



For Highland's Children - Bulletin 11

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with information on

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Getting it Right For Every Child in Highland

The Scottish Executive announced the national implementation strategy for 'Getting it Right for Every Child' on 22 June. Ministers confirmed a three-pronged approach:

- Legislation: new duties on agencies to co-operate with each other and share information, and a new duty on professionals to be alert to the needs of children and take action to meet them.
- Removing barriers: promoting ways of joined up working, and identifying barriers which require changes from the centre and those which can be tackled locally.
- Practice change: the Highland pathfinder programme to apply the *Getting it Right* approach in Inverness and then across the authority, including an IT solution to facilitate information sharing. Another pathfinder on responses to children in domestic abuse incidents in four other parts of the country.

Ministers acknowledged that "the implementation of *Getting it Right for Every Child* is an ambitious programme and a significant challenge for all those who work with children. It requires a fundamental shift in how children are helped and supported. This will take time."

Detailing the plans, Education Minister Peter Peacock said:

"Children must get the help they need, when they need it. Our reforms are vital to ensure that children get the support they need to cope with the challenges of life in the 21st century. Agencies need to change systems, working more closely together and changing the way they work."

"That's why it's vital that we get this right. I have set out an implementation plan which shows how we plan to take forward our far-reaching plans on children's services through legislation and changed practices. This co-ordinated plan sets us on a clear path to improvement. It is ambitious, and will take time to implement, but will help us make a real difference to the lives of children across Scotland."

Councillor Margaret Davidson, Chairman of the Highland Joint Committee on Children and Young People, welcomed the Minister's announcement, and said: "Highland agencies have been at the forefront of developments in services for children, and we are delighted to be associated with this major reform programme. The plans are ambitious, but our staff and managers have been working on the proposals for some time, and they are enthusiastic and committed about the implementation."

She confirmed that some local consultation had already taken place with young people and parents in Highland, and that this announcement would allow that work to gather pace.

She added: "Children and families tell us that they expect agencies to collaborate. They don't want to endlessly repeat their stories to different professionals. They want one assessment and one plan, not a multitude of plans held by different agencies. This is an opportunity to modernise our systems and we will work closely with the Executive to help make this happen.

"I am clear that agencies must work together, and in partnership with families, to achieve better outcomes for children. That means new ways of working - smarter way to achieve our goals for children and young people. Essentially, it means giving more time to direct work with families, and responsibility to lead professionals to help achieve change. I am delighted that all Highland agencies have committed to this initiative."

Further information is available from colin.macaulay@highland.gov.uk, on the website and at local briefings and in future *For Highland's Children* newsletters.

Feedback on Follow-up Child Protection Inspection

Chief Officers have received verbal feedback on the interim follow-up child protection inspection, and were informed that the draft report will be available in mid-September.

The Services for Children Inspection Team noted that last year's inspection concluded that children and young people in Highland were well protected, and their initial findings from the follow-up visit are encouraging with regard to:

- significant progress in meeting the recommendations of last year's inspection report;
- the high priority given to child protection by all agencies in Highland, and by the strong strategic leadership which is moving forward an agenda of continuous improvement;
- further impressive service developments;
- greater involvement of health professionals with police and social work, in initial and ongoing child protection enquiries;
- the development of multi-agency Quality Assurance processes
- the support being given to the national implementation of 'Getting it Right for Every Child'.

High praise was again given to the quality of joint working between professionals and agencies, and the commitment and enthusiasm for effective information sharing.

Particular credit was given for:

- increased involvement of children and families in assessment and planning processes;
- improving operational management;
- improvements to training programmes and enhanced staff supervision systems
- improvements to recording systems.

They identified areas for further development, including:

- staff shortages of lack of experience in certain areas;
- addressing some gaps in training;
- progress in information systems in some services.

They also noted that many services improvements in Highland will be dependent on the successful implementation of 'Getting it Right for Every Child' and the associated IT solution, and that the impact of this required to be closely monitored.

Chief Officers thanked the Services for Children Team for the manner in which the inspection was conducted, and for their robust, but fair and reasonable initial feedback. They have also thanked all staff who participated in the fieldwork activity.

Further details about the feedback will follow in routine management briefings across agencies.

Finally, please note:

For a period of 2/3 months from Monday 26 June, the acting Head of Service for Children, Young People & Families will be Stephen Iliffe. Bill Alexander will be acting Director of Social Work while Harriet Dempster is on leave.