

Perth & Kinross Child Protection Newsletter



Issue 6 - January 2010

Any new year, indeed decade, brings with it a chance to look forward to the opportunities and challenges and Child Protection is no exception. Building on the very positive HMle Inspection of last year, we have a clear picture of the strengths of Child Protection work in Perth and Kinross and areas of improvement required in the coming year. The Child Protection Committee and sub-groups will be monitoring progress closely on these improvements on a regular basis and continuing to audit and evaluate Child Protection work, starting with an inter-agency audit of cases in certain areas in February 2010. We are also continuing to strengthen our inter-agency partnerships and refine our procedures and processes to support staff in their work and in this newsletter you will see examples of this, such as the IRD protocol, Sex Offenders Disclosure pilot and review of the Alcohol and Drug Partnership. Difficult but important work will continue on Shared Chronologies and Integrated Assessment and progress will be made over the next year.

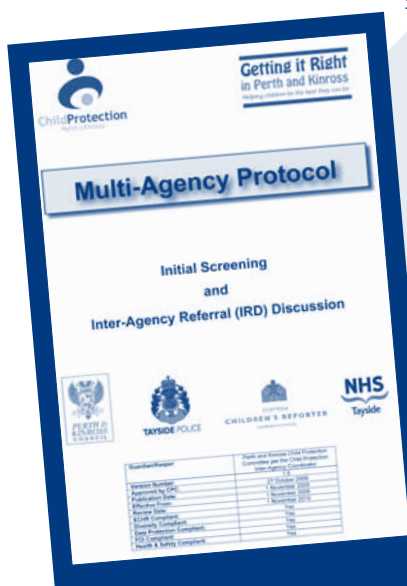
Child Protection work locally and nationally remains a challenging area, not least because of the increased demand for services, but also because of the very close public and media scrutiny of the work. Largely because of parental substance misuse and a growing number of domestic violence referrals, we have seen a year on year rise of at least 20% over the last five years and there is no reason to suggest that won't continue in the next year. We have also seen over the last year some unhelpful publicity about Child Protection work and this makes working in this area even more difficult for staff. Locally, we are currently evaluating our public information materials and hope to refresh these early in the New Year. We will also be exploring ways in which we can have an informed debate in Perth and Kinross about what the public can realistically expect from and contribute to Child Protection in this authority. More specifically, we are continuing to roll out the Child Internet Safety Programme to children, teachers and parents and we are having to constantly update this to keep pace with the challenges arising from risk to children on the internet.

I hope you will find the newsletter helpful in giving you a sense of ongoing work in Child Protection in Perth and Kinross and look forward to working with you over the year in developing and improving our services in this important area.

Bill Atkinson, Chairperson

New Child Protection Multi-Agency Protocol

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Perth & Kinross Child Protection Committee has now published their Annual Report for

2008-2009 and Business Plan for 2009-2010. The Annual Report sets in context the considerable achievements in 2008-2009 and the many challenges which were embraced. The Business Plan, which links closely with the HMle Improvement Plan, demonstrated our commitment to continuous improvement.

The full Annual Report and Business Plan can be found on www.pkc.gov.uk/childprotection

Perth & Kinross Child Protection Committee would like this newsletter to be as representative of Services, Practitioners, children and young people as possible. If you have any news or views to share, or would like to suggest a topic for future issues, then please contact us at the Editorial Team. Similarly, if you would like further copies of this newsletter sent via email, please contact the Editorial Team via Gordon McKay - tel 01738 476880 or email GRMcKay@pkc.gov.uk

New Child Protection Multi-Agency Protocol

This newly agreed protocol is soon to be launched across the local authority and it is extremely important that all staff are aware of its existence and are familiar with its aims. Its purpose is to set out the respective roles, responsibilities, duties and agreed processes involved in the initial screening, assessing, recording, discussing and acting on all **child care and/or protection concerns** from all services/agencies.

Through this pro-active, multi-agency approach, services/agencies are committed to supporting the protection of children and young people across Perth and Kinross by:

- *making an initial screening assessment of the child/young person's needs;*
- *sharing all relevant information swiftly and effectively;*
- *ensuring multi-agency discussions and decisions are appropriate and effective, and that relevant supports are identified and provided quickly; and*
- *ensuring that referrals to SCRA are made only where compulsory measures of supervision may be necessary; in cases of significant need and/or risk or harm.*

It does not seek to introduce any process or procedure that would prevent or delay the instigation of child protection procedures or where there is a concern that a child may be at risk of **significant harm**. Neither does it seek to limit the power of any service/agency to make referrals to SCRA, where this is considered to be appropriate.

The full protocol can be viewed on the Child Protection web pages allocated to information for practitioners. If anyone has a query or requires clarification on any matter relating to this item please contact Ross Drummond, Co-ordinator, Perth & Kinross Child Protection Committee - email RDrummond@pkc.gov.uk

Sex Offender Disclosure Pilot Now Well Underway in Tayside

A pilot project to provide parents with improved access to information about known sex offenders who may be in contact with their children is underway in Tayside.

The Scottish Government has selected Tayside Police to run the pilot, which will run until May 2010, on behalf of the Scottish Police Service.

This will provide a formal route for parents, carers or guardians of children under 18 years old, to ask Tayside Police to tell them if a person has a record for sexual offences against children, or other offences that might put their child at risk.

Police will be more readily alerted to concerns, with a presumption that they will inform the parent, carer or guardian if the named person has convictions for sex offences. If the child is found to be at serious risk of harm then child protection measures will be instigated.

Kenny MacAskill, First Minister, visited Tayside Police to officially launch the scheme. He said *"Our statutory agencies have considerably strengthened how they work together to protect communities from the potential risks posed by offenders but the public too has a role in assisting the authorities."*

While we must all rightly be alert to "stranger danger" most sexual offences against children are committed by individuals known to the child's family, adults who abuse a position of trust with that child.

This project provides another link which will assist in identifying vulnerable children and families who are unknown to the police and care agencies to ensure that correct help and advice are provided.

Tayside Police Assistant Chief Constable Bill Harkins added *"We are pleased that Tayside Police along with its community and criminal justice partners will be responsible for the pilot project."*

We have been working closely with the Scottish Government in advance of the pilot projects implementation. Clearly good partnership working already exists in relation to the management of sex offenders in Tayside and irrespective of the pilot project, people should always contact the authorities if they have any concerns over the safety of any child in their community."

Further information about the pilot can be obtained from the Project Manager, Chief Inspector Eric Knox, tel 0300 111 2222.



**Getting it Right
in Perth and Kinross**
Helping children be the best they can be

A Day in the Life of: Tayside Police Domestic Abuse Unit

It's a Tuesday, a January morning and the lights and kettle of the Domestic Abuse Department based at Barrack Street, Perth are being switched on by Detective Sergeant Amanda Nicolson.

The day starts in anticipation of checking the police computer system to see what domestic abuse incidents have taken place in and around Perth and Kinross during the preceding 24 hours. This morning there are 5 incidents which may pose a risk of future harm to the victim and in 3 of the incidents there are children who reside within the household. Children are considered victims in these cases even when they are not physically abused themselves.

Amanda is particularly concerned about one incident which took place the previous evening in Crieff. A 28 year old female has been slapped to the face and kicked to her legs, causing bruising, by her 32 year old boyfriend, whilst holding her 6 month old daughter. The boyfriend is now in custody in the cells at Perth Police Station having been charged with assault and awaiting transfer to appear at Perth Sheriff Court before the Sheriff that morning. The clock starts ticking to gather as much information as possible on this family, risk assess it and put in place a risk management plan to minimise any future risk of harm, in particular, should the boyfriend be released from court. Some of the many unanswered questions hanging in the air for a case like this are:

- *Will the boyfriend be released from court this morning? If so, will he have special bail conditions attached to his release to protect the girlfriend and her child? What potential risk is he of causing future harm to the victim even if special bail conditions are in place?*
- *How is the victim now - what support does she need to continue to protect herself and her child? How is she feeling about the incident now? Is she still co-operative and willing to engage with services? Is there a history of abuse?*
- *How is the child? Is mum able under the circumstances to take appropriate measures to protect the child from the boyfriend?*

It's nine o'clock and Detective Constable Janice Barnett arrives at the office. Janice and Amanda sit down to brief on the events of the preceding 24 hours. The case from Crieff is discussed, risk is assessed and actions agreed.

Helpfully, the Crieff area is currently taking part in a risk assessment pilot based on a model called SPECSS+. This means that Amanda and Janice have a lot more information at this stage than they usually would. This information has been captured from the victim by the front line uniformed officers dealing with the incident. This information flags up potential indicators for future harm to the victim and her child including that her child is only 6 months old and she is 3 months pregnant; there are issues with the boyfriend around drug misuse and alcohol dependency; there have been previously unreported incidents of abuse and the victim wants to separate from her boyfriend and he knows this. This helps Amanda and Janice determine this perpetrator could be of high risk of causing future harm to the victim and in turn the child. This information is shared with COPFS, (Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service) to assist them in securing the best protection they can for the victim at court in the morning, ie bail conditions or remand for the perpetrator.

It is agreed that with the child protection concerns this information presents, both for the 6 months old child and unborn child, it is essential that it be shared with Social Services and Amanda undertakes to discuss the information with them, agree a plan of intervention, and determine whether a referral in respect of the child is to be submitted to the Children's Reporter.

Contact requires to be made with the victim and Janice undertakes to make telephone contact with the victim this morning to discuss crisis intervention measures to protect the victim in the short term as well as fully inform her as to the criminal justice process.

It is also agreed that the services of Barnardo's would be beneficial in this case to support the victim in protecting herself and her child in the longer term.

It's ten o'clock and Corinna McAtarsnay joins Amanda and Janice. Corinna is a senior practitioner working with Barnardo's as a Domestic Abuse Worker. Corinna works along side Amanda and Janice at Perth. There is a long established successful partnership between Barnardo's and Tayside Police which has been in place since 2000.

It is agreed that Janice will seek the victim's consent for a joint visit for her and Corinna to visit the victim. The aim of the visit is to primarily offer support which Corinna can offer on a medium term basis whilst working in partnership with social work, health and education, women's aid and WRASAC (Womens Rape and Sexual Assault Centre). Janice will explore short term protective measures with the victim including safety planning, panic alarms and signposting to other agencies.



It's two o'clock in the afternoon and the joint visit takes place with the victim at her home. She is understandably still shaken from the incident the previous evening but has indicated to Corinna and Janice that she does not want her boyfriend to be convicted for the assault as she fears being on her own and has been financially dependent on her boyfriend for some time. This is discussed with the victim and other avenues for financial support in such situations are explored with her. She also accepts the services of Barnardo's and if the boyfriend is released from court today she agrees to a panic alarm being installed at her home address. The victim will also receive a security survey for her home so she can live there with as little fear as possible from the boyfriend.

Half past two and Amanda receives notification from the court that the boyfriend is released from court with special bail conditions not to approach or contact the victim. His Intermediate Diet will take place in February which Janice diaries in case the bail conditions are removed at this time and the risk management plan requires to be reviewed.

It's nearing five o'clock and this has just been one case of many requiring Amanda, Janice and Corinna's attention as well as juggling attendance at child protection case conferences, professional workers meetings, completing the necessary paperwork and remembering to eat, drink and breath! The end of the day is nearing and as the lights of the Domestic Abuse Department are switched off and Amanda, Janice and Corinna go home, they all have similar thoughts lingering regarding the Crieff case - will the boyfriend breach his special bail conditions? Will the victim change her mind and wish to reconcile and disengage from the criminal justice process? Will there be a conviction in this case? Will agencies be able to make a difference for the child and unborn child? Will this victim be a victim again in the future? What more can we do to make a positive difference? What will tomorrow bring?.....

What's New?

The Review of Drug and Alcohol Support in Perth and Kinross

The Scottish Government decided that a new structure was needed to take on the developing agenda of Alcohol and Drugs issues across Scotland. In April of this year it was decided to create a new strategic body derived from the previous DAAT's (Drug and Alcohol Teams). This was to be reformed as an ADP (Alcohol and Drug Partnership).

This emphasises the change around the alcohol agenda. In 'Changing Scotland's Relationship with Alcohol' the Scottish Government, for the first time, recognises that more has to be done to break Scotland's damaging link to alcohol. In conjunction with the other Scottish Government strategy document relating to drug use, 'Road to Recovery', which embraces a fresh agenda around helping addicts to move to a more productive, drug free lifestyle, it heralds a new dynamic approach to these dual problems which afflict individuals in Scotland.

Amongst it aims will be:

- (1) to decrease the number of problem drug users in Perth and Kinross;
- (2) to provide new and lasting opportunities for drug users to move into a drug-free lifestyle;
- (3) to reduce the number of people who are admitted into hospital with an acute alcohol problem;
- (4) through our "Change is a Must" project, provide a real change for children affected by parental substance misuse.

This new strategic partnership will report through the Community Planning Partnership. The launch date coincided with the Community Safety Partnership Conference on 9 December 2009.

Training

Child Protection Training

Applications and further information available from Training & Development Unit at Pullar House

Getting it Right for Looked After Children
3 February 2010, 9.15am - 4.30pm, King James VI Business Centre

Development, Attachment and Resilience
2 & 3 February 2010, 9.15 am - 4.00 pm
(limited availability - Dundee venue)

Self Harm Network
18 February 2010, 4.00 pm - 5.30 pm, Blackfriars Development Centre

Tayside Domestic Abuse & Violence Against Women Training Consortium (venues to be established)

For further details please contact sarah.watts@dundeecity.gov.uk

Introduction to Domestic Abuse
21 January & 18 February 2010, 9.15 am - 4.00 pm,
Foundation Level

Introduction to Violence Against Women
11 March 2010, 9.15 am - 4.00 pm

Resources and Useful Websites

CEOP - Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

www.ceop.gov.uk

Inter-Agency Child Protection Guidelines

www.pkc.gov.uk/childprotection

Child Protection Web Pages

www.pkc.gov.uk/childprotection

Child Protection Committee

Membership/Minutes/Messages

Protecting Young People Useful Information

Inter-Agency Protocols, Procedures, Guidelines and Assessment, Working with Substance Misusing Parents, Carers and their Children

www.pkc.gov.uk/childprotection

Domestic Abuse

www.domesticabuse.co.uk

Useful Telephone Numbers

Children and Young People

Child Protection Duty Team 01738 476768

Childline 0800 11 11

Police

Police 01738 621141

Public Protection Unit 01738 892911

Emergency Services 999

Social Work

Social Work Out of Hours 01382 432270

Education & Children's Services 01738 476768

Substance Misuse

Social Work Drug & Alcohol Team 01738 444433

NHS 24 08454 24 24 24

GUM Clinic 01738 623311

(Sexually Transmitted Infection)

Useful Websites

www.nhstayside.scot.nhs.uk

www.scottishwomensaid.co.uk

www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

www.pkdomesticabuse.co.uk

www.pkc.gov.uk

www.iwf.org.uk

www.savethechildren.org.uk/caris

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion only, a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting Gordon McKay on 01738 476880.



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