Welcome to the first edition of the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee newsletter.

The Child Protection Committee is busy ‘working together to keep our children and young people safe’ and we thought that a newsletter would be an effective way to share with colleagues the work that we are progressing. This includes new policies, procedures and service developments. You can read more about this in the newsletter.

The committee is finalising an annual report and business plan which will soon be available on the Child Protection Committee web pages at www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/childprotection. This will give details of our achievements 2008/9 and our plans 2009/10.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff who are involved in protecting children and improving their lives. Members of the Committee recognise the very demanding nature of the work undertaken by frontline practitioners and managers and therefore we would welcome any suggestions or ideas you may have about improving child protection practice in East Ayrshire. You can do this by contacting the child protection co-ordinator Diane.Burns@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

Future editions of this newsletter will tell you more about CPC aims and work in progress.

Susan Taylor, Chair of Child Protection Committee

What is the Child Protection Committee?
The Child Protection Committee is the primary multi agency forum for child protection work in East Ayrshire.

The key functions of the Child Protection Committee are:
- strategic planning of Child Protection Services
- continuous improvement
- public awareness.

Who is on the Child Protection Committee?
The Child Protection Committee has representation from the key agencies working to keep children safe in East Ayrshire. The current membership of the Committee is supported by four sub groups:
- Performance and Audit
- Practitioners
- Public Engagement and Information
- Training sub group.

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If you have any comments on this newsletter or any stories or news items for future editions. Please contact Diane.Burns@east-ayrshire.gov.uk
Child Protection Committee

Road shows

To increase awareness of the developments in Child Protection and the work of the Child Protection Committee a number of briefing sessions will take place throughout east ayrshire. We would love to see you there. For further details are available on the CPC web pages at www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/childprotection

The HMIe Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children and Young People in the East Ayrshire Council Area.

As you will know the HMIe visited East Ayrshire in 2007. They found key strengths in how well children were protected in East Ayrshire and their needs met. They noted strengths in:

- the quality of relationships between staff and children which helped children express their needs and views;
- the range of successful approaches used to raise public awareness of child protection;
- children, especially vulnerable children and their families, were consistently involved in the development and design of services;
- shared vision, values and aims which influenced the work of partnership services;
- staff awareness and ownership of joint planning for improvement and planning and partnership working, at a strategic level, across all services.

The HMIe also highlighted areas where services needed to be strengthened, which were:

- Improve processes for identifying and assessing risks and needs of children where there are child protection concerns;
- More fully involve health in child protection processes and improve children’s access to medical assessments and examinations;
- Improve joint planning to meet children’s needs;
- Ensure the work of social workers is monitored more consistently.

Following the inspection the Child Protection Committee agreed an action plan to address these issues and this work has been progressing.

New Cycle of HMIe Inspections

The HMIe announced a new 3-year cycle of joint inspections of services to protect children and young people. As part of this new cycle the HMIe inspectors will return to East Ayrshire on 26th October 2009 and the second week of the inspection will take place on 9th November 2009.

In the new cycle inspections become increasingly proportionate and there will be a sharper focus on outcomes for vulnerable children. Inspectors will focus on fewer quality indicators and self-evaluation will help to determine the scope of each inspection. The extent of self evaluation of child protection practice that is carried out by the Child Protection Committee, agencies and individual workers/managers will determine the scope of the inspectors’ scrutiny.

The new model will be in 3 phases over 2 weeks of fieldwork. The inspection is an opportunity for staff to highlight the good and effective practice that is in place in East Ayrshire.

The principal inspection team for East Ayrshire's Child Protection Inspection will be:

Emma McWilliams
Lead Inspector (Social Work)

Len McConnell
Depute Inspector (Education)

Fiona McManus (Health)

DCI Jacqui Rennie (Police)

Child Protection Training Calender

The Child Protection Committee offers child protection training at 3 levels which aims to promote competence and confidence in all staff / volunteers in relation to various issues in protecting children and young people. The training also provides a forum for staff / volunteers from all agencies to meet, train together and share experiences and views. This will promote a sharing of best practice where everyone can learn from each other. The calendar is available at: www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/childprotection
MARS: Multi Agency Resource Service

The establishment of the MARS unit is part of the Scottish Government’s response to Recommendation 27 of the SWIA report An Inspection into the Care and Protection of Children in Eilean Siar.

The new MARS will be officially launched by the Scottish Government this summer and will be based at Stirling University. It will be the first hub of child protection expertise in the UK. The MARS will aim to develop a network of practice and research expertise to aid professionals in the field.

MARS will aim to:

• act as a critical friend to organisations involved in challenging child protection work
• develop a community of expertise
• help agencies identify perceived and actual gaps in skills or experience at a strategic planning, operational management or practitioner level
• help agencies access support at various levels to assist in the handling of complex child protection work
• put processes in place to facilitate and support access to external skilled practitioners, consultants or trainers with the aim of reinforcing or increasing local levels of expertise

Child Trafficking

In March 2007 the U.K. Government signed the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings and the Home Office and the then Scottish Executive co-published the U.K. Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking.

The Convention was ratified by the U.K. Government on 17 December, 2008, which means that the U.K. is bound by the Convention from 1 April 2009.

The purpose of the Convention is to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings; to identify and protect the victims of trafficking and to safeguard their rights; and to promote international co-operation against trafficking.

Whistle Blowing

In the wake of a number of high profile child abuse cases both in Scotland and in England, there has been increased public scrutiny of child protection services in an effort to minimize the possibility of further tragic events.

Every Council, Police Force and NHS Board in Scotland has in place ‘whistle blowing’ and internal complaints procedures. Every child protection practitioner should be aware of what they can do to report any concerns they may have that cases are being mismanaged, or that capacity problems are preventing them from giving at-risk children the support that they need. They should also be confident that any such concerns will be taken seriously and acted on appropriately. It can be difficult to speak out about these kinds of problems, but we must encourage a climate of openness and transparency rather than apportioning blame.

As Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years stated in his letter to Child Protection Committees at the end of 2008: ‘I know that Scotland’s front line practitioners are doing a difficult job very well, and I hope that you will help empower them to report any concerns they have, to help us protect Scotland’s children. If you have any concern please refer to your agency’s whistle blowing policy.’
East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee Annual Conference

The Second Annual Conference on ‘Protection’ took place on 25 February 2009 looking at ‘Listening to Children’s Voices and Corporate Parenting’. The Conference was attended by 113 delegates from various agencies across East Ayrshire and was evaluated very positively.

Key topics from the day were:

- ‘These Are Our Bairns: a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent’, September 2008;
- ‘The Authentic Warmth’ approach to children and young people who have been rejected, neglected and abused;
- The Carer’s Perspective of being a Corporate Parent;
- ‘Who Cares’ – Independent Advocacy Service for all Looked After Children and Young People in East Ayrshire;
- The Voices of Children who have experienced Local Authority Care;
- We Can and Must Do Better. The Scottish Government report ‘Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better’ provides a framework for action for improving the educational outcomes of looked after children and young people.

Review of National Child Protection Multi Agency Guidance

A review of the 1998 guidance ‘Protecting Children: A Shared Responsibility’ will be led by a national working group chaired by the Scottish Government and with representatives from Child Protection Committees (CPCs), police, health, social work, SCRA and the Crown Office. The group will draw on evidence emerging from inspections to help embed good practice in the guidance and it is hoped that the new guidance will be available in 2011.

Youth Survey

An essential part of the work that we do with children is to speak to children and gain their views to influence policy and practice. The Public Engagement and information sub group has just finished conducting a youth survey which was completed by 256 school pupils. The aim of this survey was to determine children and young people’s understanding of the phrase Child Protection. Questions were included to assess awareness of sources of help and support and to indicate if information materials are reaching their intended audience.

The results of this will soon be placed on the Child Protection Committee webpage.

If you are concerned about a child...

As a minimum all employees should:

- Listen to what is said
- Observe what is happening
- Write down exactly what you see and hear
- If you are concerned about a child or young person’s welfare don’t delay
- Report any concerns to your line manager/supervision

IF IN DOUBT, CHECK IT OUT

Further advice or support can be obtained from

SOCIAL WORK

Lugar 01563 554455
Kilmarnock 01563 528011

POLICE

Strathclyde Police any police office or Family Protection Unit 01563 505092

HEALTH

Child Protection Advisor 01290 421194

Child Protection Committee Vision Statement

‘Working together to keep our children and young people safe’