



Your Moray

REPORT TO: COMMUNITY PLANNING BOARD (CPB) COMMITTEE ON 29 FEBRUARY 2024

SUBJECT: JOINT INSPECTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF HARM IN MORAY

BY: HEAD OF SERVICE / CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To provide the Community Planning Board members with an overview of the findings from the joint inspection of Childrens Services by the Care Inspectorate report that was published on 23 January 2024 (**Appendix 1**).

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Community Planning Board note:

- i) the overview of the findings from the joint inspection of Children's Services by the Care Inspectorate.**
- ii) the Childrens Services partnership are developing an improvement plan in respect of the findings**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Conducted at the request of Scottish Ministers, joint inspections consider the effectiveness of services for children and young people at risk of harm. Children at risk of harm means children up to the age of 18 years who need urgent support due to being at risk of harm from abuse and/or neglect. Included in this term are children who need urgent support due to being a significant risk to themselves and/or others or are at significant risk in the community.

3.2 The inspection team is led by the Care Inspectorate's strategic scrutiny children's team and their scrutiny partners: Education Scotland; Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS). The inspection team looks at the differences community planning partnerships are making to the lives of children and young people at risk of harm and their families.

- 3.3 Moray received notification of inspection on 10 July 2023. The inspection was conducted in 3 phases, beginning from the point of notification and ending with the final partnership discussion meeting held on 29 November 2023.
- 3.4 Inspectors use a six-point scale to provide a formal evaluation of just one quality indicator, 2.1 - impact on children and young people. This indicator focuses solely on the experience and feelings of children and young people at risk of harm. It relates to the differences services are making to their lives and their life chances in the future. It includes the impact of services in optimising the wellbeing of individual children and young people across the wellbeing indicators.
- 3.5 Central to the inspection methodology is the participation of children, young people and parents and carers. Through face to face meetings, telephone or video calls and survey responses, Inspectors listened to the views and experiences of 113 children and young people and 94 parents and carers in total. This aspect of the inspection required significant co-ordination with input and support from frontline practitioners across all services. In addition, inspectors conducted a partnership wide staff survey, with a total of 404 frontline practitioners completed the survey which was a strong engagement response for the partnership with 88% uptake.
- 3.6 In September inspectors reviewed practice by reading a sample of records held by a range of services for 60 children and young people at risk of harm. Preparation of these records took place over a three week period, based on a randomised selection by inspectors with a defined list of documents required from files held by social work, education, health, police and children's reporter. In total 4329 documents were collated and made available to reviewers during the week long record reading activity.
- 3.7 During October, 98 children and young people and 64 parents and carers were supported to complete online surveys. The partnership also submitted a position statement outlining current performance, practice and leadership across the partnership. The position statement was accompanied by 85 documents as supporting evidence. An engagement week was then held in November, with inspectors meeting members of staff, including senior leaders and those who work directly with children, young people and families. They also met with five elected members, 15 children and young people and 30 parents and carers.

4 **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Inspectors evaluated the impact of services on the lives of children and young people as **adequate**. This meant that strengths just outweighed weaknesses. Although many strengths were identified as having a positive impact, the likelihood of achieving positive experiences and outcomes was reduced significantly because of key performance areas which needed to improve.

4.2 Inspectors found strengths in areas where our partnership working and joint improvement efforts were well established. Due to the fact that many of the areas for improvement identified were already reflected in our partnership plans, inspectors are confident that the partnership in Moray has the capacity to make changes in the areas that require improvement.

4.3 Identified Strengths

- 4.3.1 Children and young people were safer as a result of our approach to identification and initial response to risk. The quality of local Interagency Referral Discussion partnership working has been highlighted as a good practice example which is a significant achievement.
- 4.3.2 The introduction of a solution orientated approach to child protection planning meetings was beginning to improve the participation and quality of meetings for children, young people and their families.
- 4.3.3 Staff were confident in their knowledge, skills and ability to recognise, report and respond to child abuse and neglect and harm from parental behaviour or circumstances.
- 4.3.4 When children and young people received support from universal and specialist services this made a positive difference to their lives. Where available, specialist services were helping children and young people recover from abuse and neglect.
- 4.3.5 Most children and young people reported that they felt safe where they live all or most of the time. When children and young people were identified as being at risk of neglect or abuse, the support provided had helped the majority of children and young people to become safer.
- 4.3.6 When children and young people had supportive and trusting relationships with staff, this was making a positive difference to their lives.

4.4 Areas for improvement

- 4.4.1 Young people at risk of harm from themselves or to others, or from risk in the community did not always receive the help they needed to make a positive difference in their lives.
- 4.4.2 Not all children and young people felt that their worker spent time with them or gave them the help they needed. This was linked to a lack of consistency of staff members and some families experienced frequent changes in staff.
- 4.4.3 The quality of chronologies, assessments and plans was variable.
- 4.4.4 Children and young people at risk of harm had not consistently benefited from independent advocacy, and had limited opportunities to influence service planning and delivery.
- 4.4.5 The child protection committee had not yet fully developed the mechanisms necessary to understand and communicate the difference that services were making to the lives of children and young people at risk of harm.
- 4.4.6 The partnership's agenda for improvement and change was not yet underpinned by a cohesive approach to service review and self-evaluation.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.** The Care Inspectorate have requested a joint action plan that clearly details how the partnership will make improvements in the key areas identified by inspectors. This is to be submitted by 5 March 2024. A partnership discussion session with inspectors was held on 7 February 2024 which supported the development of key areas within the improvement plan.
- 5.2.** A timeline for developing the improvement plan has been established to include consultation with key stakeholders and governance groups across the partnership. In keeping with the approach taken by most authority areas, the timeline outlines approval stages via the Child Protection Committee and Public Protection Chief Officers Group prior to final submission.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1.** The joint inspection of Moray's Children's services has concluded and the findings were published by the Care Inspectorate on 23 January 2024.
- 6.2.** A partnership communication plan has been developed to ensure co-ordinated dissemination of key messages internally and externally, including a proactive media release on publication date.
- 6.3.** The partnership has six weeks, from publication, to develop an improvement plan in response to the inspection, for submission to inspectors by 5 March 2024.

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Background Papers: Moray Joint Inspection Children at Risk of Harm
Ref: Appendix 1