and to self-evaluation processes, such that:
 - robust self-evaluation and independent inspection would complement one another as means of evaluating and improving the quality of services for children and young people;
 - inspection should moderate and verify self-evaluation as part of the quality improvement cycle;
 - self-evaluation should address the same high level questions as inspection, and that inspection should make use of the same set of indicators as self-evaluation; and
 - Inspectorates would take as inputs to their evaluations, evidence supplied by service providers of their self-evaluation processes, the outcomes from such processes and the subsequent improvements made by the service providers.
- 1.4 HMIe has now published '*A Guide to Evaluating Services for Children and Young People using Quality Indicators*' (available at:

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/evaluating%20services.pdf>) which was launched at a series of national seminars in late 2006.

- 1.5 The approach to evaluation taken in this guide underlines the complementary roles of self-evaluation and inspection in quality improvement. At its heart is a set of generic quality indicators that can be drawn on for both self-evaluation and inspection.
- 1.6 The quality indicators are designed to help providers of services to identify the strengths in their provision and to identify where further development or improvement is required. The guide is not intended to replace existing approaches to evaluation in the different sectors which provide services to children and young people, but to:
- help systematise and give greater coherence to the efforts which organisations are already making to improve quality within the context of increasing inter-agency provision of services for children and young people;
 - make a major contribution to the development of a common language across service sectors for discussing issues of quality improvement;
 - contribute to the development of a better common understanding of quality issues; and
 - give greater coherence to self-evaluation and inspection of services for children and young people.
- 1.7 The generic quality indicators have been developed to help individual organisations and partners to answer the six high-level questions that have been increasingly used in integrated inspections:
- 1 *What key outcomes have we achieved?*
 - 2 *How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?*
 - 3 *How good is our delivery of services for children and young people?*
 - 4 *How good is our management?*
 - 5 *How good is our leadership?*
 - 6 *What is our capacity for improvement?*
- 1.8 These six questions are central to the Scottish Executive's *Quality Improvement Framework for Integrated Services for Children, Young People and their Families*, and to other evaluation frameworks in the fields of education and social work. Indeed, the six questions will lie at the core of the system of inspection of services for children and young people that will be introduced from the end of 2008.

1.9 The guide emphasises the importance of having a clear focus on impact and outcomes when evaluating services. Self-evaluation should lead to the maintenance of high standards, to targeted action on areas needing to be improved, and to continuous improvement in pursuit of excellence. Rigorous examination of impact and of outcomes for children, young people and their families is an essential component of self-evaluation designed to achieve such improvements in service.

1.10 The guide therefore makes clear the links with integrated children's services planning, acknowledging that this framework is necessary to

1. articulate clearly the desired outcomes for children and young people;
2. set challenging targets and improvement objectives for achieving successful outcomes for all children and young people;
3. have, within and across services, effective arrangements for evaluating systematically and rigorously whether successful outcomes are being achieved;
4. ask demanding questions about the performance of services for children and young people;
5. use the information from evaluation to make continuous and sustained improvements to achieve successful outcomes; and
6. determine leadership and accountability roles for achieving improved outcomes.

1.11 The Integrated Children's Services Plan is the means through which partner organisations come together to clarify intended outcomes, agree measures of performance, evaluate their performance, set improvement objectives, and devise clear strategies and timescales for delivery of these objectives. This involves each partner organisation in having individual self-evaluation processes in place through which it knows how to improve the quality of the services it provides. It also involves the partner organisations in coming together to carry out the collective self-evaluation which is necessary to agree improvement objectives and the procedures through which they will achieve these objectives.

2. Quality Assurance in child protection services

2.1 Child protection services in Highland have begun to use elements of this framework to support local, integrated quality assurance processes. The Child Protection Committee has established a Quality Assurance Group to co-ordinate these activities.

2.2 The initial work of this Quality Assurance Group has involved developing the principles and framework for self-evaluation, and testing these in a

small number of actual cases. This process proved helpful in the preparation for the recent follow-through child protection inspection.

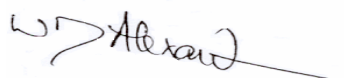
- 2.3 The Child Protection Committee has asked the Group to focus in the next year on further case audits, and on an audit of practice in relation to the children of substance misusing parents.
- 2.4 In addition, the Group will undertake awareness raising with staff across agencies, to familiarise practitioners with the purpose and processes of self-evaluation, and also about the evidence that inspectors will seek to find demonstrated in future inspections.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 Given that a consistent self-evaluation framework is now being promoted by HMIE Services for Children and associated regulatory bodies, it is proposed that Chief Officers begin to plan to use this guidance and the associated self-evaluation tools across children's services in Highland, building on the evolving child protection process.
- 3.2 This process should build on the developing Quality Improvement Framework, previously reported to the Joint Committee, which articulates clearly the targets and outcomes being sought for children and young people in *For Highland's Children 2*.
- 3.3 As well as ensuring a common approach to self-evaluation, this will help prepare for the envisaged developments towards the inspection of integrated children's services.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to agree that Chief Officers begin to plan to use this self-evaluation guidance and the associated tools across children's services in Highland, building on the evolving child protection process.



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