



TAYSIDE POLICE



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Mr MacLean
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Dear Ministers

Joint Services to Protect Children in the Angus Council Area

This letter provides a response on behalf of the key agencies responsible for the protection of children in the Angus Council area to the letters dated the 22nd of March 2006 from the Minister for Young Children People, the Minister for Justice, the Minister for Health and Community Care and Colin MacLean's letter of the 4th of May 2006 which seek a statement of assurance that:

- The new guidance for Child Protection Committees has been implemented;
- The Chief Officers' Group are confident that mechanisms exist to ensure the functions now required of the CPC's can be effectively carried out;
- Local agencies are taking reasonable steps to identify all children adversely affected by drugs misuse in the area, assess their needs and are implement plans to meet these; and
- Details of local and national barriers and action, which can be taken to address these issues.

An indication is also sought in the letter on how the new guidance for CPC's is being implemented in practice and what impact this is having on ensuring effective joint working to deliver the outcomes needed to ensure children are adequately protected.

The first part of this response relates to the CPC and the second part the issues in relation to children affected by parental substance misuse and barriers which could be overcome by collective or Executive led action in relation to this work.

Part A

Since our last letter of assurance on the 24th of May 2004 we can confirm the following developments/progress:

1. Role of Chief Officers

Angus Executive Group for Child Protection (AEGCP) meets for core business meetings on at least three occasions each year and has arranged extraordinary meetings as required. The membership consists of Angus Council's Chief Executive who chairs the group, the Divisional Commander Eastern representing the Chief Constable Tayside Police, NHS Tayside Chief Executive or their representative, Community Health Partnership General Manager, and the Lead Clinician Child Protection, the Directors of Education and Social Work and the Chairperson of Angus Child Protection Committee. The constitutions and the purpose agreed for the Group reflect the requirements of the guidance "*Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committees*".

The Group agreed the Annual Report, Business Plan and resources required for the Committee to discharge its functions for 2005 - 2006. The Annual Report and Business Plan for 2006-2007 is in the process of being completed and it will be considered by AEGCP at its next meeting on the 2nd of June 2006.

In line with the new national guidance the membership and functions of the CPC have been reviewed to ensure they meet the objectives set out for it. The Lead Officer (known locally as the Development Manager) attends both the Executive Group and the CPC in an advisory capacity. The chair of the Child Protection Committee and the Development Manager report to the Executive Group on the work of the Committee.

The resources required to support the work of the Committee including funding for the post of Development Manager for Child Protection, administrative support, the Training Co-ordinator, and related support budget have been identified from the Changing Children's Services Fund in Angus. All these are in place other than the Training Co-ordinator for whom the recruitment process begins in June 2006. In the meantime the Training Sub Group of Angus Child Protection Committee continues to identify and deliver interagency training locally, based on a training needs sample undertaken by the CPC during 2005.

The next Angus Child Protection Committee Annual Report and Business Plan referred to earlier will provide details of the work of the Committee in the last year.

2. With regard to the issue of the mechanisms to ensure appropriate functioning of the CPC we offer the following information:

2.1. Public Information

There have been two separate local consultations, one with adults and one with young people regarding the future provision of public information. The findings of these consultations have determined the current shape and strategy for public information locally.

Leaflets have been produced on the child protection process for children and their parents/carers. Information leaflets for the general public about how to respond if they have concerns about a child or young person have been widely distributed locally. Bookmarks, with contact details for agencies that can help if there is a concern about a child or young person, have been placed in local libraries. The local press and Council magazine, the latter to be distributed to every household in Angus, have been used to promote the work of agencies, and their contact details, in protecting children.

The information provided by the CPC to advise members of the public of agencies who can help is complemented by the provision of a family fact file for all parents of Primary 7 to S1 pupils in Angus. This file contains information on substances, helping agencies and how to talk to children and young people about the issues.

2.2 Continuous Improvement

2.2.1 Policy Procedures and Protocols

Since the last letter of assurance the Committee has consulted on and produced the following guidance/protocols:

- Angus Child Protection Committee Interagency Guidelines for Professional Staff.
- Angus CPC guidance "*Protecting Children in Community Groups*".
- A protocol regarding missing children, absconders and children otherwise absent from local authority care.
- Guidance and a proforma to seek the written consent of service users to share and use information across all agencies.
- Angus CPC and DAAT, Interagency protocol "*Working with children and families affected by substance misuse*"
- Angus CPC has also reviewed the policies and procedures of agencies regarding the protection of children.

Updates of Angus CPC Interagency Guidelines for Professional Staff and agency guidelines on child protection have reflected the content of the

protocol "*Working with Children and Families Affected by Parental Substance Misuse*".

The above interagency guidance/protocols have been enhanced by the development of child protection policies/guidance within agencies, which have been reviewed by the CPC, e.g. NHS Tayside Child Protection Policy, Child Protection Case Conference Guidance for Staff, Unborn Baby Protocol, the Paediatric Discharge Policy, Angus Council Social Work Department Child Protection Guidance for staff. Tayside Police have also produced a Child Protection Policy, Strategy and Guidance document.

Close collaborative work continues in the management and monitoring of dangerous and sexual offenders and involves officers of the Social Work Criminal Justice Service, Child Protection Managers, Housing Department and Officers of Tayside Police to promote the safety of children and young people in this area.

2.2.2 Trend Information

The Child Protection Committee considers data on child protection registration and the case conference process i.e. the attendance and provision of reports for child protection case conferences and acts as required on the information. This information has also been used to inform developments locally e.g. the need for a multi agency response to unborn babies and their parents, the need to have an early review Child Protection Case Conference for children who have been accommodated and given the numbers of children affected by parental substance misuse, the need for collaborative working within and across agencies and between Angus DAAT and CPC.

2.2.3 Quality Assurance

Child Protection cases within Angus Council are subject to on-going internal audit procedures by Service Managers, which are reported to the Senior Management Team within Social Work on an agreed frequency.

The Child Protection Committee has agreed a protocol for undertaking interagency audits of practice and the first audit is underway and will be reported to the CPC and AEGCP.

The Committee also continues to formulate and progress action plans in relation to major enquiries, and the findings of the pilot national inspections. These plans identify actions required both within and across agencies and are subject to regular progress reporting within the Child Protection Committee.

2.2.4 Promotion of Good Practice

The Committee has reviewed its protocol for undertaking significant case reviews. A draft protocol is currently in place and this will be subject to further consideration following publication of guidance from the Scottish Executive on this matter. During this year the Committee has undertaken two such case reviews. The findings of one review has been reported to the Child Protection Committee and Angus Executive Group for Child Protection and an action

plan is in the process of being formulated in relation to this review. The second review is underway and will report to the CPC and the Executive Group in the near future. The process of conducting these last 2 reviews will also influence future systems developed locally for this purpose.

2.2.5 Training and Staff Development

Interagency training continues to be provided by the Committee under the auspices of the Angus Child Protection Committee Training Sub Group and this has covered a range of topics during the last year. The Training Sub Group has also supported single agency training in the area of Child Protection. The Committee also links with the CPC's of Dundee and Angus to commission interagency training across Tayside, from Dundee University.

As indicated earlier it has been agreed to appoint a Training Co-ordinator to support the work of the Committee in this area and recruitment for this post will begin in June 2006.

Each agency has continued to provide training for their staff in the area of child protection and this complements that provided by the Committee.

2.3 Strategic Planning

CPC membership, representation and links into multi agency planning partnerships and structures, have been reviewed since the guidance was issued. Additionally the links between the DAAT and the CPC are strengthened by the attendance of the DAAT Development Manager at the CPC and the CPC Development Manager at the Drug and Alcohol Strategic Planning Group.

We are satisfied that in the main the Committee is now able to deliver what is required of it within the guidance.

Part B

1. Angus Protocol arising from Getting Our Priorities Right guidance "*Working with children and families affected by parental substance misuse*"

The protocol "*Working with children and families affected by substance misuse*" was launched in November 2004 following 3 multi agency consultation seminars held to develop the protocol locally. The protocol outlines clear guidance for staff in the area of sharing information based on the Scottish Executive publication "*Sharing information about children at risk*". It outlines a requirement for staff in all agencies, including those who have traditionally seen themselves as working with adults and not children, to determine whether there are children in the household and to undertake an initial screening assessment of the child's needs. Where there are concerns about a child's welfare or protection the protocol requires that agencies give consideration to a referral to Social Work and or Tayside Police. Whilst training has been provided on the protocol there is recognition that ongoing work is required to ensure its effectiveness and development.

The Angus Council Social Work and Health Departments operational instructions "*Protecting children from abuse and neglect*" also requires that where a parent is using substances chaotically, children under the age of 4 years will have their circumstances considered at a child protection case conference.

Angus DAAT audited the implementation of the protocol and training provided to staff. The audit established there was a need to provide interagency training and to complement agency training to assist in raising awareness of the protocol.

A multi agency group was established to overview implementation and review of the protocol. The implementation group has co-ordinated the provision of agency and interagency training on the protocol as follows:

1. Briefings for elected members and senior managers;
2. Awareness raising seminars for main grade staff; and
3. Training for specialist staff working with children and their families.

274 staff attended these seminars. A further audit is planned for the end of 2006 to establish the effectiveness of the training in terms of raising awareness of the protocol.

The protocol will be updated and aligned with developments since its launch, during the coming year.

The protocol is congruent with the NHS Tayside unborn baby protocol which promotes early identification of vulnerable expectant mothers and their babies and a local multi agency resource allocation group which will accept its first referrals in May 2006. This multi agency group will receive referrals of vulnerable expectant mothers and their babies, including but not exclusively where parental substance misuse is a concern, allocate a lead worker who will undertake jointly with other members an assessment of the expectant mother and unborn baby, identify levels of risk and levels of support need. The Pre birth resource allocation group will agree a multi agency support package for the family.

2. Identification of children adversely affected by drugs misuse, assessment of their needs and plans to meet these

Within Angus the issue of parental substance misuse and its impact on children is being actively addressed. This is reflected we believe in the high proportion of children (2/3) on the child protection register and children who are looked after and/or accommodated by Angus Council (1/3) where parental substance misuse is an issue. The priority accorded to this issue locally is also reflected in the development and implementation of the protocol and the training delivered in relation to it referred to previously.

The Pre inspection return (PIR) recently provided for the joint inspection of services in Angus to protect children includes information on children receiving services from agencies in Angus. Of the 191 children included in the PIR 104 were recognised as being affected by parental substance misuse.

In the last year Angus Council Social Work staff have convened 18 pre birth case discussion/planning meetings and NHS Tayside convened 34 pre birth meetings. Child protection case conferences were considered necessary in 10 of these cases. 7 of the 11 children under the age of 1 year on the Child Protection Register in the last year were affected by parental substance misuse.

All children on the child protection register plus those children accommodated or looked after by the Local Authority are subject to a multi agency review, which is chaired by a senior officer of Angus Council who is independent of the management of the child's case. These reviews consider the assessment of the child's circumstances, progress and the fitness of the care and/or protection plan, which is in place to meet the child's needs. Arrangements are also in place within Angus Council Social Work and Health for the completion of an assessment, and where appropriate completion of a plan, for children who are deemed to be "in need". There is consultation with personnel from other agencies involved with the child as part of this assessment. The level of assessment is determined by the nature of the concern for the child.

In the early stages of the existence of the protocol applications were made to the NHS Tayside Caldicott guardian to obtain health information about some children and their families, which was not forthcoming at the first request. It is worthy of note that there has been no need to make any applications to the Caldicott guardian for some time.

A range of services exist for young people who misuse substances including a service commissioned from the Web Project a local voluntary organisation, to provide a service specifically for children and young people who are Looked After and are experiencing problems in relation to drug misuse. The social work department's Drug and Alcohol Team will also provide services to young people where there are specific problems in relation to their drug misuse.

Whilst considerable work has been undertaken locally on this issue it was identified that there was no reliable baseline information regarding the numbers of children in Angus affected by parental substance misuse. Therefore prior to the request from the Ministers a decision was made by Angus DAAT to commission a multi agency audit of the number of children affected by parental substance misuse, the age of these children and the agencies involved with them. The outcome of this work will be reported on completion to the DAAT and CPC and relevant agency and interagency planning fora.

Angus Youth Congress is holding a conference supported by local agencies on the work of the emergency services in August 2006. It has been agreed that Angus CPC and DAAT will participate in this event to consult with young people to establish their knowledge of services for young people who have a substance misuse problem. Any actions arising from this event will be attended to by the DAAT and/or CPC.

3. Local and national barriers and action, which can be taken to address these issues

We would suggest the following could usefully be addressed by the Executive:

- a) The production of a training framework and competencies for those who are working with children and families affected by substance misuse.
- b) Within Angus a number of children have been born seriously affected by their mother's substance misuse. These children were identified prior to birth and attempts were made to engage their mothers in appropriate ante-natal care however this was declined. Currently there is no legislative provision to protect the rights of the unborn child and we suggest this should be considered
- c) A significant increase in the provision of residential and community based rehabilitation resources would help address the needs of parents and their children in their local community.
- d) There has been an increasing demand for services in relation to children and families affected by parental substance misuse. There is a need to ensure resources are available to adequately respond to this demand.
- e) Within Angus there has been a significant increase in the number of children received into accommodation. Whilst this has been very demanding of resources, we have been able to respond to the need. This will become increasingly difficult should there continue to be increasing demand in this area of work. Continuing Executive action assisting Local Authorities in addressing the national shortage of foster care placements would be welcomed.

We will be pleased to discuss the contents or provide clarification, should that be required.

Yours sincerely

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Chief Executive

J Vine
Chief Constable

A Wells
Chief Executive
NHS Tayside