

**Report by Director of Community Health and Care Partnership
West Dunbartonshire Council**

Community Health and Care Partnership Committee: 28 March 2012

Subject: Care Inspectorate Report: Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children and Young People in the West Dunbartonshire Council area.

1. Purpose of Report

This report is to inform members of the outcome of the inspection of services to protect children in West Dunbartonshire which was carried out by the Care Inspectorate in October 2011.

2. Background

2.1 Child Protection Services have previously been inspected in 2007 with a follow through inspection in 2009. Previous Child Protection Inspections were carried out by HMIE but with the re-configuration of the inspection agencies in April 2011, this function is now undertaken by the Care Inspectorate.

2.2 This Phase 2 Inspection was carried out in October and November 2011 with the report published on 20th March 2012.

2.3 Child Protection Inspections are not focussed on any one agency but consider the collaborative practice of all relevant agencies; Health, Police, Council and the Children's Reporter, working together to keep children safe.

2.4 A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 1

3. Main Issues

3.1 The Inspection found evidence of very good practice and noted the following particular strengths:

- Children get the right kind of help as soon as difficulties arise and for as long as it is needed.
- Services make sure children are safe and well cared for when placed with relatives or friends in an emergency.
- Staff work hard to help children remain, whenever possible, in their own families, schools and communities.
- Workers get to know children well and take their views seriously.

3.2 Child Protection Inspection Reports use the 6 point scale (from Unsatisfactory to Excellent) with which members will be familiar as this is also used in all other Care Inspectorate Reports. In Child Protection Inspections there are 4 “reference indicators” which are reported on as follows:

- Children are listened to and respected
- Children are helped to keep safe
- Response to immediate concerns
- Meeting needs and reducing long term harm

All 4 of these indicators were evaluated as “Very Good”, which places West Dunbartonshire amongst the highest performing local authority areas in Scotland.

3.3 Particular positive comment was made by the inspectors about the programme of support to Children and Families which has been a priority for the Community Planning Partnership.

3.4 The inspectors also report on Self-Evaluation which they graded as “Weak” and Improvements in Performance which was graded as “Good”.

3.5 There are two main points for action, one relating to the work needed to improve self-evaluation and the other to improve assessments of risks and needs and outcome-focussed planning for individual children. The Child Protection Committee and the Chief Officers Group have already considered what improvement action is required and the Improvement Plan will be reported on through the Annual Report and Business Plan of the Child Protection Committee.

4. People Implications

There are no personnel issues associated with this report.

5. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. Risk Analysis

The Care Inspectorate’s scrutiny process is an important element in ensuring and providing reassurance, that services of a sufficient standard are in place to protect children. This is a crucial area of activity where failure can result in very serious public criticism.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

No issues were identified in a screening for potential equalities impact.

8. Strategic Assessment

Inspection of Child Protection Services is a key external scrutiny exercise for the CHCP, the Council and other agencies. The learning from inspection and the resulting improvement actions contribute towards providing services which are fit for purpose.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

- 9.1 The outcome of this inspection of services to protect children in West Dunbartonshire shows marked improvement on previous inspections as the evaluation of Very Good in the 4 reference indicators shows.
- 9.2 However, there can never be any room for complacency when considering Child Protection and the inspection has offered the opportunity to identify areas of our activity that need further work. The Chief Officers' Group and the Child Protection Committee are committed to taking that work forward without delay.
- 9.3 The Committee is recommended to:
- i) Acknowledge the commitment and good work of staff across all agencies as reflected in the Very Good evaluations of direct work with children and families.
 - ii) Note that immediate action is being taken to progress the areas for improvement identified.
 - iii) Agree a further report on the improvement actions taken as a result of the Inspection be brought back to the Committee before the end of 2012;
 - iv) Note that this Report be submitted to the Education & Life Long Learning Committee for its interests.



R. Keith Redpath, Director
20.3.12

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Appendices: Appendix 1
Background Papers: None
Ward affected: All wards