

Integrated Children's Services Inspection Report

Report by: Joan Tranent, Chief Officer, Children's Services, Partnership and Communities

Report for Information

1 Recommendations:

Acknowledge the many strengths within the report which evidences strong partnership working at all levels in addition to the partnership's record of improvement to date in relation to the impact of services on care experienced children and young people.

Thank all staff involved within this process across the community planning partnership for their commitment and good work.

Develop an action plan to take forward the priority areas for improvement.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

This report serves to provide feedback to council from the recent Joint Children's Services for children and young people in need of care and support within Midlothian and the areas for improvement highlighted within.

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Report Contact:

Joan Tranent Tel No 0131 271 3721

Joan.Tranent@midlothian.gov.uk

3 Background/Main Body of Report

- 3.1** Between February and March 2020 the Care Inspectorate in partnership with Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and HMICS completed a joint inspection of services for children and young people in need of care and protection in Midlothian. The inspection was carried out in line with the care inspectorate's revised quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection and evaluated practice against four quality indicators:

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- 3.1.1** Improvements in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people
- 3.2.1** Impact on children and young people
- 3.2.2** Impact on families
- 3.9** Leadership

The quality indicators were supported by five key inspection questions:

1. How good is the partnership at recognising and responding when children and young people need protection?
2. How good is the partnership at helping children and young people who have experienced abuse and neglect stay safe, health and recover from their experiences?
3. How good is the partnership at maximising the wellbeing of children and young people who are looked after?
4. How good the partnership at enabling care experienced young people to succeed in their transition to adulthood?
5. How good is collaborative leadership?

The joint inspection took place between 3rd February and 13th March 2020 and involved a range of partners that have a role in providing services for children, young people and families. The inspection was informed by both parents & carers, children and young people, staff surveys and the submission of a joint self-evaluation.

During the inspection, 95 case files were read, inspectors met with 129 children and young people and 73 parents and carers, 51 children and young people/parent & carer & 239 staff surveys were returned.

Formal feedback in relation to the inspection was received on 6th July 2020 with the following grades awarded;

- Leadership and Direction – **GOOD**
- Impact on Families – **GOOD**
- Impact on Children and Young People – **GOOD**
- Improvement in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people – **GOOD**
- Evaluation Scale 4 **GOOD** = Important strengths, with some areas for improvement.

The final report was subsequently published on 1st September 2020. (Appendix 2).

The inspection identified a number of key strengths and good practice as follow;

- Leaders had embraced their collective responsibility to protect children, demonstrated through their well embedded, collaborative approach to quality assurance and scrutiny.
- Staff recognised risk and took timely and appropriate action to keep children safe, and key processes for assessing and managing risk for children and young people in need of care and protection were well established.
- The wellbeing of children in need of care and protection was improving, with most children and young people benefiting from positive and caring relationships with staff and carers.
- As a result of operational and strategic effort, partners had achieved significant reduction in the overall number of looked after children and young people and a reduction in out-of-authority placements.
- Children and young people had their rights respected and they benefited from opportunities to have their voices heard throughout the well-established Champions Board structure.

The priority areas for improvement were identified as;

- While children and young people in need of care and protection were helped by a range of purposeful interventions, access to the specialist services required to help them recover from trauma, was not always available at the time they needed it.
- The partnership recognised that more needed to be done to raise educational attainment and reduce the number of care experienced children and young people excluded from school.
- Outcomes and experiences for care experienced young people transitioning into adulthood were variable. The partnership had identified this as a key area for improvement.
- Collaborative leadership of corporate parenting had not yet consistently achieved partner's ambitions for improved and wellbeing across all groups of care experienced children and young people.

In conclusion the Care Inspectorate reported;

- That they were **very** confident that the partnership in Midlothian has the capacity to continue to improve and to address the areas identified for improvement.
- Evidence of strong partnership working at all levels and a confident and competent workforce committed to improving outcomes and experiences for children, young people and families.
- The effective Champions Board structure and continued effort from staff across the partnership to enable children and young people to influence service design and improvement.
- The strength of scrutiny and oversight of child protection practice and the drive for continuous improvement.
- The partnerships record of improvement to date in relation to the impact of services on care experienced children and young people.

Working collaboratively with partners in health, police, education, SCRA and the third sector, a partnership approach will now be taken to develop an action plan to meet the areas identified for improvement.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

At this time there are no significant resource implications identified.

4.2 Digital

Not applicable.

4.3 Risk

The Joint Children's Services Inspection for children and young people in need of care and protection within Midlothian identified areas for improvement within this area of work. The robust scrutiny of the action plan via the GIRFEMC Board coupled and with the ongoing support from our link Inspector from the Care Inspectorate will mitigate any identified areas of risk.

4.4 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Background information/Links

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan:

- Reducing the gap in learning outcomes
- Reducing the gap in health outcomes
- Reducing the gap in economic circumstances

Key Priorities within the Integrated Children's Services Plan:

- Raise the educational attainment and reduce the number of care experienced young people being excluded from school.
- Improve access to specialist services to help children and young people.
- Improve outcomes and experiences for care experienced young people transitioning into adulthood.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☒ Holistic Working
- ☐ Hub and Spoke
- ☐ Modern
- ☐ Sustainable
- ☒ Transformational
- ☒ Preventative
- ☐ Asset-based
- ☒ Continuous Improvement
- ☐ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☐ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☒ Efficient and Modern
- ☒ Innovative and Ambitious
- ☐ None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

Children's Services and its partners are committed to delivering best value and ensuring that resources are delivered based on the level of risk and need. Providing locally based support within our communities continues to evidence improved outcomes for children and young people in need of care and support.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Children's services and its partners will continue to engage with all stakeholders ensuring that we are evaluating and improving the services we provide to citizens within our communities.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Many of the performance indicators relating to support and protection of children and young people who are at risk or/and are care experienced are scrutinized quarterly via the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub Group which reports into the Public Protection Committee in addition to quarterly scrutiny by Performance and Scrutiny within Midlothian Council.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Children's services and their partners continue to promote a preventative approach. Policy and good practice support systems where professionals are able to identify children, young people and their families who require additional support at the earliest point of contact and arrange for support to be offered.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

By ensuring that we continue to develop the services we provide to children, young people and their families through a partnership approach and committing to promote a preventative approach, we shall endeavour to provide a sustainable approach to reducing risk and providing appropriate and proportionate support within our communities.

APPENDIX B

Background Papers/Resource

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/5788/Joint%20insp%20children%20&%20young%20people%20services%20Midlothian%20August%202020.pdf>