

To: Safer and Stronger Renfrewshire Thematic Board

On: 24 November 2016

Report by:

Dorothy Hawthorn, Head Child Care and Criminal Justice, Renfrewshire Council

**Update report on Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee Annual Conference,
Gender Based Violence and PI Children Looked After away from Home**

1. Summary

- 1.1 Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee holds a conference each year. This year's event was held in Johnstone Town Hall on 8 September 2016 and it was heavily oversubscribed. There was a strong field of speakers and the event was positively evaluated by participants.
- 1.2 At the conference there was a video link with David Mandel from Ending Violence. This was a precursor to training for staff who work directly with domestic abuse and coercive control.
- 1.3 Children's services work to support children and families and wherever possible to support children at home. However there are circumstances where the risks are too high and alternative placements will be sought including extended family members known as Kinship care, foster care, residential care and adoption, to best meet the needs of children. Placements are monitored through a range of performance Indicators including those children who are looked after away from home.

2. Recent Developments

Feedback from RCPC Conference

- 2.1 The annual RCPC conference held in Johnstone Town Hall attracted 233 delegates from across all agencies . Keynote speakers included Nazir Afzal, former Chief Crown Prosecutor for North West England; Billy Burke, Head Teacher at Renfrew High and David Mandel , of endingviolence.com , who provided a live transatlantic video link to the conference.

Delegates were able to choose to attend one of five workshops in the afternoon session. These were:

- Family Nurse Partnership " Breaking the cycle"



- Families First Core Services “ Supporting families and communities”
- MARAC “ Positive Action – a multi-agency response to domestic abuse”
- Nazir Afzal “ Getting it right every time – responding to child sexual exploitation
- Foundations First “ When is a house a home- the role accommodation plays in children feeling safe”
- Barnardo’s “ The Importance of Nurture – 5 to thrive”

Feedback from delegates was particularly positive this year, with comments on catering being the only focus of any negative feedback.

Update on Gender Based Violence.

2.2 The Gender Based Violence Steering group has been keen to offer staff working in this field training that supports the development of their skills in working in this complex and prevalent area of practice. The Safe & Together Model Training (www.endingviolence.com) provides a framework for improving how agencies, particularly those involved in child protection procedures, deal with situations of domestic abuse.

The Safe and Together Model Suite of Tools and Interventions is a perpetrator pattern based, child centred, survivor strengths approach to working with domestic violence. Developed originally for child welfare systems, it has policy and practice implications for a variety of professionals and systems including domestic violence advocates, family service providers, courts, evaluators, domestic violence community collaboratives and others. The behavioural focus of the model highlights the "how" of the work, offering practical and concrete changes in practice. The model has a growing body of evidence associated with it including recent correlations with a reduction in out of home placement's in child welfare domestic violence cases.

The Safe and Together model is a field-tested, promising best practice approach to those involved in child protection and their partners to make good decisions for children impacted by domestic abuse perpetrators. The model consists of a set of assumptions, principles and critical components that when utilised in domestic abuse cases, help to improve identification, assessment, documentation, case planning and decision making

The four day training programme for practitioners was delivered to 39 members of staff from across the partnership between 3 and 6th October. The immediate evaluation from staff was very positive and further evaluation will be taken forward to understand the impact that the training has had on practice. We are currently looking at how we will support practitioners in their ongoing practice.



Renfrewshire is also hosting a seminar by David Mandel on 11 November to widen awareness amongst leaders and front line practitioners on the approach.

There will be an input at each of the Local Area Committees on gender based Violence, what it is and the partnership approach to this in Renfrewshire during November.

- 2.3 Children's services has a performance indicator to reduction in the number of children looked after away from home. Our aim is to support children and families in the community wherever possible. The year 3 target was 275 and the actual figure was 295.

The aim of reducing the number of children looked after away from home is a long-term one and required a multi-layered approach. Good progress is being achieved.

There are currently a number of children who are settled and thriving in permanent placements away from home and these placements will support them into adulthood.

The wellbeing of the child is always paramount. Strong partnership working in Renfrewshire supports the identification of risk to the most vulnerable, meaning we continue to accommodate very young children where this is necessary. The prevalence of addiction issues within Renfrewshire is a significant contributory factor.

In partnership with CELCIS, Renfrewshire Council has been implementing tests of change in permanency planning for children and this will contribute incrementally to a long term reduction in accommodated placements as arrangements for the most appropriate long-term placements which include kinship care, adoption and permanent return home are made consistently for children.

There have been significant reductions in the number of older children being accommodated, and services such as intensive family support, the Whole Systems Team and Functional Family Therapy support older children and teenagers to remain at home.

It is anticipated that further reductions will be achieved as the impact of early intervention and preventative work are realised however it must be recognised that such programmes achieve results over many years.

Author: Dorothy Hawthorn, Head Child Care and Criminal Justice, Renfrewshire Council on 0141 618 6827, dorothy.hawthorn@renfrewshire.gov.uk