

Briefing No.48 19 April 2016

Improving Children's Services in Dumfries and Galloway

The Progress Review (inspection) of services for children and young people is now a few weeks away and it is a good time to provide all frontline staff with information about improvements delivered, work still underway and some of the challenges we face.

The improvement activity carried out over the last 2 years has resulted in significant change that has undoubtedly begun to improve outcomes for vulnerable children. This could not have been achieved without your co-operation and hard work and we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their efforts.

Below is a reminder of our achievements since the 2014 Joint Inspection of services for children and young people:

- We have developed and introduced a [Pre-Birth Protocol](#) that supports early identification of risks to vulnerable pregnant women and their unborn babies and will lead to timely, proportionate interventions. The protocol was introduced on 1 October 2015 and should be used by all professionals who work in services for children, young people and families; and in particular those who provide care to pregnant women and their families. The protocol is intended to be used in conjunction with GIRFEC guidance and in line with [Dumfries & Galloway Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures and Supporting Guidance](#).
- The Initial Referral Discussion (IRD) process for child concerns was introduced in 2014 and multi-agency decision-making has become embedded since then. The Children's Services Executive Group receives regular performance reports on the IRD process. The learning from this quality-assurance process has informed changes to the [IRD Inter-Agency Procedures](#) and the revised procedures have been updated on the [Child Protection webpage](#).
- The new Child's Plan template is supporting improvements in the quality of assessment and planning. (On the [GIRFEC webpage](#) under Multi-Agency Forms, Templates, Toolkits).
- We have a revised Parenting Strategy that aims to develop a spectrum of support for parents that will be delivered in a range of ways and will be accessible across our rural communities.
- We have improved our performance management and quality assurance arrangements with regular reporting to the Child Protection Committee and an independent Chair to provide robust challenge.
- We have further developed our Named Person Service in preparation for statutory implementation in August 2016. GIRFEC drop-in sessions for staff were held in November and December 2015.
- A 'Social Worker in Schools' project is operating in Stranraer and North-West Dumfries. The project aims to:
 - Improve relationships and understanding between Social Work and Education staff
 - lead to greater understanding of thresholds and processes within the GIRFEC framework

- Support early intervention.
- Improve children, young people and families' understanding of the role of Social Work.
- As Corporate Parents, we have:
 - established the Champions Board
 - reviewed the provision of advocacy services
 - established a specialist LAC Health Team to ensure that all looked-after children and young people have a health assessment.
 - Revised and re-published our Educational Guidelines for looked-after children.
- We have introduced [guidance](#) and [training](#) that has led to an improvement in the use of chronologies.
- We have implemented revised multi-agency child protection procedures: [Protecting Children and Young People in Dumfries and Galloway](#). This document is the West of Scotland Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures embedded in supporting guidance that puts them into a local context for their application in Dumfries and Galloway.
- We have introduced evidence-based approaches for example the [National Risk Framework](#) and provided training and [guidance](#) on this.
- We have delivered 8 multi-agency staff engagement events across Dumfries and Galloway since the publication of the Joint Inspection Report in 2014.

Other developments to look out for in the coming months include:

- An intensive family support service for the most vulnerable children that is currently in development.
- Improved connectivity and planning around the themes of parental mental health; parental substance misuse and domestic abuse.
- The one-day themed conference on Neglect taking place on Thursday 12 May. (Look on the [Training Webpage](#) under the section headed 'Application Forms'.)
- The introduction of a toolkit/framework for neglect.
- Further development about performance management/quality assurance.
- Information Technology developments: development of the ePortal; the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the GIRFEC Gateway.
- Action Learning sets.

For any further information please email GIRFEC@dumgal.gov.uk.

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