

Report To: Community Health & Care
Partnership Sub Committee

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Subject: National Guidance on Child Protection

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 This report is to inform the Sub-Committee about the main changes to practice in child protection as a result of the National Guidance for Child Protection issued by the Scottish Government in December 2010 and the implications for local child protection procedures.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 The Scottish Government has issued new National Guidance for Child Protection which will have implications in particular for practice in Social Work Services. This report highlights the main changes.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 That Sub-Committee note the changes to practice as a result of the Scottish Government's National Guidance for Child Protection.

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4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Scottish Government issued guidance for child protection in December 2010 to replace the previous guidance produced in 1998. Practitioners from a range of disciplines were involved in developing it and Inverclyde participated fully, including at the consultation stage. The result is a comprehensive document which reflects the lessons learned from Significant Case Reviews and research as well as practice developments. In addition there is guidance on the interface between Child Protection and Adult Protection, MAPPA, children affected by parental mental health problems and domestic violence. The document also has some content relating to children/young people who are affected by parental drug and alcohol misuse but the Scottish Government are currently revising Getting Our Priorities Right which is the primary general guidance for staff working in this area.
- 4.2 The main implications of the Guidance are to bring it in to line with the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child which puts the child at the heart of assessment and planning processes which are proportionate and integrated. Inverclyde have implemented an Integrated Assessment Framework and have developed some of their child protection paperwork to reflect this integrated approach. This was identified as good practice by HMIE and further work will be done to ensure this is embedded throughout all child protection paperwork.
- 4.3 One of the main changes in the Guidance is the removal of the category of registration when a child's name is placed on the Child Protection Register. Instead, the child will be registered and the main issues identified and recorded separately. This is in recognition of the fact that child protection cases are complex and there are usually more than one or two key issues which have led to the child protection investigation. This has meant that it has been hard for chairs to determine which category a child should be registered under as often more than one apply. Removal of the actual category and instead identification of the key issues should simplify this decision making process although it will present more challenges in collecting management information.
- 4.4 Timescales for completion of the investigation and the holding of a child protection conference have been specified in the Guidance. Currently staff as their first priority ensure that a child is protected from further harm until the Child Protection Conference has reviewed the issues and a Child Protection Plan can be developed if the child's name is to be placed on the Child Protection Register. This is done in a number of ways and this is recorded through case notes. This will now be a more formal process with a requirement for a more formal inter-agency plan of intervention to protect the child before the conference has been held
- 4.5 A more significant change introduced by the National Guidance is the registration of unborn children who require a Child Protection Plan. This has not previously been practice in the West of Scotland where there was a facility for a Pre-birth Child Protection Conference but the outcome would be a Family Support Plan until the baby was born. It was considered nationally that a Child Protection Plan would formalise the process more and ensure inter-agency co-operation at this early stage. As Members are aware from the HMIE Inspection Report, establishing this co-operation at a pre-birth conference has not been an issue within the local area but we will develop our procedures to comply with the National Guidance.
- 4.6 The National Guidance highlights the importance of continuity for the child and it stipulates that children and young people whose names are on the Child Protection Register should not be excluded unless there is a multi-agency discussion to identify risk factors and strategies to address these. Whilst there is no formal arrangement in place in Inverclyde for this to happen, there is generally discussion between the relevant agencies in such circumstances. Work will be done along with colleagues in Education to formalise this in a way which meets the requirements of the Guidance.

4.7 The Guidance also sets out the roles of Child Protection Committees and of the Chief Officer Group. Inverclyde is compliant with the standards set down in the Guidance but further work will be done in both these groups to ensure this continues to be the case.

4.8 Work is ongoing internally to revise the Social Work Procedures in line with the requirements of the National Guidance and briefing sessions are planned for staff in Children and Families who will be undertaking or supporting investigations. GG&C Health Board will be drawing up new procedures for Health staff but in the meantime briefing sessions on the implications of the National Guidance will be undertaken in the autumn for Health staff, other social work staff and staff in Education.

5.0 PROPOSALS

5.1 That members note the main changes in the National Guidance for Child Protection and the implications for practice in Inverclyde.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Legal: None

6.2 Finance: None

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments

6.3 Personnel: None

6.4 Equalities: None