

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: "IT'S EVERYONES JOB TO MAKE SURE I'M ALRIGHT." REPORT OF THE CHILD PROTECTION AUDIT AND REVIEW – SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE: SOCIAL WORK SERVICES INSPECTORATE
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 19 DECEMBER 2002	Ref: MF/AB	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. To advise Committee of the publication of the multi-disciplinary Child Protection Audit and Review on 25 November 2002 and to seek approval for the proposals contained within the report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Following the report into the death of a child, at the hands of her stepfather, the (then) Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs, ordered a review of Child Protection across Scotland.
- 2.2. Committee was advised of the progress of the review at Operations and Services Sub-Committee on 14 February 2002.
- 2.3. The review aimed
 - To promote the reduction of abuse or neglect of children; and
 - To improve the services for children who experience abuse or neglect.
- 2.4. The review incorporated an audit of practice of medical, nursing, social work, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and education staff; a number of research projects to gain the views of children, their parents and the public; a literature review and consideration how child protection systems work in other countries.

3. KEY FINDINGS

- 3.1 The review found that:
 - There are many instances where children are being protected well from harm or neglect and that there is evidence of real progress and improvement over the past 20 years; but that
 - Many children are living in conditions or under threats that are just not tolerable in a civilised society;
 - Neglect is a major cause for concern;
 - There is a lack of confidence in the system;
 - Some children and families are not getting the help they need when they need it and some children are not being adequately protected;

- There is duplication of effort and energies are being diverted into meeting system requirements rather than the real needs of children.

4. REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The report makes 17 recommendations which have implications for the following:

- All agencies involved in Child Protection
- Child Protection Committees
- The Scottish Executive
- Local Authorities
- Children's Services Plans

4.2 The recommendations focus on;

- Improving information;
- Developing quality standards and strengthening monitoring and inspection arrangements;
- Strengthening the role of Child Protection Committees, particularly in relation to information provision for the public, agencies and employers in taking responsibility for the quality of inter-agency work;
- Improving knowledge about effective practice, staff training and competence, particularly in assessment;
- Promoting the rights of all children to life, decency and development in tackling the needs of the most vulnerable children early;
- Ensuring resources follow need and there is scope for joint commissioning; and
- Reviewing the grounds of referral to the Reporter.

5. ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE REPORT

5.1 The recommendations of the Child Protection Review are welcomed, as is the Minister's pledge to improve Child Protection. North Lanarkshire is committed to working with the Executive to ensure that this long awaited opportunity to tackle the problems in Child Protection is not lost.

5.2 It is important to acknowledge that the report recognises that good work is done in protecting children. That the vast majority of children referred are successfully protected is a result of good joint work between agencies and this is achieved in a non-controversial way.

5.3 The report recognises the pivotal work that Social Work plays. Therefore, for the Child Protection process to be improved, the factors that critically undermine the work of social workers must be addressed. These include

- A failure by Government including the (now) Executive to implement a number of the key recommendations from the Clyde Report following on from the Orkney Enquiry in 1991.
- A need to improve public understanding of the role of Social Work and those involved in child protection
- Failure by the Executive, until recently, to address the recruitment and retention issues for social workers. The report notes "good workers make a difference to outcomes for children". Across Scotland there is a serious shortage of children and family social workers.
- Under resourcing of child and family work over the past ten years. Between 1999 – 2000, Local Authorities spent more than 1/3rd more than was provided for by the Scottish Executive (GAE) on children's services.

- 5.4 The Judicial process was not part of the review which is required if better outcomes for vulnerable and abused children and young people are to be achieved.
- 5.5 The report notes that Child Protection Committees have potentially a critical role to play in inter-agency work and in promoting good communication and positive practice. The majority of Child Protection Committees have no dedicated resources such as staffing and budgets and there are no recommendations to address this within the report. North Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire have agreed to jointly fund a Child Protection co-ordinators post attached to the Child Protection Committee. Interviews are scheduled for the first week in December.

6. FURTHER ACTION

- 6.1 The First Minister intends to host a multi-agency Child Protection Summit in the near future to discuss further action.
- 6.2 The review sets out a programme for change which will require action by all agencies involved in Child Protection, Child Protection Committees and the Scottish Executive. The Scottish Executive will set up an implementation team to assist the process of implementation.
- 6.3 Local Authority Chief Executives with their partners are asked to review the operation of the Child Protection Committee within their authority to ensure that it is capable of meeting the objectives set out within the report.
- 6.4 The report notes that some of the recommendations can be implemented immediately, others will take more time and require discussion with agencies.

7. NORTH LANARKSHIRE CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Within North Lanarkshire, the Children's Services Strategy Group and the Child Protection Committee have responsibility for children's services and inter-agency child protection matters (The Child Protection Committee reports to the Children's Services Strategy Group).
- 7.2 It is proposed that the groups be
- Remitted to consider the implications of the Audit and Review for North Lanarkshire
 - Develop an action plan following a review of the Reports recommendations and their considerations.
 - Provide a report to Committee in February 2003 outlining proposals to ensure compliance with the findings of the review and enable the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities.
- 7.3 In view of the corporate considerations, the report should be remitted to Policy and Resources, Housing and Technical Services, Education and Community Services Committees for information.

8. PERSONNEL/FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 At this stage there are no personnel or financial considerations, although this may change subject to the recommendations of the report from the Children's Services Strategy Group to be presented to a future Committee.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Committee is asked to

- (i) Note the publication of the Child Protection Audit and Review
- (ii) Request the Children's Services Strategy Group/Child Protection Committee to make recommendations for further action required arising from the review.
- (iii) Remit the report to Policy and Resources, Housing and Technical Services, Education and Community Services Committees for information.
- (iv) Otherwise note the contents of the report



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28 November 2002

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