

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL AND NHS HIGHLAND**  
**JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Minutes of Meeting held in the Inverness  
High School, Inverness on Friday, 16 March  
2007 at 10.30 a.m.

**Present:**

**Members**

Mrs M C Davidson (Chairman)	)	
Mr A M Millar	)	Highland Council
Mr L Fraser	)	
Ms P Courcha	)	
Mrs J Baird	)	NHS Highland
Mrs S Amor,	)	

**Children's Champions**

Mrs G McCreath

**Officers:**

Ms H Dempster, Director of Social Work	)	
Mr S Illiffe, Principal Educational Psychologist	)	
Ms K Birch, Acting Head of Operations (Children)	)	HC
Ms M Campbell, Co-ordinator (Disability Services)	)	
Mr J Allison, Principal Administrator, Corporate Services	)	
Miss V Rushton, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Services	)	
Mr B Alexander, Head of Service (Children, Young People and Families)	)	HC/NHS
Mr A Ward, Women and Children's Services Manager	)	NHS

**In attendance:**

Mr C Munro, Highland Children's Forum  
Ms A Hallmann, Who Cares? Scotland  
Mr A McMahon, Children's Rights Officer  
Ms A Darlington, NCH  
Ms C MacLean, CHIP+  
Dr B Stradling, UHI Millennium Institute  
Dr M MacNeil, UHI Millennium Institute

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs O J Macdonald; Mr A Anderson; Mr B Fernie; Mr D Flear; Mrs A Bethune; Mrs A Brady and Mrs R Finlayson.

**2. Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Committee held on 26 January 2007**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 26 January 2007 were circulated and **NOTED**.

Arising from the Minutes, also **NOTED** that a letter had not yet been sent to COSLA on the issue of Out of Authority Placements, but discussions were taking place with other local authorities to prepare data on the cost and availability of such provision. Once this had been completed a letter to COSLA would be prepared.

**3. Revenue Budget - Monitoring 2006/07**

Report No CYP 5/07 by Bill Alexander, Head of Service (Children, Young People and Families), providing monitoring information to January 2007 on those areas of expenditure that had been delegated to the Joint Committee

**NOTED** the report.

**4. Revenue Budget 2007/2008**

Report no CYP 6/07 by Bill Alexander, Head of Service (Children, Young People and Families) providing information on the Joint Committee revenue budget in 2007/08, and making proposals with regard to the budget. The report detailed the funding available through the Council and that the budget would contribute £436,000 in 2007/2008 to savings measures across the authority. The budget would also be affected by both savings on early education identified by the Education, Culture and Sport Service and by the reductions in management and staffing costs being carried out in all Council Services.

The budget was managed by the Chief Officers Group who had examined current expenditure of the budget and proposed savings measures while protecting front line services. It was intended to do this through mainstreaming some services and stand still budgets as well as by streamlining management and administrative costs. Details of the measures were highlighted to the Committee.

During discussion the following points were made:

- concern was expressed over the reduction in Family Resource Officers from 7.5 to 3 as had been agreed at the Council's Housing

and Social Work Committee. While it was recognised reductions in staffing had to be made, early years provision had still to be fully established and consolidated;

- it was felt the Chairman should request that the Council allow for an additional floating Family Resource Officer to the new Structure of the Integrated Children's Services team, to cover areas of need as required;
- changes would be phased to reduce initial impact of the proposals;
- the timing of the introduction was important to ensure frontline services were maintained;
- impact assessments were scheduled to take place on the activities of the Joint Committee and therefore any future decisions would be knowledge based and would increase the transparency of working practices.

**AGREED:**

- i. the proposed 2007/08 budget allocations; and
- ii. the Chairman request that the Council allow for an additional floating Family Resource Officer in the new Structure of the Integrated Children's Services team, to cover areas of need as required.

**5. Child Protection Follow Through Inspection**

Report No CYP 7/07 by Alistair Dodds, Director of Corporate Services, informing the Joint Committee of the findings of the interim follow through inspection of child protection by HMle. The report highlighted that the inspection concluded that considerable progress had been achieved since the initial inspection. The report was also being considered by both the Highland Council and the NHS Board and was available through the Council's website. A further follow up inspection to assess progress was to take place within 12 months of publication of the findings.

Members welcomed the report but acknowledged that continuous improvement was required to ensure that appropriate Services reached all children. Comment was made on the launch of the national helpline as it was felt there had been insufficient media coverage of the helpline and it was important to maintain awareness of the service.

**AGREED** to endorse the positive evaluation of child protection services in Highland, and the ongoing commitment to continuous improvement.

**6. Getting it Right for Every Child**

Report No CYP 8/07 by Marj Stewart, Integrated Assessment Framework Co-ordinator and Bill Alexander, Head of Service (Children, Young People and Families) providing an update on the 'Getting it Right for Every Child' Pathfinder. The report included a draft response to the Scottish Executive on the draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill which was to be submitted by the 31 March 2007.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- there had been a meeting of representatives from the voluntary sector to discuss the impact of GIRFEC on their input to the care of children and young people. A report was also being prepared on their behalf on the implementation of GIRFEC;
- discussion was continuing as to the IT options for GIRFEC;
- implementation was beginning to occur as a new police form was now available;
- feedback from a forum involving parents and young people on the subject of GIRFEC had been positive and many were impressed with the information available on its implementation;
- concern was expressed over the availability of funding for GIRFEC for each local authority, as it was important that the project reached every child; and
- recognition was given to the hard work undertaken by the GIRFEC team to date.

In response to questions on the effects of the Bill on the Children's Hearing System it was explained that it would not be the responsibility of individual Hearings to allocate services or resources to individual cases. The Bill introduced measures to ensure that prior to the disposal of a case, a Children's Hearing need not disclose any information about the child if it was significantly against the interests of the child.

**AGREED:**

- i. to endorse the actions being taken to implement 'Getting it Right for Every Child' in Highland;
- ii. to delegate to the Head of Children's Services in consultation with the Chair and Vice – Chair of the Joint Committee, and the Chief Officers to finalise and submit the response to the Scottish Executive on the draft Children's (Scotland) Bill; to include comments made at the consultation event held on 6 March, those made by the Joint Committee, and to take account of any other responses received.

**7. Evaluation of Multi-Agency Autism Services**

Report No CYP 9/07 by the UHI Millennium Institute, introducing further summary findings papers from the UHI Millennium Institute evaluation of integrated children's services, with regard to multi-agency services for children on the autistic spectrum.

The researchers, Dr B Stradling and Dr M MacNeil, from the UHI Millennium Institute attended the meeting and gave a summary of their assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the processes and procedures that have been introduced in Highland to provide a more integrated service to families and children on the autistic spectrum. The presentation highlighted how research had been undertaken and

concluded that progress had been made on the services provided within a relatively short time, with positive feedback from both parents and professionals involved. It also identified that most of the structure and procedures required for multi-agency working were in place.

The Joint Committee welcomed the report and the positive work done to date in the provision of multi-agency autism services. Comment was made that while the numbers of those being diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder had risen, it would be useful to compare the figure with those being diagnosed with non specific learning difficulties in the same time period.

In response to comment on the availability of information to families at key stages such as referral and diagnosis, it was explained that a variety of information packs, including non-specific packs on autistic spectrum disorder, were available. However, it was at the discretion of the health professionals to provide the packs, and often they faced a dilemma in providing information on issues such as diet where there was conflicting evidence of its effects.

It was also indicated that while positive results had been achieved on the integration of services for families, work was still required on the provision of services available for young people with autism during the transition into adult life.

The Joint Committee was also informed of proposals to hold an international conference in Highland on 5/6 September 2007 to launch the recent evaluation material produced by Highland, including the evaluation of Multi-agency Autism Services.

**NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** to endorse the proposals to hold an international conference in Highland on 5/6 September 2007 to launch the recent evaluation material produced by Highland, including the evaluation of Multi-agency Autism Services.

## **8. Persistent Offenders: Intensive Support and Supervision**

Report No CYP 10/07 by Joyce Gartshore, Youth Justice Resource Manager, providing an update on key statistics relating to young people who have been classified as persistent offenders in Highland.

The Joint Committee was informed that overall there was a downwards trend in the numbers of those considered persistent offenders for Highland. The number of those young people who had already reached persistent offender status, who were committing further offences within Highland, was well below the national average. This indicated that the intensive programmes of intervention to those young people who presented behaviour of most concern was having a significant impact on deterring them from committing further offences.

It was also highlighted that the Chairman of the Joint Committee had written to the Justice Minister, indicating the positive results that the Intensive Support Services had in Highland and asking that funding be continued.

**NOTED** the continuing positive performance of the Youth Action Service in Highland, which compared favourably with the national position.

#### **9. Development of Inter-agency Nurse Consultant**

Report No CYP 11/07 by Jan Baird, Director of Community Care, providing background information to the Joint Committee on the proposal for the development of Inter-agency Nurse Consultant for children and families over the next two years. The position would be funded by the Scottish Executive for a two year period with the expectation that ongoing resource implications would be addressed across the Partnership.

**NOTED** the proposal and **AGREED** to support the ongoing development of the project.

#### **10. Date of Next Meeting**

**NOTED:**

- i. that dates for future meetings could not be agreed until the Council's future meeting timetable had been fixed; and
- ii. the provisional date for the next meeting was in Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Friday 1 June at 2:00pm, and confirmation would be made to Members as soon as possible.

In closing the meeting the Chairman thanked the Joint Committee for their support and recognised that it had made some difficult, but effective decisions and wished the Committee well under the new Chairmanship of the NHS.

The meeting closed at 12:30pm.