

### Purpose

To provide the Board with a report on the development of child protection in the run-up to the external inspections in spring 2008. The last periodic report was provided in May 2007.

### Background

Members will recall that child protection is “everyone’s business”, that services require inter-agency co-operation<sup>1</sup> and that it needs to be viewed within the overall strategy for promoting the health and welfare of children. The latter is a more strategic approach particularly where there is emphasis on supportive and caring relationships within the home. Public and politicians alike are however, rightly concerned when individual instances of serious harm or neglect come to light and much work has gone into improving the processes for recognising and managing individual cases<sup>2</sup>. These processes are now being inspected in each local authority area throughout Scotland by a team<sup>3</sup> led by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE).

The inspection of services will be set against the national set of quality indicators (Annexe A) and while it is not an end in itself it will provide a valuable, external assessment.

### Current Position

Preparation for inspection is about improving the current service as measured by the national quality indicators. It is not about making superficial change in order to pass a test. All agencies are working co-operatively in this endeavour through the child protection committees (CPCs) of North and South Lanarkshire Council.

Assessment is key to identifying the areas that need strengthening. Annexe B identifies:

- The external assessments undertaken by HMIE of other local authorities and which are in the public domain
- The multi-agency, self-assessment for both North and South Lanarkshire Councils
- The NHS Lanarkshire self-assessment

Revisions to the Lanarkshire (NHS and multi-agency) are underway and should be complete by the end of the calendar year. It is likely that they will be revised downwards as self-criticism grows as external inspection draws near. None-the-less it is a reasonable belief that child protection in Lanarkshire will withstand comparison with any service elsewhere in Scotland. There is however absolutely no complacency and action plans are reviewed regularly.

Action planning will be strengthened by: the return of Anne Armstrong to the senior professional leadership position, the commencement of a new Nurse Consultant post in Child Protection, and further appointments in child protection facilitator staff (2) and secretarial support. In addition the specialist child protection committees’ development staff of both Councils and NHS Lanarkshire are now located in a single-office suite in Hamilton.

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<sup>1</sup> The NHS, social work, housing, education, police and criminal justice.

<sup>2</sup> These include risk factors; assessment, monitoring and review; support measures, specialist team approaches, e.g. drug abuse; case reviews; forensic examination; protection measures and criminal justice action.

<sup>3</sup> The inspection team will be drawn from the following “inspectorate or regulatory” bodies: HMIE, Social Work Inspectors, Scottish commission for Regulation of Care, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary and NHS Quality Improvement Scotland.

The significant issues that have arisen since the last report include:

- Specialist medical staff rosters: there has been concern, for some time, about maintaining the rota because of recruitment and retention issues. Changes have been agreed with partner agencies (principally Strathclyde Police and North and South Lanarkshire Social Work Services) that have made the rota commitment less onerous by providing an extended day service, rather than a 24 hour service. There is however, no diminution in the effectiveness of the service. These changes will be reviewed, to ensure their effectiveness, at regular intervals.

In addition agreement has been reached on changes in the structure of medical staffing that will allow funding to recruit an additional Consultant post who will be able to participate in the specialist child protection rota.

- Case Supervision: mainly public health nurses but also professional staff working in addiction services and mental health. Currently case supervision is patchy, follows different models, is under-resourced and has ambiguous lines of managerial and professional accountability. These all need to be resolved but will not be so in time for the inspection visit. In the interim limited additional resources have been assigned to case supervision in public health nursing. It should be noted that case supervision by social work of children deemed to be at risk is a separate issue.
- Case Records: recent audits of case records have shown the need for improved practice in the entry of relevant and timely information, as well as issues of access, retrieval and storage. An action plan is in train to address both the professional practice and more strategic record management issues but this issue will not be resolved before the inspection takes place.

#### **Next Steps:**

1. The self-assessment and improvement process will continue up to and beyond the inspection both unilaterally within NHS Lanarkshire and on a multi-agency basis under the aegis of the child protection committees.
2. The formal notification of inspection has now been received:
  - A pre-inspection return has to be completed and returned by Monday 17 December 2007.
  - The managing inspector will brief the Chief Officers and key contacts during week beginning 7 January 2008.
  - The inspection team will undertake fieldwork activities during weeks beginning; 25 February 2008, 10 March 2008 and 17 March 2008.
  - Shortly after the fieldwork inspectors will provide an oral report of their main findings. There will then follow a draft written report on which comments will be invited. Publication (in the public domain) will then follow within 22 weeks of the inspection, perhaps August 2008 or September 2008.
3. Further reports to the Board will follow in February 2008 and May 2008.

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**20 November 2007**