

MARS

Multi-Agency Resource Service

helping keep children safe

Edition 3, March 2010

Report on visits to Child Protection Committees

The MARS team has spent the last nine months contacting and visiting Child Protection Committees (CPCs) across Scotland. This has enabled CPCs to meet us, discuss the aims of the MARS and to manage expectations of the service we provide.

The visits help build knowledge and confidence, particularly in situations where CPCs may contact the MARS concerning complex and sensitive child protection cases.

During the course of each meeting, CPCs were asked to consider the best channels to use for contacting the MARS regarding business and for communicating about the MARS to the wider workforce. We also asked for examples of interesting or developing practice, skills or experience that could be offered by CPCs.

Areas requiring further advice or information

CPCs were interested in the skill-set identification, recruitment process and support required by CPCs with independent chairs. They were also interested in the role of the critical friend during enquiries and inspections; access to media handling expertise when working with the media; and the use of independent trainers.

CPCs also wanted to know more about the effectiveness of co-located CPC offices, particularly in the impact on outcomes for children and the need for identified accessible research into fabricated and induced illness; evaluation of practice or new initiatives in the UK and internationally; and issues related to parental substance misuse.

During the team visits, CPCs welcomed the MARS's role in working with individual organisations and

also helping to provide solutions to common problems, for example in relation to significant case reviews (SCRs). Further developments could include improved links with adult protection services, support with risk assessment procedures and shared local guidance, protocols and procedures.

Website development

The joint MARS and SCCPN website was launched on 1 December and is being developed following feedback from users. It will disseminate child care and protection news and events to a wide audience and display connections with a broad range of organisations. The MARS and SCCPN are considering developing the layout to improve accessibility, building the capacity to signpost research and related publications and commissioning an online survey to capture views about the website.

This website is being developed as a resource for you and we would appreciate your feedback.



Developing an interactive web space

In collaboration with the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) we are developing a social network for the child protection community. This will enable people working in child protection to share information, knowledge and experience. We are currently developing guidelines on how to use the network and relevant FAQs and are also undertaking a small pilot with CPC chairs and lead officers. Please contact scott.reid@stir.ac.uk if you would like to participate.

Requests for advice and support

The MARS has received a total of 22 requests for advice and support. These can broadly be grouped into five main categories: the development of local or organisation procedures and guidance (third sector); support and advice on practice developments; support and advice on particular cases; undertaking local evaluations and information on training.

Revised national child protection guidance



The consultation timescale for the revised national child protection guidance is now available. Following meetings of the workstream and steering groups in March, the pre-consultation draft document will be minuted to the Minister on 19 April with an expected sign-off in May.

Formal consultation will begin at the end of May and close in mid September. It is anticipated that the new national guidelines will be published in November 2010. For more information contact gillian.buchanan@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

SLWG on significant case reviews

A short-life working group has met on three occasions and is actively taking forward the tasks outlined within its remit. We have utilised the expertise of those who have conducted significant case reviews (SCRs) as well as those involved in research and developments in other parts of the UK. We intend to report on our findings and make some recommendations by June 2010.

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Scottish Child Care and Protection Network

Connecting research and practice

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Join the network

If you want to keep up to date with our activities, join the network mailing list. Send your email contact details to sccpn@stir.ac.uk

New NSPCC post for Professor Julie Taylor



Julie Taylor – a co-founding member of the Scottish Child Care and Protection Network – is leaving the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Dundee to take up a national (UK) post as Head of Strategy and Development: Abuse in High Risk Families, with the NSPCC as from April 2010. The NSPCC recently revised its strategy and subsequently restructured, creating a new unit that brings together policy, research, analysis and commissioning. Julie's post, the only one from Scotland, will be based in Edinburgh. Julie's substantive research has been concerned with optimal service delivery conditions for children in need of care or protection, using a public health approach to frame this work. Find out more about the NSPCC's strategy for 2009–2016 at www.nspcc.org.uk.

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Adoption Research Initiative

Adoption Research Initiative (ARi) will disseminate findings during 2010

The ARi is a group of major research projects focusing on permanence planning, matching and supporting adoptive placements. Although focusing on the legal, policy and practice context in England, the findings from the projects will hold key messages for all who are concerned with securing permanence and stability for children who can not live with their birth parents. To find out more go to www.adoptionresearchinitiative.org.uk.

LARCI award supports research

The SCCPN recently brokered a successful partnership funding bid between Stirling Council and Stirling University. This small-scale, applied project brings together an academic, Chris McIlquham, and inter-disciplinary groups of practitioners to explore research evidence and promote critical reflection of assessment and planning at pre-birth within the context of parental drug and alcohol misuse. On completion, learning from the partnership will be shared via the SCCPN.

Report on child trafficking in Glasgow

A research report on Child Trafficking in Glasgow is now available online at the SCCPN research index. Produced by the Glasgow Child Protection Committee, the research undertaken by Dr Paul Rigby analyses social work case files to identify unaccompanied asylum seeking children who may have been trafficked and to identify characteristics of the children.

Gender and child welfare in society



A new book from network members, *Gender and Child Welfare in Society* (Featherstone, Hooper, Scourfield and Taylor: Eds) considers ways in which raising questions about gender can help researchers and practitioners better understand family relationships and issues in children's development. It draws on current developments in thinking about gender relations and offers an overview of sociological, psychological and developmental perspectives on family relationships, child welfare outcomes and the practice/policy realities of professional interventions with families. Chapters address a range of service settings; including family support, child health, education, child protection, domestic violence, 'looked after' children and youth justice.

Gender and Child Welfare in Society is published by Wiley-Blackwell, www.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/home.

Parental substance misuse workshops

Interested in research evidence about parental substance misuse? Practitioner-focused workshops to explore research findings on working with families affected by parental substance misuse are on offer via the SCCPN. To find out more, email fiona.mitchell@stir.ac.uk