

Briefing No.25 10 February 2015

Improving Children's Services in Dumfries and Galloway

More Feedback from the Interim Follow-on Inspection of Children's Services

The Care Inspectorate have advised us that it could be March when they publish their report on the follow-on inspection that took place in December. This inspection focused on the 5 recommendations from last April's Joint Inspection and how they were being addressed in Dumfries and Galloway. We don't want to pre-empt the published report but we think it is important to maintain communication with those who work in children's services and let everyone know what the inspectors said about our progress. This briefing is based therefore, on verbal feedback from the inspectors when they met with senior managers and Chief Officers.

What did the Inspectors tell us?

The overall messages were positive and the inspectors told us that Dumfries and Galloway is now a better place. We have more honesty and self-awareness and we are more aware of our strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors said 'energy and drive' were very apparent.

This is what they said about our progress against the 5 recommendations:

The first recommendation was about child protection - vulnerable children, young people and families get the help they need at an early stage.

These are some of the things the inspectors said:

- We have made notable progress in this area with a systematic, structured approach that provides a solid foundation for the future.
- We have an independent Chair of the CPC who provides challenge.
- We have embraced the National Risk Assessment Framework and there are signs that staff are becoming more confident about assessing risk.
- There has been significant effort to develop the new Initial Referral Discussion (IRD) framework and there is now much better information-sharing between the NHS, Social Work and Police.
- There is evidence of a more positive culture developing and evidence of agencies working together.

The second recommendation was that vulnerable children, young people and families get the help they need at an early stage.

These are some of the things the inspectors said:

There is clear progress being made in this area with our work on:

- Chronologies
- Information-sharing
- Risk Assessment
- Child's Plan

The third recommendation was that we need to successfully tackle priority areas of need in order to improve the life chances of looked after children, young people and care leavers.

These are some of the things the inspectors said:

- Our Corporate Parenting Plan demonstrates much better awareness of the needs of looked-after children and young people.
- There is evidence of better engagement with looked-after children and young people.
- We no longer have care-leavers in 'B&B' accommodation.
- We are providing free access to Council Leisure facilities for looked-after children.

The fourth recommendation was that we need to implement an effective quality assurance framework in order to achieve high standards of work.

These are some of the things the inspectors said:

- Our draft QA Framework is ambitious in scope and will help support a cultural shift to where quality assurance becomes everyone's business.
- Our performance information activity is a very significant piece of work which will provide a very substantial platform for driving improvement and promoting accountability.
- Our Initial Case Review process is 'impressive'.
- We've made a big commitment with our Significant Case Reviews and our approach to these is positive and practical.

The final recommendation was about the need for stronger collaborative leadership to plan and direct the delivery of integrated children's services so that there are measurable improvements in outcomes for children and young people.

These are some of the things the inspectors said about this:

- There was positive evidence of growing, strengthening collaborative leadership.
- There is a shared Vision from the Chief Officers that is child-centred and has been developed with children, young people and families. This forms a good foundation for our Integrated Children's Services Plan. (This will be shortly be published on the Children's Services website.)
- We have a much clearer direction for the development of our Integrated Children's Services Plan. It makes sense to do this in 2 stages with an initial 18 month focus on vulnerability.
- We have much better governance and accountability with new structures; an independent Chair of the Child Protection Committee; a Children's Services Executive Group that meets weekly and Strategic Groups reporting to the Executive Group.

The final message from the inspectors was that we have made very positive first steps but we must maintain our momentum and continue to make progress. As soon as the Care Inspectorate publishes its report we will send out a link to it in a briefing.

Other information:

Training

There have been some changes to the training calendar with cancelled dates being re-scheduled. Please check the 2015 training calendar for the latest dates at:

<http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=14146>

Information Sharing

Visit the Children's Services website to view a youtube video of Maureen Falconer (from the Information Commissioner's Office) giving a presentation on wellbeing and information-sharing.

This is available here <http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=14145>

Coming soon....

Various products will be formally launched in March. These include the chronology template; the new Child's Plan and the risk assessment framework. Details will follow.

For further information or to give feedback on any of these items, please contact GIRFEC@Dumgal.gov.uk

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