

Annual Report March 2007-2008



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PREFACE

Preface

Edinburgh has established a Chief Officers Group in accordance with national guidance for the governance of child protection services (*Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committees, 2005*). In addition to child protection, the remit of Edinburgh's Chief Officers Group includes adult protection, the management of dangerous offenders and the local drug and alcohol action team. The group is now well-established and is committed to ensuring that local agencies, individually and collectively, work to protect vulnerable people as effectively as possible.

We recognise that over the past year our agencies have faced particular challenges. HMle's inspection of our services to protect children and young people and the publication of its report in 2007 highlighted that some aspects of our service were not as good as they should be, some markedly so.

All partner agencies have responded energetically to address the areas for improvement identified in the report. We have developed a multi-agency action plan and set up robust mechanisms to monitor its implementation. We can now say with confidence that we have made good progress in improving some aspects of our services, though we recognise that we still have more to do.

The Child Protection Committee's ambitions for a comprehensive rebuilding of the service will take time to implement fully and for the impact of this on outcomes for children to be measurable. We are determined to progress this as quickly as we can, but we are equally determined to do it well.

The Chief Officers group is confident that all agencies will continue to display the same commitment to continuous improvement that has been apparent over the past year.

*Tom Aitchison
Chief Executive, the City of Edinburgh Council
Chair of Edinburgh's Chief Officers Group*

*Heather Tierney-Moore
Chair Edinburgh Child Protection Committee*

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the third report of the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee. Overall, there has been continued progress in meeting our objectives, although much work is still required. We have accepted feedback from the HMle inspection, and have re-prioritised our actions to improve outcomes for children who need protection.

Edinburgh is a large city of complexity and contrast, which includes a number of rural villages. This contrast presents inherent challenges in delivering consistent services to all.

We have areas of deprivation and of substantial wealth. Around 31% of secondary school age children in Edinburgh attend independent schools, and a significant proportion of primary and pre-school aged children are also educated privately.



We also have some of the most disadvantaged children, living in some of the most deprived areas in Scotland. Our challenge is to balance concentrated support to those most in need, whilst ensuring universal support services are available.

Another feature of our city is its ethnic and cultural diversity – not only in terms of the local population, but also Edinburgh's short-term employment of young people in the tourist industry and high volumes of tourists themselves.

Since the publication of the HMle inspection report in September 2007, the Committee has initiated a number of changes to improve its overview of progress against agreed priorities and targets. Membership of the Committee has changed (attached at Appendix 1) and the Committee now meets monthly. A subgroup structure has also been established to facilitate the functioning of the Committee, and includes the following groups: Quality Assurance; Training; Communications and Practitioners' Issues.

2. EVALUATION AND INSPECTION

Key Milestones

- A multi-agency self evaluation was carried out, for the second time, in preparation for HMle's joint inspection of services to protect children and young people.
- Robust links have been established with the Edinburgh Adult Protection Committee and the Edinburgh Offender Management Committee.
- Joint multi-agency child protection training continues to be delivered, not only to staff within the core agencies, but also to participants from the voluntary and independent sector – this is funded jointly.

- The Committee's constitution has been revised to reflect the establishment of the Chief Officers Group, which has the primary governance role in relation to adult and child protection and the management of dangerous offenders.
- A detailed multi-agency child protection action plan was developed in response to HMle's findings and this is monitored on a monthly basis by the Quality Assurance Subgroup of the Committee.
- The City of Edinburgh Council's social work services (for adults and children) were subject to inspection by the Social Work Inspection Agency in October 2007, and the recommendations of the inspection report have been incorporated into the child protection action planning process.
- A performance monitoring framework has been developed and is monitored on a multi-agency basis by the Quality Assurance Subgroup and on a local authority basis by the Council's internal performance monitoring group.

The Chief Officers Group and the Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders Executive Group

The Chief Officers Group has taken on the governance and performance monitoring role for Edinburgh, as required by national guidance. It is responsible for ensuring that constituent agencies, individually and collectively, work to protect children, young people, vulnerable adults and the wider community as effectively as possible. It also has responsibility for maximising the involvement of those agencies not under its direct control, including the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscals Service (COPFS) and the voluntary sector. The Chief Officers Group contributes to the Edinburgh Lothian and Borders Executive Group (ELBEG) in promoting working across regional boundaries. ELBEG continues to provide a jointly agreed strategic framework for those functions which benefit from a joint approach.

3. PUBLIC INFORMATION

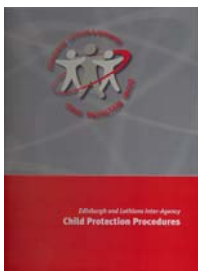


Edinburgh is one of the local authority areas taking part in the pilot of the 24 hour national **Child Protection Line (0800 0223222)** launched on 12 February 2007. The line provides another avenue for the public to report any concerns they may have about a child and to seek advice. A new poster has been produced and a media campaign has taken place to promote the existence of the line, which has increased public awareness of child protection issues and where to seek help. The Scottish Government will be reviewing the use of the line later in 2008.

The Communications Subgroup of the Committee has drafted a communications strategy, which includes all proposed activity in relation to public awareness and information to staff. This will include a rationalisation and up-date of public leaflets. The role of this Subgroup will expand to cover other related protection activity, in particular adult protection and the management of offenders.

The communications strategy includes action to rationalise increase and improve child protection information on the core agencies' websites, targeted at both public and staff.

4. POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS



New inter-agency child protection procedures were implemented in June 2007. Partner agencies in the Lothian and Borders area will be reviewing these from June 2008 to measure their impact on practice and on outcomes for children, and to examine any difficulties that have arisen in their implementation.



The inter-agency guidelines 'Protecting children living in families with problem substance misuse', implemented in 2005, will also be reviewed.

Partner agencies in Edinburgh have now also revised the interim protocol for dealing with significant case reviews. The finalised protocol was implemented in March 2008. To ensure consistency this protocol is being adapted for use by Edinburgh's Adult Protection Committee and its Offender Management Committee.

Other key inter-agency protocols in place include:

- the pan-Lothian information-sharing protocol, and
- interim guidance in relation to underage sexual activity (this will be revised when national guidance is developed)

5. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

A multi-agency Quality Assurance subgroup of the Committee has been in place since January 2008, meeting on a regular monthly cycle. Its work includes:

- monitoring progress in implementing the agreed improvement action plan
- examining performance reports from agencies on key measures and indicators
- identifying necessary actions to improve performance
- overseeing significant case reviews
- identifying areas for improvement that emerge from these
- monitoring the subsequent action plans
- reporting to the Child Protection Committee on a monthly basis

Performance reports include data from the City of Edinburgh Council and Lothian and Borders Police, and over the course of the year will include data from NHS Lothian.

Actions taken in response to data from performance reports and the findings of significant case reviews have included:

- amending the Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD) process
- amending processes to ensure that case conferences take place within agreed timescales
- agreeing common definitions, rationalising and prioritising the information collated by different agencies
- providing training on joint investigative interviewing of children with learning disabilities
- developing an IT tool to assist practitioners to build chronologies
- establishing a working group to consider provision for gypsy travellers

Partner agencies supplement the performance information with qualitative information from audits they conduct – currently on a single agency-basis. These include:

- local authority social work audit programme, including a bi-annual audit of approximately one in five social work case records of children on the child protection register and an annual audit of a sample of case records of children who are not on the register, but for whom there are concerns about their welfare
- audit of public health nurses' files
- audit of police processes
- audit of paediatricians' attendance at case conferences
- audit of the effectiveness of child protection activity in schools

The partner agencies recognise that much of the data gathered measures inputs and outputs, and that there is a need to develop outcome measures. A research project funded by the Scottish Government is examining the issue of effective performance management information on behalf of the Child Protection Committee.

A blank performance monitoring scorecard is attached at Appendix 3

Child Protection Register statistics are available in Appendix 5

6. TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A multi-agency Training subgroup of the Committee is responsible for assessing local need and facilitating a range of high quality training to address this need. A training strategy has been adopted, which ensures that all training offered reflects relevant government guidance and is consistent with the National Training and Learning Framework. The strategy also takes an overview of training that supports individuals and agencies in their responsibilities to safeguard and promote children's welfare and to take timely and effective action to get children the help they need when they need it, including protective action (see Appendix 4).

The Training Subgroup is responsible for:

- the planning and development of training materials
- ensuring appropriate links to single agency training programmes and progression within these programmes

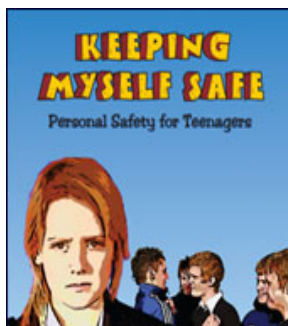
- the quality assurance of single and inter-agency child protection training
- the provision of a framework for continuous professional development

The three key agencies have committed to funding inter-agency training jointly. Effective progress has been made within and across the agencies, including the voluntary sector. Strong links have been established with other sub-groups especially the Quality Assurance and Practitioners Subgroups.

Quality assurance and evaluation mechanisms have been built into the training strategy. Training opportunities for social work and NHS staff have increased. Staff groups identified by the HMIe inspection have been prioritised to receive training, e.g. midwives and some police officers.

Agencies have singly and collectively provided a range of specialist training courses to enhance staff development. Examples include:

- inter-agency briefings on the revised child protection procedures
- inter-agency training on the local protocol specific to children living in families affected by substance misuse
- inter-agency vulnerable adults training
- communicating with children with disabilities
- child protection and child at the centre awareness training for criminal justice staff supported by new child protection guidance for criminal justice
- basic awareness training for all probationary police constables and to children and families staff
- training on legal processes
- shadowing opportunities
- training for education staff on the delivery of the 'Keeping Myself Safe' programme for Primary 6, 7 and secondary pupils



7. PROMOTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Practitioners Sub-group will run a number of best practice seminars, starting during the summer of 2008. These will address findings of Significant Case Reviews and other current topics.

The Amethyst Team was established in 2006 and is being reviewed to ensure that the processes continue to offer the best possible response to vulnerable children and their families. Amethyst is currently being reviewed with specific reference to the social work component. The weekly reviews of Interagency Referral Discussions are continuing to ensure that appropriate action is taken timeously and that we can demonstrate a consistency of approach.

The “Keeping Myself Safe” training programme has been rolled out across schools. Guidance given in schools on child protection and personal safety has previously been recognised and commended by HMIE.

8. COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION

The Committee has a responsibility for communicating with the public, and is the driver for improving communication across agencies. The Communications Subgroup has developed a Communications Strategy and will evolve from a child protection only group to one that is responsible for the communication strategies across adult protection and offender management.



9. PLANNING AND CONNECTIONS

The revised membership of the Committee ensures effective representation from all relevant agencies and interests.

The partner agencies’ relationship with voluntary organisations is a key strength, as is the voluntary sector’s representation on the Committee. Voluntary agencies provide an important range of services for children and young people in Edinburgh and essential additional capacity in the provision of services for children and young people, particularly at an early stage and with very young children.

The Director of Children and Families, who is one of the Committee’s vice chairs also chairs Edinburgh’s Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership. This ensures that the Committee’s business plan and the Integrated Children’s Services Plan articulate a consistent message.

The Committee’s Lead Officer maintains links with strategic and key groups, e.g. the Protection of Vulnerable Adults Implementation Group and the Pathfinder Project Board.

Links have been established with the ‘Team Around the Child’ project (responsible for the implementation of the Getting it Right for Every Child agenda), to ensure a cohesive approach to our most vulnerable children and young people.



The Domestic Abuse Pathfinder Project has been established in the north of the City, and this is further promoting inter-agency working to the benefit of vulnerable children and young people.

There are also links, through joint membership, between the Committee and the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) mechanisms.

10. LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Involving and listening to children and young people is a fundamental principle upon which the Committee's constituent agencies base their operations. The Edinburgh and Lothian Inter-agency Child Protection Procedures reinforce this principle, and set out the clear expectation that the views, wishes and opinions of children and young people are actively sought, listened to and taken into consideration.

We are continuing to develop means by which those children who are not able or choose not to participate in meetings and case conferences themselves are encouraged to articulate their views and thus influence decisions that are made about them.

11. FUTURE PLANNING

- Committee members will ensure delivery of our business plan, re-prioritising targets as and when necessary, and taking account of new developments (see business plan at Appendix 6).
- The Communications Sub-group has developed a Communications Strategy and will be reviewing single-agency awareness raising and information literature, working with core agencies to improve access to child protection information on our websites, both for the public and for our staff.
- The Practitioners Sub-group will develop a programme of best practice seminars for staff.
- The Quality Assurance Sub-group will continue to develop our performance management framework and to monitor progress against our action plan.
- The Training Sub-group will continue to deliver an inter-agency training programme in accordance with the training strategy (see Appendix 4).

12. CONCLUSION

The Edinburgh Child Protection Committee is committed to the continuous improvement of services to protect vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Our key milestones demonstrate the journey we have started and our Business Plan demonstrates the journey ahead.

We will continue to work together under the auspices of the Chief Officers Group to maintain and deliver effective and appropriate support to our staff in the delivery of services to vulnerable people.