



TAYSIDE POLICE



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Our ref	BM/SJW
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Dear Peter

Statement of Assurance: Services to Protect Children and Young People in Perth and Kinross

This letter provides a response on behalf of the key agencies responsible for the protection of children and young people in Perth and Kinross to the letter dated 22 March 2006 from the Ministers for Children and Young People, Justice, and Health and Community Care, and Colin MacLean's letter of 4 May 2006 which seek a statement of assurance that:-

- The new guidance for Child Protection Committees has been implemented;
- The Chief Officer's Group are confident that mechanisms exist to ensure that the functions now required by CPCs 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 implement plans to meet these needs;

The letter also asks local agencies to provide details of local and national barriers and action that can be taken to address these.

Since the last letter of assurance on 26 May 2004 we can confirm the following developments:-

1. Child Protection Strategic Forum

In Perth and Kinross the Chief Officers Group has been established for two years. It is known as the Strategic Forum and meets on a quarterly basis. It is chaired by the Chief Executive of Perth & Kinross Council and membership comprises:-

- Chief Social Work Officer/Depute Director (Community Care)
- Executive Director, Education and Children's Services
- Executive Director Housing and Community Care
- SCRA Reporter
- Procurator Fiscal
- Chief Executive of NHS Tayside or his representative
- Chief Constable of Tayside Police or his representative
- Chairperson of Perth and Kinross' Child Protection Committee
- Head of Legal Services in the Perth and Kinross Council

The remit of this group meets the requirements outlined in the guidance "Protecting Children and Young People – Child Protection Committees February 2005". The group provides leadership and oversees the work of the Child Protection Committee (CPC).

At each meeting of the Strategic Forum the CPC provides update reports on the following:-

- Statistical analysis of national and local child protection trends
- The progress of key Child Protection initiatives
- Progress of the work of the CPC as per the annual report and business plan

The Chair of the CPC attends the Strategic Forum to advise and report on the work of the Child Protection Committee and to ensure effective communication between the two groups in setting and taking forward the agenda and associated actions required to promote, develop and improve services to protect children in Perth and Kinross.

2. The Child Protection Committee (CPC)

Over the past year we have reviewed the remit and membership of the CPC and re-established this forum. An audit and review of practice was undertaken in 2004 and an improvement plan produced.

The CPC meets quarterly and holds an annual development day for all members to consider and review its functioning. The CPC undertakes its role and function as set out in "Protecting Children and Young People – Child Protection Committees February 2005" and the Annual Report and Business Plan 2005-2006. The Annual Report and Business Plan 2006-2007 is due to be presented for approval to the Strategic Forum at its next meeting.

A Lead Officer for the CPC was appointed in October 2005. The Lead Officer (known as the Development Officer) undertakes the following functions on behalf of the CPC:-

- Acting in an advisory capacity to the CPC, individual members of the CPC and to other strategic planning groups

- Chairing and reviewing the work of the training sub-group, the vulnerable witness short life sub-group and any other task groups required to address particular Child Protection issues.
- Promoting the work of the CPC to inter-agency partners and to the public
- Ensuring that the work of the CPC is competent when evaluated against the requirements of the guidance "Protecting Children and Young People – Child Protection Committees".

3. Mechanisms to assess the appropriate functioning of the CPC

A number of mechanisms are in place to ensure the appropriate functioning of the CPC. Those set out above include the clear reporting line through the Chief Executive of Perth and Kinross Council to the Strategic Forum with its membership of Chief Officers and Lead Practitioners from key partner agencies. In addition key reports are considered by the Strategic Community Planning Partnership and also the policy Committees and Boards of the partner agencies.

Developments by the CPC to date include:-

3.1 Public Information

As part of our commitment to improving practice leaflets have been produced entitled, "What To Do If You Have A Concern About A Child". These have been widely distributed and placed in a number of public venues. NHS Tayside has widely distributed leaflets and posters in primary care and other settings.

To raise public awareness of Child Protection issues, local buses will display a poster which includes contact telephone numbers. Additionally a Council Tax planner including a calendar due to be disseminated to every household in Perth and Kinross-shire will incorporate the Child Protection logo and contact numbers.

Child Protection Guidance and Procedures are widely disseminated to staff of key agencies.

Council and NHS staff have also had training and have been given information cards to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities in Child Protection and how to report concerns. Training in this area is an integral part of staff development across all agencies.

A Communication Plan has been produced by the CPC and approved by the Strategic Forum outlining the campaign to raise public awareness and promote the work of the Child Protection Agencies.

The CPC Development Officer is also developing materials for parents/carers and young people who become part of the Child Protection process. This aims to ensure that service users are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

3.2 Procedures and Policies

Since the last Letter of Assurance the CPC has consulted on and produced the following guidance/protocols:-

- Perth and Kinross Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures May 2006.
- In collaboration with Scottish Training on Drugs and Alcohol (STRADA), Perth and Kinross Procedure and Protocol for assessing children in need or at risk due to parental substance misuse.

These documents have been enhanced by the following protocols:-

- NHS Tayside Child Protection Policy
- Unborn Baby Protocol
- Paediatric Discharge Policy
- Interim Education and Children's Services Child Protection Procedures November 2005 (these have been further developed and final procedures are to be approved imminently for wider Council services)
- Perth and Kinross Inter Agency Adult Protection Guidance and Procedures

Close collaborative work featured in the production of all these policies, procedures and protocols.

3.3 Statistical Analysis

The CPC and Strategic Forum consider Child Protection data at each meeting. This includes the figures for referral, registration and the number of unborn baby assessments.

This information is used to monitor trends and to inform local developments in practice and procedure.

3.4 Quality Assurance

The CPC developed an inter-agency evaluation tool based on the document "How well Are We Protected And Our Needs Met". In January 2006 a small-scale inter-agency evaluation exercise took place and key members from each agency were co-opted on to the evaluation team for this purpose. The key findings and action plan will be presented to the CPC on 30 May 2006 and to the Strategic Forum in June 2006. A range of actions were taken at an early stage to improve services based on the early findings of the evaluation. The Committee also continues to formulate and progress action plans in relation to major inquiries. These plans identify actions required both within and across agencies and are subject to regular progress

reporting within the CPC and Strategic Forum.

A systems sub-group also operates under the auspices of the CPC. This reviews cases where some aspects of practice, or the outcomes for Children and Young People could be improved. Action Plans are developed which identify the required actions both within and between agencies. These action plans are reported to the CPC and are subject to review.

3.5 Training and Staff Development

Inter-agency training continues to be planned and provided under the auspices of the CPC via the Training Sub-Group. Most training is delivered by the Child Protection Training Officer for Education and Children's Services supported by experienced practitioners from a number of agencies, including the police, health and education.

The need to create the capacity to develop training materials is currently being considered and proposals will be taken to an early meeting of the Strategic Forum.

The Training Sub-Group also supports and quality assesses Single Agency Child Protection Training.

Every training course is subject to participant evaluation which the Training Sub-Group uses to continuously improve the quality of training provided.

The Training Sub-Group has produced a document which has been approved by the CPC outlining the purpose and expected outcomes from multi-agency training.

3.6 Strategic Planning

The CPC and Strategic Forum membership has been developed to ensure representation and links into other multi-agency planning partnerships, the DAAT, the Children's Services Planning Strategy Group, and the Interim Adult Protection Committee.

The staff of partner agencies work strenuously to protect children and deliver on national and local priorities under the guidance and direction of the Strategic Forum and the CPC.

4. Children and Families Affected by Substance Abuse

In Perth and Kinross multi-agency protocols and procedures have been developed to address issues of substance misuse including drug misuse.

The Perth and Kinross protocol and procedures, based on the Getting Our Priorities Right (GOPR) Guidance was initially launched in 2003. This outlined the multi agency requirement to recognise and respond to children at risk due to parental substance misuse. The Children and Young Person's Sub Group of the Drug and Alcohol Team, jointly with the Child Protection Committee reviewed the implementation of the GOPR protocol and procedure. In response to this the protocol and procedures have been re-written, with support from STRADA, and take account of new guidance.

Launch of the protocol and procedures took place on the 22 May 2006 at which Senior Managers from all agencies attended. This development event will be followed up by workshops for practitioners to ensure the effective ownership and implementation of the document.

Regarding identification of children affected by substance misuse, the procedures state that "All agencies involved in providing services to families or individuals with child care responsibilities affected by the misuse of drugs and/or alcohol will regard the safety and welfare of the child as their first priority".

The guidance and procedures require staff from all agencies including those who have traditionally seen themselves as working primarily with adults to refer any child they believe to be at risk because of parental substance misuse.

The unborn baby protocol integrated into the GOPR and Child Protection Procedures, requires that any unborn baby who may be at risk due to parental substance misuse is subject to a multi-agency risk and needs assessment.

It is considered that this protocol is used effectively and has led to early intervention in relation to a number of families including formal intervention through the use of Child Protection Orders in three instances during the past year.

Perth and Kinross procedures will be updated in line with the publication of "Hidden Harm The Next Steps" (May 2006).

Multi-agency training integrates the GOPR procedures in its delivery. The Scottish Executive Guidance "Framing Information About Children At Risk" has also been integrated in to the multi-agency training to ensure that all agencies are aware of the requirement to refer children at risk.

5. Identification of Children Adversely Affected by Substance Misuse, Assessment of Need and Plans to Meet These

All referrals to Children's Social Work Services require an assessment of whether or not parental substance misuse is either the main or a contributing factor in the reason for referral. This can be actual or suspected substance misuse.

Established child protection procedures already identify a growing number of children who are living in chaotic substance misusing families. Over 30% of Looked After Children fall into this category and for between 30% - 40% of those on the Child Protection Register parental drug misuse is an issue. In a number of additional cases substance misuse is suspected. A draft multi-agency questionnaire has been produced by the Children and Young Person's Sub-Group of the DAAT to try to determine the actual prevalence of substance misuse and children adversely affected. This will be used to gather information over the next few months and work by all agencies is ongoing to identify the extent of the problem and to ensure that all children who are or who may be affected by substance misuse receive appropriate services, care and support.

Services are responding to incidents of parental substance misuse which impact on the welfare of the child. Since January 2006 three babies have been subject to Child Protection Orders as a result of Unborn Baby Assessments.

All children and young people on the Child Protection Register (and those who are Looked After and Accommodated) are subject to an inter-agency care and protection plan. These plans are reviewed by Senior Officers from Perth and Kinross Council and are designed to ensure that decisions regarding the child are based on their needs and will monitor any progress made.

Strategies are in place to try to ensure early intervention in the lives of children affected by parental substance misuse. There are two Early Years posts located in the Perth City Family Centre and two Social Care Posts, one based in Perth City, and one in the rural area.

In addition to this, funding has been secured in order to appoint social work and support staff to the Perth and Kinross Drug and Alcohol Team. These workers provide intensive support to parents with serious substance misuse where their drug misuse poses a significant risk to their children.

The method of working, overseen by a multi-agency management team, is an intensive outreach model. Staff carry small caseloads, maximum 15 clients per worker, who are seen several times a week. The target group is hard to reach parents, some of whom fear contact with services.

The issue of parental substance misuse and its impact on children is being tackled as a multi-agency concern. Consequently, an operational working group has been formed to focus on improving services to families affected by parental substance misuse. The inaugural meeting which took place on 3 April 2006 involved representatives from the DAAT and Tayside Drug Problem Service and Senior Social Workers drawn from across Perth and Kinross Children and Families, and Adult Services.

The group aims to promote staff development for Child Care and Substance Misuse workers and monitor the effective implementation of protocols.

6. Barriers

The implementation of protocols, such as the Unborn Baby Protocol, has led to the early identification of increasing numbers of children who may be at risk or in need.

This has led to capacity issues for the professionals involved in the assessment of need and risk and for agencies who deliver services. It is likely that the need to respond to the increasing numbers of children in need or at risk due to parental substance misuse will place growing pressure on resources. In addition it is anticipated that strategies to deal with children adversely affected by substance misuse may well lead to an increase in the identification of such children. Providing services to meet their needs will place further demands on resources.

Local and national guidance and procedure regarding the sharing of information has addressed some of the barriers to effective practice. The forthcoming legislation will be welcome, given that this is an area in which ongoing development is required.

An issue which could be effectively addressed by the Executive in this area would be to lead the development of an agreed framework and competences for people working with children and families affected by substance misuse.

We will be pleased to discuss the content of this letter and to provide clarification of many aspects if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely



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