



# Child Protection Strategy for Renfrewshire 2009 – 2012

## **1. National context**

- 1.1 This child protection strategy describes the approach to protecting children in Renfrewshire and ensuring their well being.
- 1.2 The issue of Child Protection has been focused by the Child Protection Reform Programme established by the first minister following on from the Scottish Executive's 2002 audit and review of child protection in Scotland entitled "Its Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright". The Reform programme established the Children's Charter which emphasised that all children and young people have the right to be safe, and protected from abuse, harm or neglect, and the Framework for Standards which set out key principles and guidelines to which all child protection work should concur. This included clear guidance for the functioning of local area child protection committees.
- 1.3 This strategy has been developed taking into account the Children's Charter, the Framework for Standards and the findings of a number of reports and reviews of child protection process including the Scottish Executives audit and review, and the Laming and Caleb Ness enquiries along with the Committee's own evaluation of practice across Renfrewshire.
- 1.4 HMle have established a programme of multi-agency inspection across children's services which focuses on a range of quality indicators on a six point scale. Renfrewshire's child protection services were inspected in April 2008 and received a very positive evaluation across the range of quality indicators. A resulting action plan sets out areas for improvement.
- 1.5 The Scottish Government's programme "Getting it right for every child" ( GIRFEC) builds on the national child protection reform programme and is a fundamental way of working that builds on research and practice evidence to help practitioners focus on what makes a difference for children and young people. Getting it right for every child threads through all existing policy, practice, strategy and legislation affecting children, young people and families.
- 1.6 As children and young people progress through life, some may experience temporary difficulties, and some may experience more complex issues. No matter where they live or whatever their needs, children and families should know where they can find help, what support might be available, and whether that is right for them. GIRFEC works on the principle that all children have needs. Most are met by the universal services of health and education which they encounter as they grow and develop, but some children may need extra help and this should be available to them when they need it. For children, young people and their families, GIRFEC should mean that they understand what is happening and why, and they are confident about the help they are getting; they are appropriately involved in discussions and decisions that affect them, and they will have experienced a more streamlined and co-ordinated response from practitioners.

## **2. The local context**

- 2.1 The Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership( RCSP) is the strategic group which drives forward the direction of integrated children's services in Renfrewshire. It has endorsed the vision for children's services in Renfrewshire which is that " Every child in Renfrewshire Matters. Their journey to adulthood should be a safe, healthy and

nurturing experience. Every child should be respected and supported to achieve their full potential". The RCSP comprises of council elected members and other council and community planning partners at directorate level as well as the independent chair of Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee.

- 2.2 The RCSP has developed a Child in Need policy which sets out the foundations for the development of Getting it Right for Every Child in Renfrewshire. It describes a tiered approach to intervention across the range of children's services and outlines the concept of the "lead professional" in ensuring that there is a co-ordinated response to meet identified need.

The development of an integrated assessment framework for children's services in Renfrewshire is the first step in establishing a common approach to assessment and care planning and the development of a common language for assessment across the domains of the " My World" triangle and the seven well being indicators as outlined in appendix 1 of the strategy.

- 2.3 The integrated assessment framework is being established incrementally across Renfrewshire and it is the intention of the RCSP that this is fully rolled out by the end of 2010.

Part of the developments around implementation of GIRFEC in Renfrewshire include the streamlining of multi-agency activity around meetings, reports and plans for an individual child where the aspiration is to ensure that agencies work together to avoid repetition and duplication

### **3. Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee**

- 3.1 Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee (RCPC) is the multi-agency group that plans and reviews services for children at risk of harm within the Renfrewshire area. The Committee is a partnership between the Council and other organisations involved in protecting children in accordance with national guidance on the structure and role of Child Protection Committees. RCPC has a written constitution which governs its operations, and is led by a chief officer's group comprised of the chief executive of Renfrewshire Council, the chief executive of NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde health board, and the chief constable of Strathclyde Police. It has an chairperson who is independent of it's constituent agencies, and a dedicated budget for the development of inter-agency child protection developments. It has dedicated staff ie. A lead officer; an inter-agency child protection co-ordinator, a part time inter-agency trainer and a part time family group conferencing co-ordinator.

RCPC leads the development of child protection services across Renfrewshire and ensures that services are monitored and evaluated in terms of effectiveness.

- 3.2 Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee has representatives from Renfrewshire Council(Social Work and Education & Leisure Services, Housing and Property Services,), NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Strathclyde Police, Scottish Children Reporters Administration, the Children's Panel, Procurator Fiscal and the voluntary sector . The Committee brings together senior officers to provide leadership, direction and co-ordination to the task of providing an integrated approach to discharging statutory responsibilities for protecting children as required by "Protecting Children and Young People: Framework for Standards" and as set out in the HMle self evaluation document "Protecting children and young people and ensuring their well being"

- 3.3 RCPC makes use of management information provided by Social Work to inform responses to child protection.
- 3.4 This child protection strategy is aimed at all children aged under 16 years and young people aged over 16 with special needs who require help from statutory agencies in order to be protected. Renfrewshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde provide a range of universal services for young people who could be vulnerable and may experience adversity. These services are not discussed in detail in this plan and are covered elsewhere in the children's services plan. The universal services are those provided to all children as a right and include access to education and health services. The universal services set out targets for all young people in terms of education, achievement and health gains. RCPC recognises that young people affected by child protection issues often have other needs and therefore our approach is to address the young person's needs in a holistic manner.

## **2. Aims of the strategy**

2.1 The Child Protection Strategy for Renfrewshire has six distinct aims:

- Through RCPC and individual agencies provide leadership and accountability for child protection work in Renfrewshire.
- To provide an integrated approach to identifying, intervening and providing ongoing support to protect children at risk of harm and assist parents to keep their children safe. This will be achieved by the use of integrated assessment to identify the nature and level of risk of harm along with the needs of children and parents. The integrated approach is outlined later in this strategy
- To improve the range and availability of services aimed at protecting children in Renfrewshire – this will be achieved by regular review of the effectiveness of our services and using management information to target the development or redesign of services to ensure they continue to protect children and support families.
- To reduce the number of children at risk within Renfrewshire – this will be achieved by ensuring that young people receive the right service at the right time.
- To take account of the Scottish Executive's "Getting it Right for Every Child" document and divert children away from the statutory services where this is the correct response by providing a range of supports and interventions in partnership with parents and carers.
- To work within the Framework for Standards for child protection services.

## **3. Objectives of the strategy**

3.1 The objectives of the Renfrewshire Child Protection Strategy are to:

- Ensure children get the help they need when they need it
- Take timely and effective action to protect children
- Ensure children are listened to and respected
- Ensure that information is shared about children where it is necessary to protect them
- To provide multi agency assessments of needs and risks and develop effective plans
- To maintain a competent and confident workforce
- To work in partnership with the community to protect children

- Provide an integrated and tiered approach to delivering child protection services by providing prevention, assessment, intervention and intensive intervention services
- Develop the range of services using evidence based approaches to support children and families
- Promote effective communication between agencies
- Ensure that adults involved in offending against children have their actions addressed quickly to reduce the risk of further offending
- Ensure the needs of children are addressed by offering therapeutic interventions for children and young people affected by abuse and neglect.
- Rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of assessment and intervention programmes using the findings to redesign services and maintain high standards.

#### **4. Principles underpinning the strategy**

4.1 Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee has agreed a holistic and integrated approach to safeguarding children. This means that all children whose contact with agencies indicates a child protection concern will be subject to a multi disciplinary assessment and provided with integrated interventions, which safeguards their welfare. This strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

- Ensuring that the population of Renfrewshire is made aware of child protection issues and is clear about how to help vulnerable children.
- Minimum intervention in line with the Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Rights of the child under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Achieve compliance with the Framework Standards for Child Protection
- Assessment will be organic, holistic, integrated, thorough, prompt and avoid duplication and unproductive delay
- Interventions used will be evidence based in relation to their effectiveness in addressing children's right to feel safe.
- Communication, record keeping and information sharing between professionals must be effective, clear, objective and timely.
- Services will work in an integrated manner to ensure best outcomes for children young people.
- Services will be evaluated to ensure they are effective and that best use of resources is maintained.

#### **5. Analysis of Need**

5.1 Our annual report provides a current needs analysis of Renfrewshire's children and young people. This highlights areas of particular concern that impact on child protection, drawing upon existing reporting systems and research into trends and influences.

## 6. Our Approach to Protecting Children

6.1 **Communication.** Effective communication between agencies and workers is crucial to ensuring good outcomes for vulnerable children. Communication covers several strands of activity

- **Public Information.** RCPC will promote public knowledge of child protection issues and inform members of the community about how they can communicate their concerns about a child.
- **Interagency.** Child Protection agencies need to have in place effective mechanisms for communicating with each other. RCPC will take a lead role in achieving this by ensuring that appropriate protocols are in place and by promoting the development of integrated information systems and assessment processes.
- **Agency and service level.** Each individual agency is responsible for promoting effective communications by having in place robust information and recording systems along with clear guidance and training for relevant staff. They must ensure that staff within the different sections of their organisation communicate with each other.
- **Individual.** Individual employees of all agencies are responsible for sharing, communicating and recording their concerns about children fully and timeously.

6.2 **Investigation.** A key process in child protection work is the response to concerns which are expressed about a child being at risk of harm. The concern may come to any of the child protection agencies from a member of the public or from an agency involved with the child. Effective inter-agency working is essential and the Police and Social Work will work collaboratively during any child protection investigation in accordance with the child protection procedures. Investigation will focus on whether the child has been placed at risk of or has experienced actual harm and must consider whether a criminal offence has been committed.

6.3 **Assessment.** Thorough and well-informed multi -agency assessments are also central to the task of identifying and safeguarding children at risk from harm. The Scottish Executive's integrated assessment framework will provide the basis for Renfrewshire's assessment model. As the Scottish Executive notes in their guidance, the universal services begin to gather information on the child from pre-birth and will continue throughout their childhood. This data will form the platform from which all other assessments will build on. RCPC will play a central role in developing an integrated assessment process for Renfrewshire based on the following principles:

- Building upon core assessments undertaken by universal services
- Multi agency and multi-dimensional assessment is essential
- Adding in specific components from targeted services in matters such as parental addiction, mental health and offending behaviour.
- Clarifying and addressing gaps in information.
- Identification of risk including its level, nature and impact using both generic and specific tools.
- Developing integrated ICT systems
- Using the integrated assessment to inform process such as case conferences, compiling SBR's and LAC review reports and permanency planning.

6.4 **Intervention.** Within Renfrewshire we have adopted a tiered approach to delivering children's services as set out in our Child in Need policy. This includes the prevention of and identification of concern and risks as well as providing targeted interventions.

- 6.4.1 **Tier 1: Universal Provision:** Tier 1 is the universal provision offered to all young people by health and education and leisure services. This strategy does not address the Tier 1 services but recognises their impact on promoting children's well-being and supporting families to care for children by bringing them up in a safe and nurturing environment. The Children's Services Directory lists all of the universal services and is available on the council website.
- 6.4.2 **Tier 2: Prevention and early intervention:** Where universal agencies identify or are alerted to concerns about children, they will build upon existing information about the child and their carers held by universal services and carry out assessment and intervention largely within the resources of the identifying agency and involving the child and family members. Other agencies may be called upon on a consultative level to provide advice and support. A single agency action plan will be put in place.
- 6.4.3 **Tier 3: Integrated Intervention:** At this level the needs of the child have not been met by the existing single agency action plan and agencies such as Social Work and SCRA will be directly involved in monitoring and promoting the child's welfare. In most instances significant risks will have been identified through child protection processes or investigation by the Reporter. The risks may be due to factors such as domestic violence, drug and alcohol use, parental lifestyle, contact with a schedule 1 offender and deficits in the carers parenting capacity. Children are likely to be looked after, subject to a supervision requirement; subject to formal investigation under the child protection procedures; or on the child protection register. An integrated child protection plan should be in place, which clearly identifies the role and tasks for each member of the team involving in promoting the child's safety and welfare. Services available will include New Expectations, Family Matters, drug, alcohol and mental health services and practical support within the home. Therapeutic inputs will be provided for children by services such as Women and Children First, CAMHS and the voluntary sector.
- 6.3.4 **Tier 4: Intensive Intervention:** For some children the use of preventative and intervention services in tiers 1-3 will not have the desired impact on reducing or eliminating the risk to their safety and welfare. This category includes unborn children and those where immediate and significant risk of harm has been identified. They will require substantial input from Social Work and other specialist services. If the child can remain in the family's care, extensive surveillance of the child's safety will take place, formalised by a supervision requirement and monitored by the Children's Hearing System alongside a comprehensive support package involving services such as home care, Family Matters and drugs workers. There will be a clearly articulated expectation that the child's carers co-operate with the support provided and that they evidence positive change otherwise steps will be taken to remove the child. The child protection agencies services will use all of the statutory interventions available including obtaining Child Protection Orders and recommending to the Children's Hearing that the child be Accommodated. Where children are Accommodated for more than 15 weeks, or there is existing evidence of the family lacking the capacity to parent, the care planning should include the consideration of whether there are grounds for permanency.
- 6.4 **Adult offenders.** Keeping children safe from adults who are known to pose a risk is essential. Adults convicted of a schedule 1 offence, on the Sex Offenders Register or List of Adults Unsuitable to work with children are amongst those who are of concern. However there are other adults who are not so clearly identified who also pose a risk to children and may be known to agencies. The management of adult offenders is a key task for the Council and the Police. Keeping children safe from dangerous adults also requires effective team working across disciplines and agencies, information sharing and communication. It requires effective risk assessment. The Police and Criminal Justice Social Work staff will lead on undertaking joint risk assessments which will inform individual risk management plans. The Social Work Pathways Project based in Paisley

will undertake intervention work with sex offenders. More detail can be found in the Criminal Justice Strategy for the area and in Standards for Guidance and Practice in work with sex offenders.

