



To: **Safer and Stronger Thematic Board**

On: **3rd February 2016**

Report by: Dorothy Hawthorn
Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice, Renfrewshire Council

Report of the joint inspection of services for children and young people in Renfrewshire

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise members of the outcome of the joint inspection of children's services in Renfrewshire.
- 1.2 The inspection of joint services for children in Renfrewshire took place between December 2014 and February 2015. The inspection report was published on 11th December 2015.
- 1.3 The inspection was part of a new national programme of inspection and was the first time that all children's services in Renfrewshire were inspected jointly.
- 1.4 The inspection measured progress against nine quality indicators marked against a six point scale. Renfrewshire received six "very good", two "good" and one "adequate" grade which is a very positive result given the scale of the inspection. This places Renfrewshire in the top four of these inspections undertaken to date.
- 1.5 The inspection recognised that the Community Planning Partnership and elected members were all highly committed to working together and had a compelling vision, values and aims, with meaningful ownership across the partnership to collaboratively realise the vision.
- 1.6 The inspection found that Renfrewshire partners were highly committed to tackling inequalities and improving the life chances of vulnerable children and young people and were demonstrating notable improvements through a range of effective early interventions and support services. Partners were found to be delivering improving trends through effective approaches to prevention and early intervention and tackling inequalities. Positive trends were being achieved in tackling health inequalities.
- 1.7 Our youth engagement initiative, the multiple award winning *Street Stuff* programme, was highlighted as a good practice example. It was found to be positively improving outcomes for children and young people through increased opportunities for them to participate and engage in a range of effective diversionary activities in areas where low-level offending and anti-social behaviour was prevalent. "Street Stuff" has contributed towards a 75% reduction in anti-social behaviour and low-level offending across the local authority since 2009.
- 1.8 Community safety initiatives were seen to be reducing the risk of harm to children and young people. Early intervention and prevention programmes such as "Families First" were seen to be demonstrating early success in tackling the consequences of child poverty in the most deprived localities.

- 1.9 Partners were highly proactive in supporting children and young people's success and opportunities for achievement had increased over the past three years. Staff across services helped build resilience in children and aspired to ensure they thrived in stable environments.
- 1.10 Inspection of practice focussed primarily on a review of records from 2013/ 2014. The inspection report identifies five recommendations to further strengthen key processes and multi agency practice. A joint action plan has been produced. Training and practice has progressed since this time and action has already been undertaken in relation to the recommendations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note:
- (a) the contents of this report; and
 - (b) the positive impact of the Street Stuff programme in contributing to positive outcomes for children and young people in Renfrewshire.

3 Background

- 3.1 In 2011 Scottish Ministers requested that the Care Inspectorate lead on the development and coordination of a new model for the scrutiny and improvement of all services for children and young people. Pilot inspections began in 2012. The new inspection programme focused on those services within the framework of the Community Planning Partnership. The first joint services inspection in Renfrewshire took place between December 2014 and February 2015. Inspection of practice focussed primarily on a review of records from 2013/ 2014. The full report can be accessed on the care inspectorate website www.careinspectorate.com
- 3.2 The quality indicator framework and style of report was revised shortly before the commencement of the Renfrewshire inspection. Whilst the new quality indicators were not used in the Renfrewshire inspection, the inspection findings were subject to the more in depth style of reporting than the previous year inspections.
- 3.3 In addition to Care Inspectorate staff, the inspection team comprised of inspectors from Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland. Two young people with experience of receiving services elsewhere were also part of the team.
- 3.4 In preparation for inspection, Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership submitted a comprehensive self evaluation report which was used to inform the inspection process.
- 3.5 A total of 108 children's cases were reviewed from across partnership services. Inspectors met with 97 children and young people and 51 parents and carers in order to hear from them about their experiences of services. Staff were asked to complete a staff survey and focus groups also took place with staff from across services. Inspectors evaluated the contributions of all partner agencies jointly against nine quality indicators marked against a six point scale as follows:
- Excellent
 - Very Good
 - Good
 - Adequate
 - Weak
 - Unsatisfactory

- 3.6 Feedback from the Care Inspectorate indicated that staff survey responses were very positive:

“93% of respondents agree/strongly agree that their service does everything possible to ensure that children and young people receive timely help and support to give them the best start in life. 96% of respondents agree/strongly agree that their service does everything to ensure that children and young people are safe – well protected from abuse, neglect or harm.”

Outcome

- 3.7 The Care Inspectorate report on the Joint Inspection of Children's Services in Renfrewshire was published on 11th December 2015.

The findings were as follows:

<i>How well are the lives of children and young people improving?</i>	
Improving the well-being of children and young people	Very Good
Impact on children and young people	Very Good
Impact on families	Very Good
<i>How well are partners working together to improve the lives of children, young people and families?</i>	
Providing help and support at an early stage	Very Good
Assessing and responding to risks and needs	Adequate
Planning for individual children	Good
Planning and improving services	Good
Participation of children, young people, families and other stakeholders	Very Good
<i>How good is the leadership and direction of services for children and young people?</i>	
Leadership of improvement and change	Very Good

- 3.8 Inspectors found that staff took immediate action in response to child protection concerns to keep children safe. Staff (including those who work with adults) were found to be very alert to the signs that children may need help or protection from significant harm and acted promptly by appropriately sharing concerns.
- 3.9 The report contains many positive examples of good practice. Our youth engagement initiative, the multiple award winning *Street Stuff* programme was found to be positively improving outcomes for children and young people through increased opportunities for them to participate and engage in a range of effective diversionary activities in areas where low-level offending and anti-social behaviour was prevalent. “Street Stuff” has contributed towards a 75% reduction in anti-social behaviour and low-level offending across the local authority since 2009.
- 3.10 Proactive steps by partners including Renfrewshire Leisure were recognised as having increased access to and participation in sport and physical activity by children and young people, including an 18% increase in rates of children participating in out of school holiday camps.

- 3.11 The inspection highlighted the action being taken by partners to address the educational attainment gap between communities. A number of targeted initiatives are underway through Renfrewshire's Corporate Parenting Strategy and Corporate Parenting Plan to increase the proportion of looked after young leavers in positive and sustained destinations including education, training and employment. This involves a range of partners including the Economic Development Service, support from the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), Education and Leisure Services, Skills Development Scotland and Invest in Renfrewshire.
- 3.12 The inspection noted that positive trends were being achieved in tackling health inequalities in key child and maternal health outcomes to support children to attain the highest level of health including improving trends in oral health, immunisation uptake, smoking cessation in pregnancy and child healthy weight.
- 3.13 Work by partners to tackle child poverty was recognised as showing early indications of positive impact and improvements in the lives of children and young people. Early intervention and prevention programmes delivered through Renfrewshire's early years strategy were seen to be demonstrating early success in tackling the consequences of child poverty in the most deprived localities of Ferguslie and Linwood. Families First clubs operated across Renfrewshire to provide free meals and activities for children during school holiday periods and money advisors in Families First teams had at the time of the inspection secured an additional £400,000 for local families.
- 3.14 The inspection noted that children and young people were being provided with opportunities to become responsible citizens in the life and work of their school and their communities through extensive involvement in school committees and community based youth forums and groups. The joint initiative Generations Working Together between schools and care homes was having a positive impact on helping to bring young people and older people together through participating in social and recreational activities and had helped to increase the respect and empathy between younger and older people.
- 3.15 The inspectors also highlighted our "Family Assessment and Contact Team (FACT)" which through robust assessment is supporting the achievement of early and effective permanency decisions for children and their families. We have made significant progress in relation to permanence and it is very positive that this has been recognised by inspectors. Also recognised was Renfrewshire's "Safer Choices Missing Service" which is helping to ensure that young people who are identified as being at risk or vulnerable to sexual exploitation are well protected and kept safe. The initiative recently received a Police Scotland Divisional Commander award for the very effective partnership working.
- 3.16 The inspection found that performance in improving outcomes for children and young people was very good. They noted high quality, trusting relationships between staff and children and their families. They were impressed with the wide range of responsive and accessible supports and services to promote family wellbeing and resilience.
- 3.17 Inspectors commented very positively on the effectiveness of services. Examples included the effective and well-coordinated pre-birth support and transition planning for children moving from nursery to primary and to secondary school
- 3.18 The inspection found that the Community Planning Partnership and elected members were all highly committed to working together and had a compelling vision, values and aims, with meaningful ownership across the partnership to collaboratively realise the vision.
- 3.19 There are five improvement actions. Renfrewshire partners have developed a joint action plan. Training and practice has progressed since this time and action has already been undertaken in relation to the recommendations.

- 3.20 In common with the feedback received by many other local authority areas in the west of Scotland, the inspectors asked us to work jointly to improve aspects in the initial response process of child protection concerns to ensure a robust, jointly assessed and planned approach to all child protection referrals and investigations that fully includes health, and to develop a joint record of decision making in initial referral discussions between staff in social work, health and police when sharing concerns about a child or young person's safety or wellbeing. To address this, the Renfrewshire partnership worked with neighbouring authority areas East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde to develop and put in place a shared multi agency recording process that reflects the joint responsibility of health, police and children's social work in the decision making when considering child protection referrals.
- 3.21 The inspection found that the majority of our assessments of needs and risks were of a good or above standard as was the chronologies within our lead professional files. However, the inspection recommended that we improve staff's confidence in undertaking assessments of risk and needs and use of chronologies to assess and analyse the impact of significant events to aid the assessment process. This is linked to another of the report's recommendations, which is that we improve performance in writing SMART plans. Significant training programmes have been undertaken in universal services which have specifically addressed these areas. Further work will be undertaken as we prepare for the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 3.22 The inspectors recommended that we strengthen planning and reviewing arrangements for children looked after at home and those living in kinship care. Since this time the Child's Plan integrated assessment framework has been revised and the process strengthened to ensure that there are minimum standards in place for reviewing children's plans across services.
- 3.23 The inspection found that we could streamline Child Protection Committee business planning by better identification of measurable improvements in the quality of services to protect children and young people and performance against targets. In response to this recommendation, a session of the Committee on 2nd December was used to develop a balance scorecard approach to better support Committee members to monitor and evaluate progress.
- 3.24 A senior officer led GIRFEC seminar is scheduled to take place early in 2016 which will disseminate inspection findings to staff across the partnership and set out the key inspection actions being taken going forward.
- 3.25 Our own research has established that the inspection findings place Renfrewshire in the top four inspections undertaken to date. This is a very positive outcome given the scale of the inspection. In 2016 Renfrewshire will be introducing the named person role which will further strengthen the support we provide to children and their families in Renfrewshire.

4 Resources

- 4.1 An action plan has been developed and is being delivered within existing partnership arrangements. The Children and Young People Thematic Board is supported by a range of partnership groups taking forward the agenda.

5 Prevention

- 5.1 The inspection found that community safety initiatives were reducing the risk of harm to children and young people from deliberate fire raising incidents, house fires and road traffic accidents. This included successful road safety campaigns within schools, fire reach courses to promote good citizenship and reduce anti-social behaviour and increased home fire safety visits and educational visits and talks within schools and nurseries.

- 5.2 The work of the “Street Stuff” initiative was recognised to have contributed towards a 75% reduction in anti-social behaviour and low-level offending across the local authority since 2009.
- 5.3 It was recognised that the Fire Reach programme organised by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and supported by officers from the Community Safety Hub for young people who have been, or are, at risk of being involved with fire related crime had significantly helped to reduce wilful fire-raising by 45% over the last four years.
- 5.4 The introduction of the police child concern reports which contain a checklist of indicators and vulnerabilities was seen to be supporting police officers to better identify risks associated with child sexual exploitation.
- 5.5 The inspection highlighted Renfrewshire's “Safer Choices Missing Service” as a good practice example. The work of the service is helping to ensure that young people who are identified as being at risk or vulnerable to sexual exploitation are well protected and kept safe.
- 5.6 Screening for domestic abuse through Sensitive Routine Enquiry was found to be helpfully identifying vulnerable young parents and children at an earlier stage. Early access to timely support from services including Threads Connections was seen to be giving children the best start in life by intervening early with young families affected by domestic abuse. Trends in the number of reported incidents of domestic abuse referrals had risen year on year as a result of improved recording of data by partners and effective identification and reporting of incidents.

6 Community Involvement/Engagement

- 6.1 Inspectors found that young people in Renfrewshire had direct access to community planning partners and elected members and were systematically involved in community planning processes through community planning conferences, working groups in schools and the Children's Champion's Board. They noted many remarkable examples of innovative and meaningful ways of communicating and consulting with children and young people for example children from vulnerable groups in areas with high rates of low-level offending and anti-social behaviour had been instrumental in shaping community engagement and activity in the Street Stuff initiative involving police and youth services.
- 6.2 The inspection recognised that increasingly more young people were being provided with opportunities to gain positive experiences of taking on new or additional responsibilities and making a meaningful, positive impact on their community through volunteering.