

East Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee

Chair : Safaa Baxter, BA, DipSW, CQSW, Man. Cert.
Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park, Rouken Glen Road, Giffnock,
East Renfrewshire. G46 6UG
Telephone: 0141 577 3841 Fax: 0141 577 3846
e-mail: safaa.baxter@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk



East Renfrewshire
Child Protection
Committee

Our Ref: ercpc/sbaxter/Ministers re Child Protection

Your Ref:

Date: 31 May, 2006

When calling please ask for Mrs. Safaa Baxter, Chair of East Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee

Mr. Peter Peacock, MSP, Minister for Children and Young People.

Ms. Cathy Jamieson, MSP, Minister for Justice.

Mr. Andy Kerr, MSP, Minister for Health and Community Care.

Scottish Executive,
Victoria Quay,
EDINBURGH.
EH6 6QQ

Dear Ministers,

CHILD PROTECTION : LETTERS DATED 22 MARCH 2006 AND 4 MAY 2006

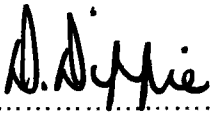
Further to the Ministerial letter dated 22 March, 2006 and Colin MacLean's letter of 4 May, 2006 seeking assurances from Chief Executives of local authorities, Chief Executives of Health Boards and Chief Constables of Scottish Forces, we would wish to stress that our agencies, working together in partnership, are entirely committed to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in our communities, including those affected by parental drug misuse.

East Renfrewshire would confirm our response made to the first letter from Ministers, that not all harm to children can be predicted or prevented. The issue of the impact of parental substance misuse provides a particular challenge.

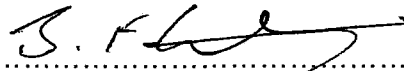
We have however taken systematic action to ensure that as far as possible the children in East Renfrewshire are protected from harm.

We enclose the following report on our activity and approach, for your consideration. We would welcome your written comments in relation to this submission and in particular as to whether you consider the East Renfrewshire partnership is discharging its duties appropriately.

Yours sincerely,



.....
DAVID DIPPIE,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL.



.....
COUNCILLOR JIM FLETCHER,
LEADER OF EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL.
.....



.....
MR. TOM DIVERS,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
NHS GREATER GLASGOW AND CLYDE



.....
SIR WILLIAM RAE, QPM,
CHIEF CONSTABLE
STRATHCLYDE POLICE.

APPENDIX 1
APPENDIX 2
APPENDIX 3

East Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee Constitution and Partnership Agreement
Self Evaluation of the Child Protection Committee in East Renfrewshire
East Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee, Annual Report 2005 & Business Plan 2006-07

EAST RENFREWSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

We are able to report that:

- the new guidance for Child Protection Committees has been implemented; and
- the Chief Officer's Group are confident that they have in place the appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the functions now required of East Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee can be effectively carried out.

In response to the guidance issued, a Chief Officers Group has been established and mechanisms are in place for convening this Group. Arrangements are also in place for the Chief Officers Group to meet with the Chair of East Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee (ERCPC) with sufficient frequency to evaluate progress against agreed objectives.

The Chief Officers Group in conjunction with the Chair of ERCPC, are finalising the annual report of the CPC for 2005-2006 and the business plan for 2006-2007 including priorities for protecting children and allocation of resources to the CPC (a draft copy is attached for your information).

A full account of the work of the CPC is contained within this report, including the level and quality of inter agency work, and an outline of the business plan, budget requirements and the sources for the coming year.

The view of children, young people and their families is demonstrated in the work of the CPC, and their involvement in the development of ERCPC's public information and communications strategies is evidenced within the annual report. The CPC will continue to ensure that the perspective of children, young people and their families informs the work of the CPC.

The Constitution of the CPC has been revised to ensure that this reflects the agreed Functions and Task of the Committee is in line with Scottish Executive guidance (copy attached). The following sub committees have been established to take forward the work of the Committee:

- Policy and Procedures sub committee
- Inter Agency training sub committee
- Public Information sub committee
- Quality Assurance sub committee
- Voluntary, Community and Private Sector sub committee

Membership of the CPC has also been reviewed to ensure that agency representation carries sufficient delegated authority to support the key objectives reflected in the business plan.

Dedicated staff time has been agreed and resources to support the implementation and delivery of the CPC's core functions have been strengthened with the appointment of a Lead Officer to the CPC. Arrangements are currently in place to appoint an inter agency training officer with administrative support to ensure the CPC is sufficiently resourced to deliver its key objectives.

A self-evaluation on the operational management and strategic leadership of ERCPC has been undertaken in line with the Quality Indicators (2,4 and 5) outlined in the Scottish Executive document "*How well are children and young people protected and their needs met?*" with an agreed action plan and timescales for completion, now in place (copy attached).

Links between the CPC and other planning forums, in particular, Children Service Planning, Substance Misuse Forum, Youth Justice Forum and Community Planning have been strengthened, with cross representation from senior managers of all key agencies linking to the CPC and the other aforementioned planning structures. The Corporate Action Plan 2006 – 2007 outlines the key achievements and planned actions relating to drugs and alcohol across partner agencies in East Renfrewshire. The creation of the integrated Community Health and Care Partnership will enhance the sharing of information and collaborative working between health and social care in service delivery.

In addition, the letter of 4 May, 2006 states that Ministers seek assurances on two principal concerns about what is happening locally:

- That local agencies are taking all reasonable steps to identify those children who are adversely affected, particularly those cases where risk of serious impact is high; and
- That in all such cases the needs of children come first and are being met.

We would advise that singly and jointly, agencies are committed to tackling the challenges of children affected by parental drug misuse, and ensuring that the needs of the child are met.

Systems are in place through our early intervention strategies and child protection processes to identify children in need or at risk at an early stage. For every child or young person identified as being adversely affected by drug misuse, a multi agency package of support and/or protection is put in place. Packages of support, and/or protection, are regularly reviewed within a multi agency forum, and child protection processes and action independently quality assured.

Systems in place ensure that a child or young person, who comes to the attention of any agency as being affected by drug misuse, is assessed using an integrated multi agency assessment approach, and a plan is put in place with agreed timescales which meets the individual needs of the child or young person and safeguards their welfare.

Information presented below provides indicators of the work undertaken:-

Prevention

This is evidenced by the extensive and innovative preventative work undertaken by Police, Education, Health, Social Work, Voluntary Sector and other partner agencies, designed to raise awareness amongst children, young people and their parents, of the adverse issues attached to drug misuse. In addition, information on where children and young people affected by drug misuse can get help is also widely available, offering children and young people a range of support options.

Some of the preventive strategies currently in place in East Renfrewshire include:

- “*Choices for Life*” – a national event aimed at all Primary 7 pupils, which through music, drama, and education offers information to young people that helps empower them to make positive life choices. This is an annual event and is due to take place again in East Renfrewshire in June 2006. All Primary 7 pupils will participate.
- “*Safety in the Park*” – a local 2-week safety initiative which covers a range of areas including drug use, aimed at all Primary 7 pupils in East Renfrewshire This again is an annual event planned for August 2006.

- *"Parent's Information Evening"* – local multi agency event in East Renfrewshire which targets parents of P7, S1 and S2 to inform them of the types of issues being taught to young people in schools, including drug education.
- *Fable vision and Pace* - Theatre and workshop productions in schools. Additional funding has been secured through Argyll and Clyde Alcohol and Drug Action Team (ADAT) for additional developments in theatre production to build up resilience in children affected by a range of parental difficulties, including drug use. The target audience for this production will be P5/P6.
- *Peer support project* –S5/6 second pilot of peer support project will begin in August 2006.
- *Citizenship and the Law*- input from Police to schools on drugs.
- *"Teen events"* – P7, S1 range of workshops with choices that include drugs and alcohol.
- *RCA Trust*-educational input on drugs and related subjects to local services in working with young people.
- *"Youth Festival"* – a multi agency, month long series of events planned in East Renfrewshire for October 2006 which highlights positive images of young people.
- *"Create Consultancy"* – has been commissioned to review the school drug and alcohol curriculum, this will include every primary and secondary school in East Renfrewshire. A dissemination event with conclusions is planned for March 2007.
- Within East Renfrewshire, the Community Health and Care multi-agency Joint Assessment Team are well placed to identify, at an early stage, children and young people in schools with a range of difficulties including those affected by drug use. Strategies to address problems identified are put in place.
- In schools, drugs/alcohol curriculum guidance informs Personal and Social Education (PSE) inputs. Updated guidance is in line with best practice and current research.
- A range of leaflets for children, young people and parents aimed at raising awareness of drugs use and its consequences and the signposting of services are available across key outlets in East Renfrewshire.
- Information on East Renfrewshire Community Health and Care Partnership Substance Misuse Team and links to other services is available via East Renfrewshire Council's Website. [www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/alcohol drugs and substance misuse](http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/alcohol%20drugs%20and%20substance%20misuse)

Protection

- Single and inter agency child protection procedures are in place which clearly outline actions to be taken in response to children at risk of significant harm, including children affected by drug abuse.
- NHSGG and Clyde have set up a Child Protection Unit to improve staff training, policy and procedure, and to provide advice to staff on child protection issues.
- A single shared assessment framework is in use across all adult specialist substance misuse and drug services in East Renfrewshire CHCP, which takes into account the needs of children and young people living with parental drug use.
- An integrated assessment framework is in the final stages of development and will link social work, education and health in identifying the needs and risks of children and young people. This will include the identification of a multi agency package of support.
- Child Protection processes and systems are in place, which ensure a quick response from any agency referring concerns about a child where parental drug use is a feature.
- There is in place a specialist integrated Substance Misuse Team covering the whole of East Renfrewshire CHCP.
- Case recording within the Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) for the Substance Misuse and Children and Families Teams is maintained on a shared social work system accessed by all social work staff.
- A multi agency pre birth case discussion is held in all known cases where a pregnant woman has problematic drug use. This is convened to share information and to agree what support, if any, is required to meet the needs of the child and family post birth.
- Where potential child protection concerns exist a multi agency pre birth case conference will be held to share information, assess risk and agree what action, if any, is required, following the birth of the baby. Where child protection concerns exist post birth an Initial Child Protection Conference will be convened and a Child Protection Plan put in place.
- There is a clear expectation and commitment from partner agencies to share information across agencies, which is necessary for assessment, decision-making and the protection of children.
- The creation of a new Social Work Senior post through funding from ADAT to provide consultation, advice and supervision for members of the substance misuse team in relation to child care legislation and child protection.

Support

- Through multi agency care planning and child protection plans, individual support packages of care and protection are put in place to meet the needs of children and young people affected by drug misuse and associated risks. These packages are regularly reviewed to ensure objectives agreed are being met.
- An integrated school approach, which includes school based social workers; school counsellors and health co-ordinators complement the range of education staff available to support children and young people affected by drugs use.
- RCA Trust Young Person's Advisor Project provides individual work in schools with young people in schools affected by drug misuse.
- CHILDREN 1st – East Renfrewshire Family Support Service, offers support to children (aged 0 – 16 years) and their families affected by drug misuse. A new initiative aimed at providing group work for young people aged 12 – 14 years is now in place.

Staff training / information

- A range of single agency and multi agency training programmes is in place which offers continuous staff development in a range of child protection and related issues, including drug use.
- Taking cognisance of *Getting our Priorities Right*¹ and *Hidden Harm*² funding has recently been secured from ADAT, to allow for additional multi agency training, which outlines the links between substance misuse and child protection. The programme of training will take place in 2006-2007. A conference, with expert speakers to disseminate best practice is also being planned to complement this programme of training.
- Appropriate Social Work staff have attended *Children at the Centre* specialist training commissioned by the Scottish Executive on parental substance misuse and child protection.
- The Family Matters booklet was produced to help support work with parents, carers and families where there is a history of parental drug misuse. A revised version will be distributed across East Renfrewshire as outlined in the Corporate Action Plan 2006- 2007.
- An information booklet for staff working across the fields of child care/protection and substance misuse "*Working with children and families affected by substance misuse: Best practice for getting our priorities right*", has been developed by ADAT multi agency sub group "*Getting our Priorities Right*". This will be distributed across key agencies within the ADAT area during 2006 – 2007.

¹ Getting our Priorities right – Good Practice Guidance for working with children and families affected by substance misuse – Scottish Executive Feb 2003

² Hidden Harm – Next Steps Supporting Children – Working with Parents. Scottish Executive May 2006

In Conclusion

As Chief Officers, we recognise the continuing challenges faced in ensuring coherent and systematic approaches are in place which are able to identify children adversely affected by drug misuse, assess their needs, and ensure plans are in place to meet these needs.

There is no confusion on the part of the Chief Officers in relation to Section 22 of the Children Scotland Act (1995). We understand the appropriate use of the legislation which has been used extensively in the past. The resources required for using this section of the Act must not be underestimated and cannot be met within the position of current financial constraint. Child Care grant allocation is considerably below that which is required and Councils have consistently overspent in this area of work. This matter has been highlighted on a number of occasions by both COSLA and ADSW. This crucial issue requires resolution as a matter of urgency if truly effective services are to be provided.

Some of the continuing challenges facing us include limited shared technology, the electronic sharing of information and the challenge of information sharing in a context where un-consented sharing of information has (as yet) not been legislated. The matter is relatively clear when a child is at risk of imminent harm, but less so when we are looking at early intervention.

We note the continued reference to illegal drugs by both the Scottish Executive and the media; this does not take into account the considerable problems, particularly in the West of Scotland, associated with alcohol abuse and its adverse affect on children. Resources and emphasis in this area are insufficient to meet the aspirations of "For Scotland Children".

Child Protection work is on the increase and this has considerable resource implications. It would be advantageous to put more resources into preventative areas of work, but when faced with high numbers of statutory case work, preventative work suffers.

We believe that measures in place within East Renfrewshire assist in the protection and support for children affected by drug misuse. We also believe that the integration of health and social care will add weight to those measures. We are confident that all partners are committed to protecting children and have worked closely together to achieve a sound, responsive service within a performance framework that will drive this agenda forward.

We can give an assurance that we will continue to strive to achieve the best results possible for children and young people both singularly and collectively and that we will continue to hold children's welfare as the primary consideration in working with substance misusing parents.