

<i>item:</i>	7
<i>report:</i>	CYP12/09

CHILD PROTECTION INSPECTIONS **by Alistair Dodds**

Summary

This report updates the Joint Committee about matters in relation to child protection, and particularly the newly announced series of multi-agency inspections and the ongoing review of the Committee's workplan and activities, including the imminent publication of new guidance.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The management of child protection services is a priority across all public agencies, as evidenced by the involvement of Chief Officers on the Child Protection Committee, representing the Highland Council, Northern Constabulary, NHS Highland, Procurator Fiscal and Scottish Children's Reporters Administration.
- 1.2 The committee has recently undertaken a review of its workplan, as part of the integrated children's services plan, and has identified a range of new priorities for the coming three year. These will include full involvement in the rollout of *Getting it right for every child*, the publication of revised procedures, and preparation for the new round of HMle inspections.

2. Child Protection Inspections

- 2.1 Adam Ingram, Minister for Children & Early Years, recently instructed HMle and its partner inspection agencies to undertake a second cycle of joint inspections of child protection services from April 2009.
- 2.2 HMle will be expected to set out detailed proposals on the scope, timing, form and focus of the second cycle for Ministers' consideration by the end of March. HMle's outline proposals for a proportionate inspection cycle are based on risk and previous performance, as well as fixed timescales, taking into account the Accounts Commission/Audit Scotland coordinated programme of scrutiny.
- 2.3 The inspection model is expected to remain largely the same, and the Joint Committee will be updated about the detail of this, further to a series of conferences being held by HMle the previous week.
- 2.4 There is as yet no clarity about where each authority will be placed within the HMle timetable, but it is expected that the 32 inspections will be evenly distributed over the next three years.

- 2.5 The outline proposals for the second cycle of child protection inspections are also still intended to be consistent with a longer-term move towards the inspection of wider children's services with greater emphasis on self-evaluation.

3. Annual Report

- 3.1 The Child Protection Committee recently published its annual report for the year 2007/08. Publication cannot be at an earlier date, due to the need to await confirmation of the various statistical aspects from Government.
- 3.2 The report confirms that 2007/08 was another productive year for the Committee, continuing implementation of the action produced in response to local priorities and the HMIE inspections. A Quality Assurance Framework was implemented, and evidence was presented to the final HMIE follow-through inspection, in February 2008. The HMIE report, published in May 2008, concluded that the culture of continuing improvement is embedded in Highland. A summary of the annual report will be made available at the Committee.

4. Workplan

- 4.1 The Committee reviewed progress on its workplan at the end of 2008, and will consider a revised plan at its next meeting, at the end of this month.
- 4.2 The identified priorities for the coming three years involve actions to ensure that:
- Young people get access to services that are appropriate, proportionate and timely on the basis of assessed need.
 - Continuing improvement in the assessment of risks and needs.
 - Children's and young people's are aware about keeping themselves safe in their use of the internet.
 - Young people involved in underage sex are protected from harm, and appropriately supported by services.
 - Adult services are able to identify and act when a child is vulnerable and in need of support
 - Effective provision and co-ordination of long-term counselling and support services
 - Confidence that young people do refer and self-refer when they should.
 - Involvement of children & young people in their own planning and decision making.
 - There is a co-ordinated approach to youth involvement in policy and service development
 - No significant shortages in numbers of key groups of staff
 - A strategic and deliverable approach to quality assurance

5. Internet Safety

- 5.1 As part of its revised workplan, the Committee has already initiated a number of steps with regard to an issue of increasing importance, internet safety.
- 5.2 The Scottish Government is taking forward the recommendations of the Byron Review (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview/>), published in September 2007, including within the UK Council for Child Internet Safety. The Council's work is being taken forward through 4 workstreams covering:
- industry standards,
 - public information & awareness,
 - better education, and
 - video games.
- 5.3 In Highland we are supporting this activity through a training programme that has now been put in place, that will initially be targeted at all secondary schools. The early pilots have proved extremely successful.
- 5.4 Leaflets have also been distributed to pupils in all schools, giving them safety advice when accessing the internet. Copies of these will be available at the Committee.

6. Review of Guidance

- 6.1 Highland has reviewed its local child protection guidance, to take full account of recent research and the improvements to processes as part of the implementation of *Getting it right for every child*. This guidance will be launched by Chief Officers at a series of local roadshows in June.
- 6.2 Highland is also contributing to the review of new national child protection guidance, which is intended to ensure that it reflects recent policy and practice developments and embeds the best practice from Scotland's child protection practitioner community into consistent general use. Crucial to this work will be how to secure a safe and robust transition towards locating the protection of children at risk within the general approach set out by the GIRFEC practice model. This national guidance will provide a framework in which the local guidance should fit.

Recommendation

The Joint Committee is asked to consider and comment on this report.

Alistair Dodds

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