Finance Committee

Public Services Reform (Scotland) Bill

Submission from Shetland Child Protection Committee

Public services in Shetland have recently been inspected by the Services for Children Unit of her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). Despite the considerable work involved in preparing for such an inspection it was considered a useful process. Key to its success was the genuinely inter-agency nature of the inspection, with the participation of inspectors from a range of professional backgrounds.

Although there is provision in Part 6 for joint inspections, Shetland Child Protection Committee is concerned that this could prove cumbersome for regular use and that in the main inspection of safeguarding services will be carried out under Part 4 by Social Care Social Work Improvement Scotland. This would appear to encourage a perception that child protection is the job of social work. Such a perception was appropriately challenged by the previous Scottish Executive’s 3 year Child Protection Reform Programme, with the title of the review Report It’s Everyone’s Job to make sure I’m alright’ sending the right message. This has been embedded and enhanced by the Getting it Right for Every Child approach endorsed by the present Scottish Government.

Locally we place child protection in the wider context of safeguarding, by which we mean the whole range of support and intervention services that help keep children and young people safe and enable them to develop to their best potential. This ranges from early support through responses to potential or actual abuse and neglect to the provision of therapeutic support to those who have had adverse experiences. We therefore see child protection and safeguarding as a core component of the business of all agencies and organisations who are providing services to children and young people and their families.

We found the recent inspection by HMIE supported this approach, and the Services for Children Unit effectively carried credibility with all agencies. We consider it vital that with whatever agency child protection inspections sit in the future, the inter-agency and multi-disciplinary approach as a feature of regular self-evaluation and inspection, not just as an occasional response to perceived problems, be retained and enhanced. The provision of on-going support from a link inspector is also helpful and should be retained.

Kate Gabb
Authority Reporter and Acting Chair, Shetland CPC