

Briefing Note:

Scrutiny and Improvement of Services for Children

Background

In September 2011, Scottish Ministers asked the Care Inspectorate to take the lead in developing **Joint Inspections of Services for Children**, based on a set of requirements:

- a design based on *Getting it right for every child*
- a strong user focus
- a coordinated /joint approach which demonstrates duty of cooperation within the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010

In response, the Care Inspectorate set out to develop a coordinated approach to scrutiny which aims to:

- improve outcomes for all children and young people
- provide independent assurance about the quality of services for children, (particularly vulnerable children and young people)
- help to build capacity for improvement.

The new model will therefore encompass a wide range of services working directly with children and their families and include universal provision as well as the more targeted and specialist services. It will take a multi-agency and strategic approach and in so doing will not evaluate the effectiveness of individual services but focus on the effectiveness of integrated working to improve outcomes for all children as well as the most vulnerable. It will hold community planning partnerships accountable for the delivery of children's services and for improving the lives of children residing within the local authority area.

Building and refining a model for scrutiny within a development site (conducted in partnership with the Angus Community Partnership April – June 2012).

A development site was arranged to test out key aspects of a proposed methodology. A team of experienced inspectors were identified which reflected the size and range of skills set out in the proposed methodology. The team included representation from the Care Inspectorate, HMICS, HIS and Education Scotland and included staff with an on-going support and challenge role for services for children across the local authority area.

The approach deployed within the development site differed from that normally taken during an inspection – i.e. in terms of scale, rigour and public reporting. We did not set out to gather evidence about how well services in

Angus are operating or evaluate the quality of this work or the impact on children and families. The main purpose for the development site was to define how the proposed methodology for future inspection should be refined and amended. The extremely valuable contribution of managers and staff, as well as the views of children and families, across the Angus community planning partnership area has allowed us to achieve this aim. As a result of the development site and associated activity, an inspection methodology, based on a set of quality indicators, is now in place for a pilot phase of inspections.

Model for scrutiny for a Pilot Phase in 2012-13

A framework of quality indicators based on the European Framework for Quality Management will provide a complimentary approach to robust self-evaluation and independent scrutiny. This means that the same quality framework for self-evaluation will be used to underpin the joint inspections of services for children. The framework is intended to be child-centred, applicable to the full range of services which contribute to the well-being of all children, young people and their families and support the implementation of *Getting it right for every child*. It is intended to complement rather than replace specific approaches to self-evaluation and quality improvement embedded within certain sectors for example *How good is our school?* or *How well do we protect children and meet their needs*.

The Care Inspectorate will lead a series of pilot inspections in 5 community planning partnership areas. These will be termed Joint Inspections of Services for Children and will commence in September 2012. The Care Inspectorate will provide independent assurance about the quality of services for children and how they are making a difference to the outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people. The Care Inspectorate will conduct these pilot inspections with representation from scrutiny partners Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland. We will report publicly on the findings. A summary of the methodology is set out in Appendix 1.

Next Steps

1. The Care Inspectorate will publish a draft set of quality indicators and self-evaluation framework for community planning partnerships at the beginning of October 2012. A 4 week-period of consultation will follow and the document will be finalised in November 2012.
2. Half-day events for all staff geographically spread across Scotland to lay out the new approach and answer questions will take place in October 2012 for community planning partners.
3. It is anticipated that further refinements to the methodology will result from the pilot phase.