

Report

Report to:	Social Work Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	22 August 2007
Report by:	Executive Director (Social Work Resources)

Subject:	Child Protection Audit
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Advise of the development of Child Protection Audit in Social Work Resources and of the report on the 2006 audit
- ◆ Note actions arising from the findings of the audit

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to note the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the update of the Child Protection audit findings be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The annual audit of children on the Child Protection Register is an established part of child protection quality assurance in South Lanarkshire. This is the fourth audit to have taken place and is one aspect of quality assurance within Social Work Resources to evaluate the work undertaken with children and their families. This audit provided a basis to appraise current practice, facilitate continuous improvement and to further develop effective safeguarding measures.
- 3.2. The first three audits used the same format to allow a comparative analysis of progress made to improve the quality of services provided to children. In the 2005 audit additional questions were introduced to consider outcomes for children. The scope of the 2006 audit was to focus on a smaller sample of children than previously but in greater depth. The audit considered in part standards 3 and 5 of The Framework for Standards and quality indicators 3.1, 3.2, 3.4 in How well are children and young people protected and their needs met? The Social Work Inspection Agency report and the general policy thrust from the Scottish Executive are towards a clearer focus on outcomes for children. The aim of this audit was to evaluate the impact of child protection interventions and processes to improve outcomes for children and their families.
- 3.3. The audit considered two areas:
- How we are doing in relation to ensuring better outcomes for children
 - Children who are subject to repeat child protection registrations (a statutory key performance indicator)

4. Scope of the Audit

- 4.1. The audit was conducted by the child protection co-ordinator and the fieldwork manager in each locality. The audit also involved social workers and team leaders/senior social worker/social workers self-evaluating the cases sampled. There was a decision to involve front line staff in the process in order to:
- Promote a shared understanding within and across child and families teams of what constitutes good practice
 - Consider the impact of services on children, young people and their families and the quality of outcomes for them
- 4.2. The audit involved scrutinising case files, minutes of child protection case discussions, child protection conferences and core groups, reports and action plans to evidence performance in those areas. Through this process the intention was to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement.
- 4.3. There were 117 children in 71 families on the Child Protection Register at the time of this audit. A random sample was taken from each locality of children on the register and all children who had been subject to re-registration. This involved a sample of 53 children in total. The sample was representative of children on the child protection register in terms of category of registration and age.

5. Areas addressed in the audit

The audit looked for evidence of the following in each case file:

- Assessment of risks and needs in relation to each child
- Whether the intended outcomes for the child were clear in the documents
- Whether core group meetings explicitly addressed the child protection plan and outcomes for the child
- The intended outcomes
- The actual outcomes
- Whether families and children (where age appropriate) were involved in the process
- Whether the intended outcomes were achieved
- The positive factors
- The barriers to achieving outcomes
- An overall assessment

- 5.1. Additional questions for repeat registrations included:
- The factors leading to de-registration
 - The factors leading to re-registration
 - Consideration of the decision to de-register the re-register

A summary sheet was completed identifying:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Areas for improvement

6. Current Position

- 6.1. This audit has been undertaken and completed and supports the move to self-evaluation and reflective practice to determine the effectiveness of the work we do to protect children and young people

7. Key Findings from the Audit

- 7.1. The audit provided the opportunity to reflect on practice, learn from and understand existing practice and identify ways in which outcomes for children can be improved. It also considered whether families and children age appropriate were involved in the child protection process.
- 7.2. Key points from the audit are:
- In most cases outcomes for children on the child protection register were improved
 - Social Work intervention made a real contribution to this improvement
 - Better outcomes were achieved when parents co-operated with the child protection plan, where there was good extended family support and additional resources available to support the child and family
 - For those children de-registered there still remained a support package in place to support the child and their family
 - Some problems, in particular parental substance misuse and neglect, require long term intervention

8. Ongoing Challenges and Areas for Continuous Improvement/Action Plan

- 8.1. The audit provided the opportunity to reflect on practice and to re-evaluate the action required to reduce the traumatic impact of child abuse and neglect. Areas identified for further development include:
- Ongoing work with staff around thresholds and what is considered good enough parenting in responding to issues of neglect
 - The quality of assessment, decision making and planning to continue to improve and be supported by comprehensive assessment, timely intervention, inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination
 - Recording the direct work undertaken with parents and the strategies put in place for achieving change to improve outcomes for their children
 - Obtaining the views of children in relation to the impact of parental substance/alcohol misuse and domestic violence on them and what action needs to be taken to make their lives better
 - Recording the behaviour, presentation of young children who are unable to communicate verbally and the direct work undertaken with children to counter the adverse effects of abuse and neglect and to promote resilience
 - The inter-agency attendance at core group meetings needs to continue to be monitored and reviewed to ensure child protection plans are implemented, reviewed and updated as required.

9. Employee Implications

- 9.1. There will be appropriate staff briefing developed to ensure that staff are aware of the findings and the action required.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. There are no financial implications.

11. Other Implications

- 11.1. There will be a Child Protection Inspection by HMIE in February/March 2008. It is necessary that we have a systematic approach to self evaluation and audit in place. It will be important to take appropriate action on the findings of the audit in order to continually improve our practice and most importantly the outcomes for the most vulnerable children in South Lanarkshire.

12. Consultation

- 12.1. The next stage is to consult with children and families to determine how services for them can be improved to achieve better outcomes.

Harry Stevenson
Executive Director (Social Work Resources)

1 June 2007

Link(s) to Council Objectives

- Supporting Our Communities
- Living in Our Communities

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

- Child Protection Audit 2006

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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