



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Education Department
Children, Young People and Social Care Group

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To: Chief Executives of Local Authorities
Council Leaders
Chief Executives of Health Boards
Chief Constables

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Cc as per attached list

4 May 2006

Dear Colleague

CHILD PROTECTION

The Ministers for Education and Young People, Justice and Health and Community Care wrote to you on 22 March 2006 about two aspects of child protection. First, they are seeking an update to the original Letters of Assurance you sent in 2004. Second, they are seeking specific assurance regarding the action taken to meet the needs of children affected by drug misuse.

Subsequent discussions both at the recent Child Protection Reform Programme Steering Group and the Chairs of Child Protection Committees meetings suggest that it may be helpful to provide some further clarification on the assurance requested on actions being taken at local level to protect children affected by drugs misuse.

Ministers have asked for an assurance that you are satisfied that you are taking all reasonable steps to identify all children adversely affected by drugs misuse in your area, assess their needs and are implementing plans to meet these. It is acknowledged that agencies will not be aware of every case of drugs misuse, and hence cannot ever be confident they have identified all children who might be affected. Ministers are also aware that the impact on children of parental drug misuse varies considerably, depending on the extent to which the drug misuse affects the capacity or willingness of parents to provide good parenting to their children. Ministers have two principal concerns about what is happening locally:

- That local agencies are taking all reasonable steps to identify those children who are adversely affected, particularly those cases where the risk of serious impact is high; and
- That in all such cases, the needs of children come first and are being met.



It is for you to decide how best to provide that assurance, but the following may be helpful.

- In relation to the first point, Ministers are seeking information about the systems you have to ensure that children adversely affected by drug misuse are identified, including related quality assurance mechanisms, and your assessment of how well these systems are working.
- In relation to the second point, Ministers are not asking you to carry out a fresh audit of every single case. They expect you will have an up-to-date assessment of the needs of those children known to be adversely affected, and a plan to meet those needs. If so, all you need to do is describe your local systems for ensuring these plans exist and are meeting needs, and your assessment of how well children's needs are being assessed and met.

If you are unable to provide either of these assurances, Ministers are seeking an assurance that you are taking necessary action to establish effective systems. In particular, if you have systems, but do not know how well they are working, can you describe what you are doing to find out.

Ministers have a third concern: that local agencies identify and tell Ministers what local and national barriers exist that make this work harder that could be overcome by collective or Executive led action. Can you please also use your replies to their letter to identify these constraints, and indicate what action it would be helpful to take nationally to address these issues.

We have considered whether it would be helpful to extend the deadline beyond 31 May 2006, but concluded the types of questions being asked above either can be answered quickly or not at all, and that it was best to stick with the original timetable to enable us to respond as quickly as possible to the issues raised in your letters.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Colin MacLean



Copy list:

Chief Executive, CoSLA

President, CoSLA

General Secretary, Association of Directors of Social Work

General Secretary, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland

Chair, Child Health Commissioners Group

Vice Chair, Child Health Support Group

Chair, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

Principal Reporter, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

Chair, Children's Panel Chairs Group

Chair, Care Commission

Chair, Scottish Social Services Council

Chief Executives, Key Voluntary Children's Organisations:

Aberlour Child Care Trust

Barnardo's Scotland

ChildLine Scotland

Children 1st

Children in Scotland

NCH

Quarriers

Save The Children

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

Scottish Women's Aid

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