



REPORT TO: MORAY INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD AUDIT, PERFORMANCE AND RISK (APR) COMMITTEE ON 29 FEBRUARY 2024

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

BY: CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER/HEAD OF SERVICE

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To inform the Committee with an overview of the findings from the joint inspection of Children's Services by the Care Inspectorate report that was published on 23 January 2024, as at **Appendix 1**.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee note:

- i) the overview of the findings from the joint inspection of Children's Services by the Care Inspectorate; and**
- ii) the Children's 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/neglect and those who pose a significant risk to themselves and/or others 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 impact the community planning partnerships are having on 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 A consistent approach is taken to inspections by using the quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection. Inspectors collect and review evidence against all twenty-two quality indicators in the framework to examine four inspection statements:
1. Children and young people are safer because risks have been identified early and responded to effectively.
 2. Children and young people's lives improve with high quality planning and support, ensuring they experience sustained loving and nurturing relationships to keep them safe from further harm.
 3. Children and young people and families are meaningfully and appropriately involved in decisions about their lives. They influence service planning, delivery and improvement.
 4. Collaborative strategic leadership, planning and operational management ensure high standards of service delivery
- 3.5 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 future life chances. It includes measuring the impact of services aimed at optimising the wellbeing of children and young people against the wellbeing indicators.

4. KEY MATTERS RELEVANT TO RECOMMENDATION

- 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**
- 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.

- 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.
- 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**

- 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.
- 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.
- The quality of chronologies, assessments and plans was variable.
- 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.
- 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.
- The partnership's agenda for improvement and change was not yet underpinned by a cohesive approach to service review and self-evaluation.

4.5 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.

4.6 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.

5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) and Moray Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan "Partners in Care 2022 – 2032"**

This report notes that an improvement plan is currently being developed in respect of the inspection findings that will align with key priority areas across the Children's Services partnership.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

None arising as a direct result of this report.

(c) **Financial implications**

None arising as a direct result of this report.

(d) **Risk Implications and Mitigation**

None arising as a direct result of this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no proposed changes to the staffing or reporting relationships.

(f) Property

None arising as a direct result of this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

None arising as a direct result of this report.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

None arising as a direct result of this report.

(i) Directions

None arising as a direct result of this report.

(j) Consultations

MIJB Senior Management Team.

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.

Author of Report: Tracy Stephen, Chief Social Work Officer/Head of Service

Background Papers: Report of a joint inspection of services for children and young people at risk of harm in Moray (**APPENDIX 1**)