

**The Highland Council**  
**Education, Children and Adult Services Committee**  
**20 May 2015**

Agenda Item	17.
Report No	ECAS 46/15

**Child Protection Committee Biennial Report: April 2013 – March 2015**

**Report by Director of Care and Learning**

**Summary**

As required by the Scottish Government, the Highland Child Protection Committee has prepared a biennial report detailing how functions have been carried out and progress against the priorities identified in the rolling Child Protection Improvement Plan.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The national guidance for Child Protection Committees (CPCs) requires Chief Officers to decide on the local reporting arrangements for their Child Protection Committee and the reporting requirements.
- 1.2 Due to changes in the requirements for the annual submission of data sets to the Scottish Government, from the financial to the academic year, a biennial report, circulated separately as **Booklet B**, has been produced for the period April 2013 – March 2015, including data for the period to July 31<sup>st</sup> 2014.
- 1.3 The biennial report, which is provided to this meeting of the Committee:
  - provides an account of progress against the previous year's plan and of the execution of the CPC's functions, which can be summarised as continuous improvement, strategic planning, public information and communication;
  - provides information on the level and quality of interagency work;
  - allows some comparison across CPCs and year on year trends for individual CPCs;
  - outlines improvement priorities for the coming year.

**2. Summary of Progress**

**2.1 Improving Practice**

- 2.1.1 Self-evaluation and bench-marking against best practice are embedded across children's services and this was cited as an example of good practice in the Joint Inspection Report published in April 2014.
- 2.1.2 Inter-agency Guidelines to Protect Children and Young People in Highland were reviewed and updated, alongside the Highland Practice Model, and will be published in the summer of 2015.
- 2.1.3 The inter-agency and core training around Child Protection and the Highland

Practice Model were reviewed and updated. In-house training has also been reviewed and additional trainers trained. In total 9706 participants accessed child protection training between April 2013 and March 2015.

- 2.1.4 Acting on findings from audit, the use of Child Protection Orders as an emergency measure has been reduced in line with the national average.
- 2.1.5 Improvements continue to be made in communication with children and their families, including increased advocacy provision and a review of methods and materials used to communicate information and to capture viewpoints.
- 2.2 **Outcome 1: Children are protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community.**
  - 2.2.1 The Improvement Plan sought to address risks to children and young people with additional vulnerabilities:
  - 2.2.2 **Disability:** National research and training materials have been reviewed. Guidance and training has been updated, and a plan put into action to improve communication, identification and protection planning.
  - 2.2.3 **Children Affected by Parental Substance Misuse (CAPSM):** Revised national guidance has been reviewed and the training programme and practice guidance updated. Adult Services have been engaged in this process.
  - 2.2.4 **Domestic Abuse:** Training in respect of Child Protection and Domestic Abuse has been reviewed and a specific workshop on Violence Against Children, in a Gendered Context, was presented for Early Years and childcare staff on 13 November. Additionally, the CPC has collaborated with the Violence against Women Partnership to produce guidance for NHS staff around the needs of children and young people living with domestic abuse.
  - 2.2.5 **Parental Mental Health:** An in-house training strategy has been developed for Health staff and specific training delivered to Adult Mental Health Service psychologists and psychiatrists and staff at Osprey House, to ensure they have robust systems in place for identifying children at risk and communicating any concerns appropriately to the named person.
  - 2.2.6 **Children at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation:** The lessons emerging from high-profile cases across the UK were considered and a working group established to progress the recently launched Scottish Government Action Plan at local level. An action plan has been produced for implementation in 2015/16.
- 2.3 **Outcome 2 - Children are well equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to keep themselves safe.**
  - 2.3.1 The Improvement plan sought to increase awareness amongst children and young people and to promote self-referral or disclosure to trusted adults.

2.3.2 Following successful pilots in 2013/14, work was undertaken with 'Safe, Strong and Free' and with the NSPCC to develop a coherent program of child protection inputs from Pre-school to Primary 7. A program of e-safety inputs across the school years is also being delivered, supported with age appropriate acceptable use policies and additional on-line blogs and materials.

2.3.3 Radio campaigns have been run to raise general awareness, supported with targeted poster campaigns in schools and nurseries and information in careers guides and school diaries.

2.4 **Outcome 13 - Children and Young People and their families are supported well to develop the strengths and resilience needed to overcome any inequalities they experience.**

2.4.1 In addition to specific groups targeted under Outcome 1, the CPC recognised that cultural differences and child protection issues arising in new contexts need to be responded to appropriately, to enable full participation by families.

2.4.2 Cultural issues have been woven through the generic child protection training programmes and the CPC has continued to contribute to joint training, with the Violence Against Women partnership and the Adult Support and Protection Committee, in relation to honour-based violence.

2.4.3 The CPC has adopted the national guidance for responding to child trafficking and contributed to the development of a joint protocol on Female Genital Mutilation, in response to national guidance.

2.5 **Strategic Planning**

The report describes in detail how the CPC works within both the Integrated Children's Services and the Public Protection structures to take forward SOA priorities 5 and 6 towards National Outcome 8 – 'We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk'.

2.6 **Public Information and Communication**

2.6.1 The report details the variety of media used to promote awareness of child protection issues and to advertise the single point of contact for the public to refer their concerns to. Since changing this to a Freephone number, in 2013, referrals from the public have risen by 25% to approximately 1 a week. These peak during radio campaigns, which are run at least twice yearly.

2.6.2 During the period reported, public information themes included:

- 'Less Visible, More Vulnerable'
- Information on Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation.
- 'Be safe and keep others safe online'
- Advice on leaving children home alone;
- Private Fostering – awareness of statutory requirement to register with LA;
- Share wellbeing concerns early – advice from the Information Commissioners Office;
- New Criminal Offence of Forced Marriage

- Signs of child trafficking
- Promotion of Child Protection training and awareness events;

2.6.3 If awareness is measured in terms of expression of concern, respondents to the Council's Public Perception and Attitudes survey reported "abuse of children" in their areas as a concern to 41% - an increase on the 33% recorded in 2013 (34% in 2012).

### 3. Impact

3.1 High profile national cases raised awareness of parental substance misuse, mental ill health and neglect issues across the UK, resulting in an increase in referrals and greater caution in dealing with evasive parents. The difficulty in engaging some of these families voluntarily, and the relapsing nature of some harmful parental behaviour, is likely to have fuelled the rise in registrations across Scotland.

3.2 Highland trends mirror those across Scotland and across its demographic comparator Local Authority areas. However, changes have been more marked in Highland:

- Investigations rose by 22%, from 538 in 2013 to 658 in 2014
- The number of referrals resulting in a Child Protection Child's Plan Meeting, in Highland, in 2014 was 244 (an increase of 27.1% from 192 in 2013). The comparator authorities show an increase of 12.2%, and the Scotland figures show an increase of 4.7%. Despite this steep rise, Highland rates per 1,000 (6) remain below both the comparator average rate of 6.7, and the Scotland average rate of 6.4
- The number of registrations per 1,000 children in Highland has risen by 30% since 2013, compared with an average increase of 10.6% across comparator areas and a Scottish average increase of 8.3%.

3.3 In the past, small variations have been accounted for by the registration of one or two large families, and there has certainly been a rise in registrations relating to parental substance misuse, mental ill health and neglect - all of which, particularly in combination, tend to affect whole families rather than single children within a family. These factors impacting on registration have shown the steepest rises:

Factor	Highland 2013-2014	Change	Scotland 2013-2014	Change
<b>Parental Substance Misuse</b>	23% - 38%	+15%	23% - 39%	+16%
<b>Parental Mental Health Issues</b>	16% - 26%	+10%	14% - 26%	+12%
<b>Neglect</b>	20% - 30%	+10%	24% - 35%	+11%
<b>Non engaging Family</b>	9% - 25%	+16%	13% - 22%	+ 9%

3.4 Caution in dealing with the particularly high percentage of non-engaging families in Highland may account for the changing trend in de-registrations, which have decreased 4% in comparison to an average Scottish increase of

2.4%. However, the rate of 4.2 per 1,000 pop 0-15 remains less than the comparator average rate of 4.9, and the Scotland average rate of 4.7

#### **4. Improvement Planning**

- 4.1 Self-evaluation and analysis of trends informed the CPC annual review of the Improvement Plan. There was consensus that the CPC should continue to prioritise work to protect the most vulnerable groups:
- Children with disabilities
  - Children affected by parental substance misuse
  - Children experiencing sexual abuse or exploitation
  - Children affected by domestic abuse
  - Children affected by parental mental health issues
  - Encouraging self-protective behaviour and self-referral
  - Responding to the needs of an increasingly diverse population
- 4.2 Additionally, it was agreed that there should be specific activity to improve the efficacy of the CPC in the execution of its functions, including:
- Implementation of the updated Training Strategy
  - Review of management information sources
  - Development of a systematic strategy for quality assurance of child protection processes
  - Review of processes for case review and dissemination of learning
- 4.3 A revised version of the rolling Improvement Plan with updated actions will be presented to the CPC at its quarterly meeting in June 2015.

#### **Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note and comment on the biennial report of the Highland Child Protection Committee.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 11 May 2015

Author: Pene Rowe (CPC Development Officer)

Background Papers: Highland Child Protection Biennial Report