

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**SUBJECT: JOINT INSPECTION OF SERVICES TO PROTECT CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN FALKIRK COUNCIL AREA**  
**MEETING: FALKIRK COUNCIL**  
**DATE: 5<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2011**  
**AUTHOR: ACTING DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES/CHAIR OF  
THE FALKIRK CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the findings of the inspection of service to protection children in the Falkirk area, published by Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (known as the Care Inspectorate) on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011. The report also advises Members on how actions will be taken forward to ensure that services build on this positive inspection report and continue to improve and develop.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 This inspection was undertaken in May and June 2011 by the Care Inspectorate. The inspection considered service provided by NHS Forth Valley, Central Scotland Police, The Children's Reporter and the Council. It also looked at service provided by voluntary and independent sector organisations.
- 2.2 This is the second inspection of such services in the Falkirk area. The first inspection took place between December 2008 and January 2009 and was published in June 2009. The first inspection was generally a positive report and provided helpful feedback on both key strengths and areas for improvement.
- 2.3 The Falkirk Child Protection Committee (CPC) brings all agencies together who have a role to play in the protection of children. The Child Protection Committee (CPC), supported by the Chief Officers Group (G5) has taken a lead role in driving forward improvements since the last inspection. The CPC has also established mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating local service provision and the extent to which children are protected and have their needs met.

**3. 2011 INSPECTION FINDINGS**

- 3.1 A copy of the full reports is contained in Appendix 1. The findings of this report indicate that services to protect children are strong and that they have continued to improve since the previous inspection in June 2009.

The evaluations from the Falkirk Council area arising from the most recent inspection are;

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|---|--------------|
| • Children are listened to and respected    | Very Good    |
| • Children are helped to keep safe          | Very Good    |
| • Response to immediate concerns            | Very Good    |
| • Meeting needs and reducing long term harm | Good         |
| • Self-evaluation                           | Good         |
| • Improvements in performance               | Satisfactory |

3.2 Inspector noted a number of key strengths which make a difference to children and families namely;

- Very effective communication with families helping them to understand what they need to do to help to keep their children safe
- Prompt and effective action by services to keep children safe
- High quality support to carers helping them to meet the needs of vulnerable children
- Services working very well together to help keep children, who can no longer live at home, remain in their own community

3.3 Inspectors have also commended three particular examples of good practice which will be posted on the Care Inspectorate website for wider dissemination across Scotland. The good practice examples include the development of the intensive family support service which helps young people remain at home. This has been a significant development since the initial Child Protection inspection, when some concerns were raised about the number of children who, at that time, required to be accommodated outwith their own community. The service has been developed as part of the overall redesign of Children's Services, approved by Members of Policy and Resources Committee 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009. Other good practice examples are the Young Runaways Protocol which ensures a strong multi-agency response to children who go missing from home, which can result in children and young people being exposed to risks. Inspectors reported very positively on the support that children receive, when traced and on the consequence reduction in repeat episodes of running away. Thirdly, inspectors commended the strong approach being taken across agencies to promote internet safety.

3.4 The inspection addressed 4 key questions which are outlined in the reminder of this section of the report.

3.4.1 How well are the needs of children and families being met?

The findings in relation to this important question are generally very positive and reflect a positive and strong approach across all agencies to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children and families in our communities.

3.4.2 How good is the management in delivery of services?

The findings in this section of the report show improvement from the previous inspection. Inspectors have highlighted some areas where further training and guidance to staff would be helpful and have encouraged wider use of the assessment tool which has been developed locally for use by all agencies who work with children. These areas will be a high priority for the Child Protection

Committee to take forward as part of the improvement plan which will flow from this inspection.

3.4.3 How good is leadership and direction?

The findings in this section of the report are generally very positive and inspectors commented very favourably on the strong connections between the Child Protection Committee, The Children's Commission and the Wider Community Planning Partnership in Falkirk. Inspectors have also noted the strong leadership and direction provided by the G5 Chief Officers Group.

3.4.4 How are services improving?

This section of the report reflects a generally improving picture, however raises some issues about the pace of change in implementing some important initiatives across all agencies eg. the Integrated Assessment Framework. These issues will be addressed by both the Child Protection Committee and the Children's Commission in their future improvement plans.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

4.1 This inspection has provided valuable feedback on local services to protect children and plays an important part in highlighting where all agencies need to concentrate their efforts in order to bring about continuous improvements. The main areas for improvement highlighted by inspectors are to:

- Improve the quality of assessment of risks and needs in individual children's plans;
- Increase the pace of change by ensuring that managers at all levels recognise their responsibilities for driving improvements and practice;
- Continue to strengthen joint self-evaluation to ensure that it results in improved outcomes for the most needy children.

4.2 It is very encouraging that inspectors have expressed a confidence that services will be able to make improvements in the light of the inspection findings and have opted not to undertake any further visits in relation to this inspection.

4.3 The Child Protection Committee is committed to working closely with the link inspector to build on this positive inspection and to take forward the improvement actions identified. This work will be incorporated into the Business Plan of the Child Protection Committee and will be reported to Members in due course.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Member of Falkirk Council note;

- 5.1 the positive findings of this report and the efforts made by all agencies to provide high quality child protection services.
- 5.2 request the Child Protection Committee, in conjunction with the Children's Commission to develop an improvement plan which addresses the appropriate areas identified by the inspection.
- 5.3 request the Chair of the Child Protection Committee to provide further updates to Members on the continuous improvement activity undertaken by the Child Protection Committee.

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Acting Director of Social Work Services/Chair of the Falkirk Child Protection Committee

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011

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## LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

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