



North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee

Communications Strategy

2013

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Chief Officer Preface

Effective communication lies at the heart of effective child protection practice. It is critical that all those working to protect children and young people in North Ayrshire demonstrate proficient communication skills at all levels. This includes raising awareness of child protection amongst the general public, families and staff as well as sharing and utilising information in ways that promote the safety and well-being of children and young people.

The North Ayrshire Child and Public Protection Chief Officer Group is pleased to present this Communication Strategy which sets out the actions being driven forward by North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee to achieve effective communication in child protection.

Equality and diversity

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee promotes equal access and opportunities to all individuals. All partners are committed to treating people respectfully, fairly and equally and to tackling discrimination in all of its forms. No one should be discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, gender or age. All partners within the Committee value diversity and actively challenge discrimination and prejudice. Service users should be listened to and respected and should have access to services which are fair, consistent and accessible to everyone, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religious belief or sexual orientation.

Vision

Children and young people living in North Ayrshire deserve “A Better Childhood”. Our Integrated Children’s Services Plan sets out clearly how we will work together to achieve this vision for North Ayrshire’s children and young people. As a key partner working in support of this vision, North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee provides the strategic lead in relation to local child protection developments. This is firmly embedded in the understanding that every child has the right to be protected from abuse, harm and exploitation.

Introduction

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee is made up of representatives from across the main statutory and voluntary organisations throughout North Ayrshire. The purpose of the Child Protection Committee is to ensure that local agencies work together effectively to protect children and young people.

The Committee believes that partnership working can be enhanced by good communication between the member agencies at strategic and policy level, and between professionals working together. It also believes that good communication with children and young people, parents and carers, members of the public, and voluntary and community groups is important too, if child protection measures are to be effective.

The responsibilities of Child Protection Committee’s in relation to public information and communication are set out in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, 2010, as follows:

Raising public awareness

156. Child Protection Committees will determine the level of public awareness, understanding and knowledge of, and confidence in, child protection systems within their area and address any issues as required within their business and/or improvement plans.

157. Child Protection Committees will produce and disseminate public information about protecting children and young people. Child Protection Committees will design, develop, publish, distribute, disseminate, implement, regularly review and evaluate a public information and communications strategy that includes the following elements:

- raising basic awareness and understanding of child protection issues within communities, including among children and young people;*
- adapting good practice from others and exploring opportunities to fulfil these responsibilities with other Child Protection Committees;*
- promoting the ethos that "child protection is everyone's job" in keeping with the GIRFEC approach; and*
- providing information about how members of the public can report concerns about a child and what could happen.*

Involving children and young people and their families

158. Child Protection Committees will ensure that the views of children, young people and their families are clearly evidenced in their work, in accordance with GIRFEC principles. It is vital that this area is not addressed in a tokenistic manner and that children's views are fed into the planning and implementation of improvements. Each Child Protection Committee will:

- be able to demonstrate that its work is informed by the perspective of children and young people, including the most vulnerable and those with direct experiences of child protection services;*
- review and develop their strategies for doing so; and*
- involve children and young people in the design, development and implementation of Child Protection Committees' public information and communication strategies, to ensure that information is accessible and that children's experiences and perspectives are properly reflected.*

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, Scottish Government, 2010.

Review of previous strategy

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee originally launched a Communication Strategy in 2006. The Information Sub Group of North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee monitors the implementation of the strategy. Key achievements to date include:

1. Establishment of three linked child protection websites, aimed at professionals and public, primary aged children and secondary aged young people respectively.
2. Wide dissemination of a range of age appropriate promotional items and safety literature for children and young people.
3. Provision of drama presentations to children and young people highlighting child protection messages.
4. Wide dissemination of a range of promotional items and child protection literature for members of the public.
5. Wide dissemination of practitioner guidance on a range of child protection issues, and comprehensive multi agency learning and development opportunities.
6. Establishment of highly successful annual public awareness raising event.

We have reviewed our previous Communications Strategy, with a particular focus on

- (a) Assessing the effectiveness of our various approaches to raising public awareness of child protection; and
- (b) Considering how we can effectively measure the impact of our Communications Strategy

The result is a streamlined Communications Strategy with objectives and actions that reflect current priorities for North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee and a set of data indicators we can use flexibly to maximise ongoing evaluation of the impact of this strategy.

Purpose

This document sets out the key objectives of our Communications Strategy and how these will be implemented, monitored and evaluated to ensure effective public information and communication across North Ayrshire to ensure the protection of children and young people.

Continuous improvement

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee is committed to continuous improvement of child protection services. The Committee regularly measures the performance and impact of services in order to inform improvement plans. This is done against the HMIE Quality Improvement Framework, *How Well Do We Protect Children and Meet Their Needs?* This Communication Strategy has been developed within this context.

Relevant extracts from the HMIE Quality Improvement Framework are outlined below, along with the outcomes which form the basis for evaluation of this Communication Strategy.

Quality Indicator 4.1 Being aware of protecting children

Themes:

- Confidence of the public in services to protect children
- Responses to concerns raised by members of the public about a child's safety or welfare

Key features:

This indicator focuses on the extent to which the community understands it's responsibility to protect children. It considers the degree of confidence felt by members of the public in services for children in need of protection and deals with the effectiveness of responses to concerns raised by members of the public.

Outcomes:

1. Members of the community have a high level of awareness of local services to protect children.
2. Members of the community know who to contact when they have concerns about a child.
3. Members of the community are confident that appropriate action will be taken as a result of their contact.

Quality Indicator 2.2 Children benefit from strategies to minimise harm

Relevant theme:

- Children's awareness of keeping themselves safe

Key features:

This indicator includes a focus on action taken to give children skills and knowledge to keep themselves safe.

Outcomes:

4. Children have a very good awareness of personal safety.
5. Children understand their right to be safe.
6. Children know who to contact if they are worried about themselves or another child.

Quality Indicator 6.3 involving children and families in developing policies and services

Theme:

Seeking the views of children and families and involving them in developing policies and services to protect children

Key features:

This indicator focuses on how services seek children and families views about their needs, and the effectiveness of services. It relates to the involvement of children and families in developing policy and services to protect children.

Outcomes:

7. Children and families have access to systems to express their views about services.
8. The views of children and families are used to evaluate service provision.

Outcomes Framework

The table below sets out our outcomes framework within which our Communications Strategy is evaluated.

	Outcome	Indicator/measure
1	Members of the community have a high level of awareness of local services to protect children.	Members of the community demonstrate a high level of knowledge of local child protection services
2	Members of the community know who to contact when they have concerns about a child.	Proportion of members of the community asked who can correctly specify who they would contact if concerned about a child
3	Members of the community are confident that appropriate action will be taken as a result of their contact.	Proportion of expressed confidence in responses to referrals
4	Children have a very good awareness of personal safety.	Percentage of children surveyed who can identify personal safety issues
5	Children understand their right to be safe.	Percentage of children surveyed who understand they have a right to be safe
6	Children know who to contact if they are worried about themselves or another child.	Percentage of children surveyed who know who to contact if worried
7	Children and families have access to systems to express their views about services.	Number of views from children and families on the effectiveness of services
8	The views of children and families are used to evaluate service provision.	Number of views from children and families passed to Audit and Evaluation Sub Group

In order to achieve these outcomes, the following strategic objectives have been agreed:

- 1. To ensure children and young people know that they have a right to be safe and know how to seek help if they are worried.**
- 2. To support all adults to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe.**
- 3. To ensure that the work of NACPC and its partners is informed by the perspectives of children, young people and their families.**

We will measure the effectiveness of this strategy in achieving the above outcomes by using these core data indicators:

1. Proportion of adults who know key indicators of concern
2. Proportion of adults who know what to do if concerned about a child
3. Proportion of adults who know what services are there for families
4. Level of confidence in services expressed by adults
5. Proportion of children who know they have a right to be safe
6. Proportion of children who are aware of personal safety issues
7. Proportion of children know who to contact if they are worried

Implementation – Strategic Objective 1 - To ensure children and young people know that they have a right to be safe and know how to seek help if they are worried.

Task		Person(s) responsible	Timescale	Resource implication	Impact	Outcome Reference
a	Develop, publish and disseminate a suite of child protection information for children and young people, in consultation with children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Sub Group. 	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time. Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of children's right to be safe and of means of help. 	4,5,6
b	Redevelop our children's website and improve elements of our young person's website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Sub Group. G Hoey 	January 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased range of opportunities for children and young people to find information. 	4,5,6
c	Create a range of local awareness raising resources for children and young people for use in a variety of ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Sub Group. 	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased resources available to support ongoing awareness raising. 	4,5,6

We will gather the core data indicators to measure the impact of these tasks by consulting with children and young people at information stalls, children's events and through surveys to ensure we meet this strategic objective.

Implementation – Strategic Objective 2 – To support all adults to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe

Task		Person(s) responsible	Timescale	Resource implication	Impact	Outcome Reference
a	Develop, publish and disseminate child protection information for the local community which includes information on local services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Sub Group. 	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time. Budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased public awareness of child protection and local services. 	1,2,3,
b	Utilise a range of opportunities to continuously promote the message “Child Protection is Everyone’s Job”. Including, but not limited to: posters, leaflets, information stalls, wage slips, electronic signage, Council vehicles, radio advertising and newspaper articles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Sub group. 	Consider on 6 weekly basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time. Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness and ownership of child protection. 	1,2
c	Develop, publish and disseminate information for parents/carers involved in the child protection system (in partnership with West of Scotland Consortium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sub Group. 	December 2013.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time. Budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/carers receive child protection information consistently across the West of Scotland. 	1
d	Regularly update our main website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Subgroup G Hoey 	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More easily accessible up to date information for staff, parents and members of the public. 	1,2
e	Develop, publish and disseminate a range of guidance and learning opportunities for staff to support their child protection practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Subgroup J Russell G Hoey 	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confident and competent staff 	1,2

We will gather the core data indicators to measure the impact of these tasks through regular survey and consultation with adults at information events and other similar events to ensure we met this strategic objective. We will also utilise findings of the People’s Panel to help us measure effectiveness in this area.

Implementation – Strategic Objective 3 – To ensure that the work of NACPC and its partners is informed by the perspectives of children, young people and their families.

Task	Person(s) responsible	Timescale	Resource implication	Impact	Outcome Reference	
a	Receive quarterly reports from the Child Protection Advocacy service and respond to issues as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Sub Group. CHILDREN1st J Russell. 	Consider on 6 weekly basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time. Budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of perspective of children in the child protection system 	7,8
b	Introduce a mechanism to measure involvement of children, young people and parents at formal meetings and respond to issues raised as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Sub Group. Focus Group. J Russell. 	Consider on 6 weekly basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time. Budget. 	Increased awareness of views of those directly involved with services	7,8
c	Respond to findings of pupil surveys as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Sub Group. J Russell. 	Consider on 6 weekly basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time. Budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of the views of children and young people in relation to safety 	4,5,6,7

We will measure the impact of these tasks by assessing how well we are able to utilise the views of children, young people and families.

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee - Media Protocol

The purpose of this Media Protocol is to clarify the process to be undertaken in the event of engagement between North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (NACPC) and the media.

The protocol defines the responsibilities of individual member organisations and the timescales to be adopted in media matters, particularly in relation to reactive media inquiries.

NACPC will not engage with the media on matters relating to an individual case except where a Significant Case Review has been undertaken by NACPC, in which case the Chief Officers' of NACPC will be involved in discussions on how approaches to and from the media will be handled (see Significant Case Review section below)

Proactive approach to the media

The following process should be followed where NACPC or one of its sub groups wishes to seek media coverage of activities or issues related to Child Protection:

- 1 A decision to seek media coverage for an activity or issue is taken by Chief Officers' Group, NACPC or one of the sub groups in line with the principles included in the Communications Strategy.
- 2 A lead contact is nominated by those wishing media coverage. This person will liaise with the Child Protection Lead Officer and North Ayrshire Council's Communications Team.
- 3 The contact will ensure that all parties have a clear idea of the purpose of the media engagement and the information to be provided.
- 4 The contact, along with the Child Protection Lead Officer and North Ayrshire Council's Communications Team will then discuss and agree a media plan.
- 5 The media plan will then be distributed to the Chairperson of NACPC for approval, then to members of the Information Sub Group and NACPC for information, ideally at least two working days prior to implementation.
- 6 The media plan will be implemented.
- 7 Media coverage will be monitored and evaluated by the Information Sub Group and feedback will be provided to NACPC within the routine sub group reports.

Response to 'routine' media inquiry

The media may approach NACPC - or any individual member organisation - for information or comment for the following reasons

- To seek a local angle on a national issue
- To follow up on a local contentious issue

These may be issues NACPC is already aware of – for example, a national funding announcement, some problem arising from local services, or criticism of aspects of the strategic approach or Action Plan.

In such cases discussion may already have taken place on how these should be handled in line with the above protocol and 'press lines' may have been agreed.

If no prior discussion has taken place within NACPC, the Communications/Press Officer of the organisation approached by the media should follow the procedure below:

1. Contact the Chair of North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee, Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council's Communications Manager immediately to discuss if the media request would be best managed by that agency or by the Child Protection Committee
2. If the decision is taken that the organisation approached will respond directly, a copy of the response will be sent to the Child Protection Lead Officer for media monitoring purposes and the Child Protection Lead Officer will then circulate that response to each member organisation for information
3. If the decision is taken that a NACPC response is more appropriate, the Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council's Communications Manager will collate the necessary information, seeking information from partners if required, and prepare a draft response.
4. The draft response will then be discussed with the Chairperson of NACPC and amended as required until it is approved by the Chairperson of NACPC.
5. The response will then be issued to the media by North Ayrshire Council's Communications Manager on behalf of NACPC and circulated by the Child Protection Lead Officer to all member organisations for information.

Response to 'exceptional' media inquiry -

If any unexpected or 'exceptional' media requests are received the following procedure should be followed:

1. If a media enquiry regarding a child protection issue related to North Ayrshire is made to a member organisation, the organisation should contact the Chair of North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee, the Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council's Communications Manager immediately to discuss if the media request would be best managed by that organisation or by NACPC itself.
2. If the decision is taken that it is more appropriate for the member organisation to respond directly, a copy of the draft response will be sent to the Child Protection Lead Officer for media monitoring purposes and the Child Protection Lead Officer will then circulate that response to each member organisation for information or input if required.
3. Where it is considered that an NACPC response is more appropriate, the Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council's Communications Manager will establish the nature of the enquiry and the information sought and will collate the necessary information, seeking information from partners if required, and prepare a draft response.
4. The draft response will then be discussed with the Chairperson of NACPC and amended as required until it is approved by the Chairperson of NACPC.
5. The response will then be issued to the media by North Ayrshire Council's Communications Manager on behalf of NACPC and circulated to all member organisations for information.
6. Where a response is requested directly from NACPC, the Chair of North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee, the Child Protection Lead Officer and North Ayrshire Council's Communications Manager will discuss the request and determine if it is appropriate for NACPC to respond or if the enquiry should be directed elsewhere.
7. If it is agreed that NACPC should respond directly, the procedures from 3. to 6. above will be followed
8. If it is agreed to direct the inquiry to an individual member organisation, the Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council's Communications Manager will contact the appropriate NACPC member for that organisation – or a senior manager from that organisation - and pass on the details of the enquiry.
9. The member organisation will then prepare a draft response and (as at 2. Above) will send a copy of the draft response to the Child Protection Lead Officer for media monitoring purposes. The Child Protection Lead Officer will then circulate that response to each member organisation for information or input if required.

Significant Case Reviews

When reporting on the findings of a Significant Case Review, the NACPC Chief Officers' Group will be responsible for any decision on whether or not to involve the media.

If the decision is taken to involve the media, the Chief Officers' Group will be involved in discussions to develop a media plan as part of their wider responsibilities and the Chairperson of the Chief Officer' Group will be required to approve the final media plan including any press release.

The media plan should include a press release and, where appropriate, suggested interview and/or photo opportunities.

Representatives on the Chief Officers' Group have responsibility for ensuring that any press release is brought to the attention of their own Communications Teams and that any concerns are fed back to the Child Protection Lead Officer.

If the Chairperson of NACPC is not available, the Vice Chairperson will take on these responsibilities. If neither is available within the required timescale and the Lead Officer and North Ayrshire Council Communications Manager believe it is important that a response is made they will discuss this with at least one member of NACPC who has knowledge of the issue and seek their approval.

When the media enquiry relates to sensitive information - for example, information about an individual case or a member of staff - the Chairperson of NACPC will attempt to discuss the response with the Chairperson of the Chief Officers' Group.

In such cases the Chairperson of the Chief Officers' Group will be expected to approve the final statement. If the Chairperson of the Chief Officers' Group is not available within the required timescale and the Chairperson of NACPC believes it is important to make a response they will approve the response following consultation with other members of the Chief Officers' Group.

This Communications Strategy will be reviewed annually.