

## **Minutes of the Child Protection Meeting on Thursday 14 June 2007 at the Carlton Hotel, Edinburgh**

**Meeting of**                    **Child Protection Committee Chairs**  
**Child Protection Committee Lead Officers**  
**The Crown Office**  
**Scottish Children's Reporter Administration**  
**HM Inspectorate of Education**  
**Scottish Executive**

### **Item 1 – Welcome and Introduction**

Claire Monaghan welcomed attendees and gave a summary of recent restructuring in the Scottish Executive generally and within the Children, Young People and Social Care Directorate specifically. Mary Fegan updated on outcomes from the morning meeting of the National CPC Chairs' Forum, including:

- Significant Case Review guidance;
- visual recording of Joint Investigative Interviews with children;
- attendance of GPs at case conferences;
- the need for a national register for children missing from systems;
- the ChildProtectionLine; and
- the format of these meetings.

Claire explained that we are keen for the Scottish Executive to gain a greater insight into the work of the Child Protection community, and to this end we would like to visit some CPCs over the next few months.

A list of attendees and apologies for absence is at Annex A to these minutes.

### **Item 2 – Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2007 and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be accurate. There were no matters arising which were not already on the agenda.

### **Item 3 – Risk Assessment Tool – Presentation by Boyd McAdam of the SE *Getting it Right for Every Child* team and Wendy Rose and Jane Aldgate of The Open University**

Boyd gave an update on the work of the *Getting it Right for Every Child* team, including the Pathfinder activity currently ongoing in Highland. Materials from this development work should be ready to share in the next month or so. Boyd explained that work on the Integrated Assessment Framework (IAF) had been incorporated into *Getting it Right*.

Wendy explained the context behind the development of the systematic practice model for risk assessment, including historical approaches to risk assessment. Jane gave an introduction to the plan itself, which is structured around eight stages:

1. Using the Vision for Scotland's Children (SHANARI) to identify immediate risk
2. Getting the child and family's perspectives on risk
3. Drawing on evidence from research and developmental literature about level of risk and likely impact on the individual child
4. Using messages from research to assess what is the likely recurrence of harm
5. Looking at the immediate and long term risks using the Child's World Triangle
6. Using the resilience framework to analyse the risks, strengths, protective factors
7. Weighing the balance of that evidence and making decisions
8. Constructing a plan and taking appropriate action

Mary Fegan pointed out that thresholds of risk can vary between areas and asked whether a system for determining this would be more useful than a tool for identifying risk. Jane pointed out that it would be inappropriate to leave decision-making to a tool – this has to rely on a combination of evidence and professional judgement. It was agreed that a shared training and development agenda would be more effective in achieving consistency.

In discussion it was also agreed that there are other factors to consider in risk assessments, such as resources, staff, information-sharing and training, and that a risk assessment tool should not just be aimed at practitioners but also at supervisors and managers, who need to be ready to assess the quality of decision-making on risk by the professionals they manage.

#### **Item 4 – National Domestic Abuse Strategy – Presentation by Claire Houghton of the SE Violence Against Women team**

Claire spoke about the work of the Domestic Abuse Delivery Group, the development of a three-year strategic delivery plan for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse, and the GIRFEC Domestic Abuse Pathfinder Pilot.

There was some discussion of the perceived acceptability of domestic abuse amongst young people, and the challenge of changing attitudes.

A draft of the strategic delivery plan should be ready in the autumn. Claire invited a continued dialogue with CPCs.

Claire pointed out that there is no CPC Chair on the Domestic Abuse Delivery Group but that Maggie Tierney and Claire Monaghan were members and also Fred McBride on behalf of ADSW. Mary Fegan suggested that CPC Chairs consider possible closer links with the group.

***Action: CPC Chairs to take outline proposals of the Domestic Abuse Delivery Group back to CPCs for discussion and then feed back to delivery group representatives with priorities and information on local developments including links between Domestic Abuse Partnerships and CPCs; CPC Chairs to consider representation on the Domestic Abuse Delivery Group / stronger links to ADSW and SE members***

## **Item 5 – Commentary on the written update on child protection issues – Maggie Tierney**

Maggie gave a quick summary of progress on the following issues, which did not require in-depth discussion at this point:

- The draft Code of Practice on the sharing of information when there are concerns about a child
- Letters of assurance on children affected by parental drug misuse and *Hidden Harm*
- Child trafficking – Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP) research report
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act
- Young Runaways – a scoping study, new Working Group to develop a national strategy
- Child Protection training materials
- Annual Reports (due by end of June), including a request for feedback on whether the Annual Report process feels useful or effective, and whether the 2005 guidance to CPCs dealing with reporting requirements feels fully relevant and up to date
- Short Life Working Group (SWLG) on disclosures of underage sexual activity

Detail on these items can be found in the written update.

Maggie discussed the Interim Significant Case Review guidance which was published at the end of March having previously been consulted on, substantially revised by the Working Group, and then fully signed off by Ministers. Since then, the Executive has received 3 letters expressing reservations about the "normal expectation of publication" of suitably anonymised SCR reports as described in paragraph 72 of the guidance. These letters all report that this concern is very widespread across CPCs. The consultation findings had revealed that only a minority (albeit a significant minority) of CPCs had expressed major concerns about publication. Most of these respondents had suggested an array of mitigating measures - all of which had been incorporated into the revised document.

It became clear in discussion that the use of the term "publication" in paragraph 72 of the Interim Guidance remained the major source of concern. CPCs pointed out that their practices are inspected, amongst other measures, against the degree to which they adhere to national guidance on particular issues. As paragraph 72 of the Interim SCR guidance seems to raise unrealistic expectations of publication, the meeting asked the Executive to revisit this issue.

Maggie accepted that the Working Group had unwittingly got to the wrong place on this point, and sought to reassure the meeting that the Executive would look quickly for a deft means of resolving the problem. Rather than removing, editing and returning the guidance on the web (as that could create more problems than it would solve), she suggested that the Executive write formally to all CPCs and inspection agencies refining what was intended in respect of publication or dissemination expectations. The letter would set out a more nuanced understanding of how CPCs could and should release suitably anonymised SCR reports into the public domain.

This letter would then sit formally alongside the Interim Guidance, for use by both inspectors and CPCs alike. The interim guidance will be revisited (probably later this year) by a new Working Group which is still to be convened to assess the Interim Guidance's applicability to conducting SCRs in all settings and covering adult as well as child cases. Maggie suggested that the complete reappraisal of the guidance at that point would provide a suitable and natural platform for consultation and final revision to suit the needs of CPCs in this critical area of CPC business.

***Action: Maggie to write to CPCs, setting out a more nuanced understanding of publication and dissemination expectations***

There was not enough time to discuss the ChildProtectionLine in the depth that it deserves, so Maggie suggested that she write to CPCs on the subject and consult by e-mail and/or visit CPC areas as appropriate. Potential issues with the line are:

- low numbers of calls and the lack of publicity which is responsible for this, unavoidably caused by the election campaign and the subsequent setting up of a new administration;
- the issue of local numbers vs. one national number;
- the types of calls received, which currently include complaints about not getting an adequate response from local Social Work Departments, and whether these are appropriate;
- calls from professionals asking about Child Protection procedures.

Key ways in which the line is valuable are currently:

- the important forum which it provides for every phone-based Child Protection service to meet and improve, and the protocols which are being developed, including consideration of out-of-hours service issues;
- the very lively and productive working group which is challenging problems of dealing with referrals and taking the burden off front-line services.

The group agreed that a letter from Maggie and e-mail consultation would be the best way to take this discussion forward.

***Action: Maggie to write to CPCs on the ChildProtectionLine and consult by e-mail.***

## **Item 6 – Fostering, including feedback on the National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy – Presentation by Jackie Brock of the SE Fostering and Residential Care team**

The meeting was running behind schedule so Jackie agreed to come back to the next meeting to give a full presentation on this subject. She gave a very brief summary of the work on the National Fostering and Kinship Care Strategy, the aims of which are:

- to reduce demand for foster care by realigning it with the priority of supporting children to return to birth families wherever possible;
- to enhance the range of skills of carers;
- to reinforce the role of foster care in early intervention and improved support for families; and

- to embed permanency planning, using permanence orders to avoid drift and keep foster placements short-term.

Jackie also discussed recruitment campaigns for foster carers, and the need to work together to maximise recruitment effort.

There was some discussion of where kinship care would fit into the strategy and within the wider family support agenda. Mary Fegan commented that children are often left where they are because there is nowhere better available, and stressed the importance of linkages of fostering and domestic abuse services with CPCs.

***Action: Jackie to return to next meeting***

### **Item 7 – Any Other Business**

Mary Fegan suggested that the format for these meetings could potentially be improved, and invited attendees to consider how they might be done better, and to feed back by e-mail. A possibility would be for the Executive to make themselves available to CP Chairs in the morning session rather than the afternoon, or for the Executive to join, leave, and then rejoin the debate as required. The Executive would also be interested in visiting CPC areas, on a regional basis, over a period of months to improve understanding of local CPC issues.

***Action: All to consider possible improvements and feed back.***

## ANNEX A

### Minutes of the Child Protection Meeting on Thursday 14 March 2007 at the Carlton Hotel, Edinburgh

#### In Attendance

Claire Monaghan – SE, Head of Children and Families (Joint Chair of Meeting)  
Mary Fegan – North Lanarkshire CPC (Chair, National CPC Forum)  
Maggie Tierney – SE Child Protection team  
Claire Houghton – SE Violence Against Women team  
Boyd McAdam – SE *Getting it Right for Every Child* team  
Wendy Rose – The Open University  
Jane Aldgate – The Open University  
Jackie Brock – SE Fostering and Residential Care team  
Gaynor Davenport – SE Child Protection team  
Peter Hope-Jones – SE Child Protection team  
Rosie Ilett – SE Health and Wellbeing  
Lindsay Ferguson – SE Health and Wellbeing  
Neil McKechnie – HMIE  
Marian Martin – HMIE  
Kate Mearns – Angus CPC  
Gordon McIntosh – Angus CPC  
Liz Strang – Argyll and Bute CPC  
Deirdre Cilliers – Clackmannanshire CPC  
Sara Lovelock – Clackmannanshire CPC  
Mike Briggs – Dumfries and Galloway CPC  
Beth Smith – Dumfries and Galloway CPC  
Claire Carthy – East and West Dunbartonshire CPC  
Sheila Foggon – East Lothian Council  
Safaa Baxter – East Renfrewshire CPC  
Myra Frankland – East Renfrewshire CPC  
Louise Scott – Eilean Siar CPC  
Angus G MacLeod – Eilean Siar CPC  
Sandra Thain – Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders CPC  
Neil Richardson – Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders CPC  
Liz Johnson – Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders CPC  
Margaret Anderson – Falkirk CPC  
Catriona Laird – Falkirk CPC  
Eric Byiers – Fife CPC  
Gillian Buchanan – Glasgow CPC  
Pene Rowe – Highland CPC  
Jacqueline Conway – Midlothian CPC  
Beverley Rowson – Midlothian CPC  
Maxine Hawthorn – North Ayrshire CPC  
Peter Reilly – North East Scotland CPC  
Fiona McCaskill – North Lanarkshire CPC  
Fiona Swift – North Lanarkshire CPC  
Gill Smee – Orkney CPC

Gordon McKay – Perth and Kinross CPC  
Bill Atkinson – Perth and Kinross CPC  
Susan Bell – Renfrewshire CPC  
Tim Huntingford – Renfrewshire CPC  
Pauline Walker – Scottish Borders CPC  
Gillian Nicol – Scottish Borders CPC  
Malcolm Bell – Shetland CPC  
Helen Watkins – Shetland CPC  
Brenda Doyle – South Lanarkshire CPC  
Rena McCarry – South Lanarkshire CPC  
Jo MacPhersal – West Lothian CPC  
Jane Ridgway – West Lothian CPC

## **Apologies**

Dougie Dunlop – Argyll and Bute CPC  
Alan Baird – Dundee CPC  
Diane Burns – East Ayrshire CPC  
David Anderson – East Dunbartonshire CPC  
Tony Keogh – East Dunbartonshire CPC  
Alan Ross – East Lothian CPC  
Astrid Telfer – Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders CPC  
Ross Drummond – Fife CPC  
David Comley – Glasgow CPC  
Susanne Miller – Glasgow CPC  
Alistair Dodds – Highland CPC  
Susan Kerr – Inverclyde CPC  
Trevor Muir – Midlothian CPC  
Donald Urquhart – Midlothian CPC  
Colin McKerracher – North East Scotland CPC  
June Gardiner – South Ayrshire CPC  
Bill Eadie – Stirling CPC  
Anne Ritchie – West Dunbartonshire CPC  
Fiona Eadie – COPFS  
Tom Philliben – Director of Reporter Operations