

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE Community Planning Partnership**

### **Report by Head of Children's Health, Care and Criminal Justice Services; Chief Social Work Officer**

**18 May 2023**

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**Subject: Joint Inspection of Children and Young People at Risk of Harm in  
West Dunbartonshire**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report provides information on the progress of the Community Planning Partnership's Joint Inspection of children and young people at risk of harm in West Dunbartonshire carried out in three phases from September 2021 until March 2023.
- 1.2** The Public Protection Chief Officers Group [PPCOG] and interim Executive Oversight Group, set up to oversee the inspection activity, has received regular updates on the Inspection and continues to provide leadership and scrutiny in relation to progress of the Improvement Plan.
- 1.3** The Joint Inspection was led by the Care Inspectorate and included scrutiny partners drawn from Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Education Scotland and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary. The active period of phase 1 and 2 of the inspection process ran from October 2021 until March 2022 and gathered evidence drawn from a range of sources across a 2 year period prior to the commencement date. The interim report on phases 1 and 2 was published on 24 May 2022 and highlighted areas for improvement.  
Appendix 1 [Interim Report May 2022.pdf](#)
- 1.4** The Partnership engaged in supported improvement activity with the Joint Inspection Team during the third phase of inspection of ongoing monitoring and evaluation between May 2022 and February 2023.
- 1.5** On 13 April 2023 the Partnership received a letter detailing the outcome from the further period of monitoring and evaluation. The letter highlights a number of areas for continuing focus and improvement which also reflects the Partnership's self-assessment and progress made. Both the interim report and the letter are published on the Care Inspectorate website and together form the outcome and next steps arising from the self-evaluation and inspection process.  
Appendix 2 [Outcomes of Improvement Work.pdf](#)

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Note the content of the letter dated 13 April 2023 from the Care Inspectorate on behalf of the Joint Inspection Team. The letter is published on the Care Inspectorate website.
- 2.2 Note that the Public Protection Chief Officers Group (PPCOG) has received regular updates from the interim Executive Oversight Group set up to oversee the inspection activity and progress , and to provide leadership and scrutiny in relation to progress of the inspection improvement plan. A review of the interim governance arrangements will be considered by PPCOG at its next meeting on 20th June 2023.
- 2.3 Note the priority actions contained in the refreshed Community Planning Partnership's Improvement Action Plan and outlined in section 4.9 of this report. **Appendix 3 [Pentana Action Plan.doc](#)**
- 2.4 Note that external support in relation to strategic planning and delivery of services to children and young people at risk of harm will continue to be provided through the Partnership's Strategic Inspector and Local Area Network arrangements.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 This Inspection is part of the national scrutiny and assurance process designed to support Community Planning Partnerships to carry out and use self-evaluation to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.2 The focus for this Inspection was the cohort of children and young people at risk of harm including those who have been subject to an initial referral to a multi-agency process because of concerns about their safety and wellbeing; children and young people who have a formal plan; or, children and young people who have received an alternative service to improve and support their wellbeing.
- 3.3 The Inspection process has taken place over an extended period of 18 months running from September 2021 until February 2023 and was carried out across 3 phases.

### **Phases 1 & 2**

- 3.4 The initial process was impacted by the ongoing pandemic and as a result the Inspection Team had no opportunity, either individually or in groups, to meet with partners, staff, children and young people and their parents. As a result the Partnership did not received an evaluation statement under Quality Indicator 2.1 which considers the impact on children, young people and evaluates the extent to which children and young people in need of protection and at risk of harm are listened to and impact services are able to make in their lives.

- 3.5** To reach conclusions the Inspection Team based their evidence on the following sources – Partnership’s Position Statement of January 2022 and supporting evidence (this is essentially a self-evaluation); staff survey; file reading; children, young people and parent survey (drawn from a sample of 60); the Link Inspector report; outcome from previous Inspections (including service based inspections); national data returns; Police Scotland and Education services information; and, internet publications such as Council, NHS GG&C and Health and Social Care Partnership Board meeting papers.
- 3.6** The interim report on phases 1 and 2 was published on 24 May 2022 and highlighted key areas for improvement. The report noted that the Inspection Team were more confident that the Partnership recognised and could identify where changes were required but also stated that they did not think, at that stage, that the Partnership would be able to take all the actions necessary without external support and challenge.

### **Phase 3**

- 3.7** The Partnership engaged in an agreed programme of improvement activity supported by the Joint Inspection Team during a period of ongoing monitoring an evaluation between May 2022 and February 2023.
- 3.8** The Partnership developed an Improvement or Action Plan reflecting the areas for improvement highlighted by the self-evaluation and inspection process. The focus areas for improvement activity over the last 12 months have been –
- Key operational processes, particularly IRDs (Initial Referral Discussions);
  - Assessment, plans and reviews;
  - Participation and engagement with children and young people;
  - Self-evaluation including use of data to support quality assurance, improvement and service planning;
  - Collaborative Leadership across the partnership
- 3.9** The Partnership’s Executive Oversight and Improvement Action Groups were established as interim, enhanced governance to develop and monitor the delivery of the improvement priorities. As stated The Executive Oversight Group reports progress directly to the PPCOG.
- 3.10** A series of leadership development; training; and self-evaluation activities (including audit and focused surveys) were undertaken by the Partnership to build skills, knowledge and capacity. The output from the activities contributed to the supporting evidence which was submitted alongside a further Partnership Position Statement on 28 February 2023.
- 3.11** On 13 April 2023 the Partnership received a letter outlining the outcome from the further period of monitoring and evaluation. The letter contains a number of areas for continuing focus and improvement. Both the interim report and the

letter are published on the Care Inspectorate website and together form the outcome and next steps arising from the self-evaluation and inspection process.

**3.12** The outcome letter acknowledges the "...considerable effort..." of the Partnership to address the findings arising from the joint inspection. The letter clearly indicates that, over the next 12 months, the Partnership will need to:

- sustain additional investment to address capacity challenges;
- maintain enhanced governance to continue to provide appropriate support and challenge for improvement work;
- refine the existing Improvement Action Plan to provide a greater focus on the outcomes for children and young people at risk of harm;
- build on the work already started to ensure children and young people are meaningfully and appropriately involved in decisions about their lives;
- continue to undertake and place emphasis on self-evaluation activity that focusses not only on how much or well services are delivering, but what difference the support is making; and
- continue to seek external support where this is necessary to achieve change

**3.13** Crucially the letter concludes that the Joint Inspection Team are confident that the Community Planning Partnership has in place the necessary framework to effect improvement. Ongoing support in relation to strategic planning and delivery of services to children and young people at risk of harm will continue to be provided through the Partnership's Strategic Inspector and Local Area Network arrangements.

## **4. Main Issues and Next Steps**

### **Inspection Process**

**4.1** As noted above the Inspection process has taken place over three phases and a period of 18 months. The footplate for this strategic inspection has been modified, in part due to the impact of the pandemic, and extended to include a period of improvement activity supported by the Joint Inspection Team.

**4.2** The inspection process did not include direct contact by the Inspectors with staff, children and young people and their family/carers. While this is a gap their views are reflected through surveys carried out as part of phase 1 and 2 and focused surveys in phase 3. The voice of children and young people is a core building block to improve outcomes and is an area the Partnership has identified as requiring further work as part of the development and delivery of the Integrated Children's Services Plan.

**4.3** As part of the improvement support the Joint Inspection Team developed and delivered a series of 9 workshops on the following topics – multi-agency record reading; Inter agency Referral Discussions; using data; self-evaluation;

involvement of children and young people; quality assurance; leadership relating to Quality Indicators and self-evaluation.

- 4.4** The Partnership also ran externally facilitated collaborative leadership development sessions; CELCIS supported workshops for the Child Protection Committee and a series of four multi-agency workshops focused on building our shared vision, values and actions aligned to GIRFEC, The Promise and our approach to continuous improvement.
- 4.5** It is important to continue to build on the work to date and that supporting partnership collaborative leadership and professional development programmes are developed to align to the improvement priorities and external support is put in place where this is appropriate.

### **Improvement Action Plan**

- 4.6** In common with all other Joint Inspections, an Improvement Action Plan has been developed to prioritise activity and address the areas identified through self-assessment activity and the conclusions from phase inspection process. The Improvement Action Plan draws on other strategic planning and operational review activity in relation to services for children and young people at risk of harm.
- 4.7** The Improvement Action Plan is a 'live' tool and now submission of the Position Statement and receipt of the outcome letter in April 2023, will be reviewed and focused on the continuing key priorities for improvement across services supporting children, young people and their families.
- 4.8** The programme for improvement is long term. A number of activities are at an early stage of development and it takes time to achieve and embed a shift in culture and practice to achieve sustainable improvement. The recovery from the pandemic, financial pressures and the issues relating to recruitment and retention of staff all impact on capacity. It is important to recognise this and to continue to focus on the key priorities to maximise our resources and impact.
- 4.9** The Partnership priorities contained within the self-assessment submitted to the inspection team echoes those highlighted within the outcome letter. The proposed priorities for the next 12 months are –

### **Key operational processes:**

- further develop and evaluate our approach to IRDs and chronologies;
- embed integrated assessment, planning and reviews;
- refresh and develop our approach to GIRFEC.

### **Participation and engagement with children and young people:**

- build our vision through engagement with children and young people through the Champions Board and Youth Forum;
- further develop our approach to The Promise, including the development of a multi-agency Delivery Plan;

- strengthen the role of the Champions Board;
- embed Viewpoint (a tool to gather views of children and young people).

**Self-evaluation including use of data to support quality assurance, improvement and service planning:**

- further develop the data sets for the PPCOG and CPC;
- continue to develop self-evaluation with a focus on outcomes for children and young people.

**Collaborative Leadership:**

- a review of the Improvement Action Plan to reflect priorities and progress;
- develop access to independent advocacy;
- review output from the recent staff survey to inform engagement and planning;
- refresh Violence Against Women and Girls;
- Develop a communications strategy and user friendly online presence.

## **Governance**

- 4.10** As part of the response to inspection the Partnership established additional short to medium term governance arrangements in March 2022. The multi-agency Executive Oversight Group, chaired by the Chief Officer, reports directly to the PPCOG and has provided leadership, guidance and support to deliver the improvement actions arising from the self-assessment and inspection process.
- 4.11** Across the Partnership work has taken place to strengthen the assurance and risk management processes and better align strategic planning priorities to reflect the needs of children and young people at risk of harm. Work is currently taking place to refresh the Nurtured DIG and develop the next iteration of the Integrated Children's Service Plan. The Child Protection Committee has reviewed the sub group structure to reflect the development priorities and has had two additional posts established to support the work of the independent chair and the lead officer in relation to learning and development and quality assurance.
- 4.12** The framework for improvement is now in place and there is confidence that the alignment of strategic planning priorities will support the delivery of a refreshed Improvement Action Plan. A review of the interim governance arrangements will be considered by PPCOG at its next meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

PPCOG will consider incorporating the planning and improvement actions for children at risk of harm within the existing strategic planning groups of the Child Protection Committee and the Nurtured DIG, which leads on the development of the integrated children's services plan. Oversight of progress of improvement actions will continue to be held by PPCOG.

## **5. Options Appraisal**

**5.1** As above in section 4.

## **6. People Implications**

**6.1** In order to strengthen scrutiny, management oversight and collaborative leadership additional fixed term posts have been funded from the Health and Social Care Partnership's reserves. These include:

- Independent Review Co-ordinators to enhance scrutiny of Looked After Children's planning arrangements and to ensure children and young people are at the centre with their views being actively sought and heard.
- An additional senior manager on a fixed term 2 year contract to support improvement and scrutiny across the children and families service
- Integrated Children's Services Lead ( GIRFEC) to support the Nurtured DIG and the work of the Integrated Children's Services planning across the Community Planning Partnership
- Two additional posts to support the work of the Child and Adult Protection Committees in relation to Learning and Development and Quality Assurance.
- The establishment of a Promise Lead

**6.2** The need for further additional resources may be identified by the Community Planning Partnership, as well as by individual partners, as actions arising from the delivery of the Action Plan are further embedded and reviewed.

## **7. Financial and Procurement Implications**

**7.1** It is anticipated that any additional fixed term resources required to support the Community Planning Partnership to deliver the improvement actions will be met from within existing budget allocation.

## **8. Risk Analysis**

**8.1** The Community Planning Partnership will require to maintain focus on the delivery of the improvement actions to embed the improvement in service delivery and strategic planning for children and young people at risk of harm.

## **9. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**9.1** Not required. The Joint Inspection is carried out under section 115 of part 8 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and is led by the Care Inspectorate working alongside Education Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland and Health Improvement Scotland.

- 9.2** The Improvement Action Plan will be subject to an EIA as the Plan matures. The Plan is designed to support those with protected characteristics.

## **10. Environmental Sustainability**

- 10.1** None required.

## **11. Consultation**

- 11.1** Not required. The Joint Inspection is carried out under section 115 of part 8 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and is led by the Care Inspectorate working alongside Education Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland and Health Improvement Scotland.

## **12. Strategic Assessment**

- 12.1** This report outlines the improvement activity relating to the strategic inspection of the Community Planning Partnership's services for children and young people at risk of harm.
- 12.2** The Community Planning Partnership's Improvement Action Plan has been developed to prioritise activity and address the areas identified through the self-evaluation process, the conclusions contained within the Interim Report and the letter dated 13 April 2023 from the Care Inspectorate on behalf of the Joint Inspection Team. The framework for improvement is now in place and there is confidence that the alignment of strategic planning priorities will support the delivery of a refreshed partnership Improvement Action Plan.
- 12.3** The improvement priorities for services to children and young people at risk of harm in West Dunbartonshire reflect the national strategies, legal framework and good practice guidance.

## **13. Directions**

- 13.1** None required.

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Designation	Head of Children's Health, Care and Criminal Justice Services and Chief Social Work Officer.
Date	20 April 2023

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- Appendices:
1. **Interim report** on phases 1 and 2 of a joint inspection of services for children and young people at risk of harm in West Dunbartonshire.  
[Joint inspection of services for children and young people West Dunbartonshire May 2022.pdf](#)
  2. Letter dated 13 April 2023 from the Care Inspectorate on behalf of the Joint Inspection Team  
[Outcomes of supported improvement work in West Dunbartonshire.pdf](#)
  3. Community Planning Partnership Children's Joint Inspection Improvement Action Plan  
[Pentana Joint Children's Services Inspection Action Plan.doc](#)

Background Papers      None.