

How well are our children protected and their needs met?



Joint Inspection of Services to Protect Children in Moray

NEWSLETTER May 2008

Introduction

Many of you may already be aware that a team of Inspectors from Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education (HMIe) will be coming to Moray in June and September. They will be carrying out an inspection of the services we offer to children and families in order to keep children safe and protected. While this will mainly involve Social Work, Education, Police, Health and Voluntary Sector staff, it may be that some other workers will be asked to speak with the inspectors. This newsletter aims to give you information about what is happening and who to speak to if you need more. The important thing to remember is that this is an inspection of all the services focusing on outcomes for children.

Letter from the Director of Community Services, Moray Council

"I'm sure that as part of the forthcoming inspection of child protection services, you and your colleagues are already involved in a number of developments by way of preparation. Child protection is one of the greatest challenges and without doubt, our highest priority. Although people may be anxious at the thought of this inspection, I believe we should welcome it as it will help us focus on strengthening arrangements and consolidating good practice.

Inspectors will focus on frontline delivery of services within Police, Social Work, Health, Education and the Voluntary Sector. The quality of operational management and linkages between services as well as the overall strategic direction given to local services will also come under scrutiny.

The inspection will focus on the efforts being made in the prevention of child abuse, the effectiveness of intervention and the extent to which services are meeting needs and supporting recovery. The inspection process will involve:-

- Detailed reading of each agency's files relating to representative samples of children and their families.
- Discussions with some children and families from the sample and the staff from those agencies involved with them.

- Individual meetings with relevant elected members, operational managers and senior staff from all agencies.
- Focus groups made up of a variety of staff involved in the protection of children.
- Visits to particular services involved with children and their families.
- Oversight of all agencies' procedures, guidance and policies around the protection of children.

What needs to be emphasised is that this inspection is not an inspection of any individual agency. It is very clearly focused on considering the level of collaborative and joint work undertaken in order to provide services that protect children and deliver positive outcomes. I hope it is considered an opportunity and viewed as a positive tool as anything that benefits our understanding of how we can work better together in this respect is to be welcomed. Child protection is after all everyone's business and this process will provide a crucial check on just how seamless and integrated services are to children across agencies and sectors."

Sandy Riddell

Director of Community Services, Moray Council

How does this affect you?

All agencies that come into contact with children or their carers, directly or indirectly, have the potential to be involved in the inspection. This means you may be involved if you work with parents or relatives of children. Staff who have previously worked with children identified in the sample may also be contacted by the inspectors.

The following agencies will be involved:

- Moray Council
- Grampian Police
- NHS Grampian
- Scottish Children's Reporters Agency
- Voluntary Sector partners
- Private Sector partners
- Elected members.

Who are the inspectors?

The Lead Inspector is Emma McWilliam, who has a Social Work background and was involved in the recent inspections of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. The rest of the team are –

- Jackie Pepper - Depute (Social Work)
- Brian Stewart (Education)
- Janice Brown (Health)
- Joan Elliot (Social Work)
- Len McConnell (Social Work & Education)
- Kevin Mitchell (Police)
- Jacqui Mok (Health)
- Sandie Young (Health)
- Admin Support for the team

As the inspectors come from a range of disciplines, it may be that an inspector from the Police visits a school and an inspector from Social Work speaks to Health Visitors. The team have a wide range of experience and come from all over Scotland.

How will the inspection team decide which children are in the sample?

On 3rd March 2008, Chief Officers were formally advised of the inspection visit and asked to complete a Pre Inspection Return (PIR). This asked for anonymous details of children who had come into contact with services in the previous year, along with background information about personnel, policy and procedures from all the agencies involved. A number of you have already been involved in the completion of this return. Thank you once more for your endeavours.

The PIR was completed and sent to the Inspection Team on the due date, 31st March 2008. It amounted to 104 pages of data and 22 appendices. The anonymous details of 268 children were supplied at this stage. From these 268, the Inspectors will select 59 files to read during the first phase.

When will the inspection team arrive?

- Phase One: 9th - 13th June 2008.

The files for each child selected will be collected together from each of the participating services. Nominated staff will be advised of the cases that have been selected well in advance of this week and will be asked to make relevant case records available no later than the morning of Friday 6th June 2008. Files will be kept in a secure location during this week.

- Phase Two: 1st – 12th September 2008.

Once the sample of cases has been reviewed, the inspection team will decide upon which individual staff, children and families they wish to interview.

In addition, there will be focus groups from staff, carers and children. Inspectors will attend meetings such as child protection case conferences, reviews and children's hearings. Senior staff, elected members, and chairs of management committees and boards will also be interviewed. At the end of this phase, verbal feedback will be given to chief officers and the chair of the Child Protection Committee.

What happens after the inspection?

Following inspection, a draft report will be produced and checked for accuracy with the agencies involved in the inspection. The final report is expected to be published within 12 weeks of the inspection on the HMIE website.

An action plan will progress the recommendations of the report. Follow-through inspections will take place to ensure these recommendations are carried out. These will be proportionate to the balance of strengths and weaknesses in the report.

Supporting Staff

Over the period of the inspection, a series of briefings will be held within the agencies and a further newsletter will be produced to keep you informed of progress.

If you have any concerns or queries about the process or what is expected of you, please speak to your line manager or one of the key contacts, listed below.

Remember that this inspection should be seen as an opportunity to -

- identify where good work is occurring and acknowledge it.
- identify our weaknesses and where we can improve.
- take the report and use it to inform continuous improvement of services.

The inspection will look at three levels of service:

- Strategic leadership and planning
- Delivery of services
- Impact of services on individual children, young people and their families

This final point is the central focus of the inspection. We need to demonstrate collectively that we have made a difference to the child's experience and have worked together towards positive outcomes for the child.

Inspections will *evaluate the outcomes for children and families*, the effectiveness of strategic leadership and the quality of operational management and processes both within and between agencies. This process is about how all the agencies work together to keep children protected and safe.

Further Information

Recent guidelines, newsletters, leaflets and other resources can be found at www.nescpc.org.uk which is the website for the North East Scotland Child Protection Committee.

Information about recent inspections, the process, and self evaluation can be found at www.hmie.gov.uk

Key Contacts

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