

Bath & North East Somerset Council	
MEETING:	Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	9 th July 2012
TITLE:	Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services Improvement Plan
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report:	
Ofsted Inspection Improvement Plan	

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The report details the process, contents, judgements and main findings from the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission's Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services undertaken between 9th – 20th January 2012, and outlines how the Council's Children's Service and its partners have responded to the inspection report's recommendations for areas for improvement. The attached report details progress with the Children's Service Improvement Plan as at 30th June 2012.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to:

2.1 Note the report, the actions taken to respond to recommendations for areas for improvement, and the progress reported thus far.

2.2 Note the arrangements proposed for reviewing and reporting progress to the Local Safeguarding Children Board; the Corporate Parenting Group; the In-Care Council; and the Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing.

2.3 Request that the Director of Children's Service and Divisional Director, Safeguarding, Social Care and Family Service present a further progress report to this Panel at its November 2012 meeting.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 The Ofsted/Care Quality Commission's inspection in Bath and North East Somerset was undertaken within the existing framework of unannounced annual inspections of Contact, Referral and Assessment Services and 3 yearly announced inspections of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services. This was the first such announced inspection of Bath and North East Somerset's Services, and followed unannounced inspections in May 2010 and January 2011, and the Joint Area Review conducted in June 2008.

4.2 The inspection was conducted between 9th and 20th January 2012. The Council and partners were given headline feedback on 20th January 2012 and the opportunity to comment upon the draft report. The Council received the pre-publication of the report on 17th February 2012. The report was published on the Ofsted website on 24th February 2012 and is a public document.

4.3 The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The inspection team consisted of four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one inspector from the Care Quality Commission. The inspection was carried out under the Children Act 2004.

4.4 The evidence evaluated by the inspectors included:-

- Discussions with 21 children and young people and 22 carers receiving services, front staff and line managers, senior officers including the Director of Children's Services and the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, elected members and a range of community representatives.
- Analysing and evaluating reports from a variety of sources including a review of the Children and Young People's Plan, performance data, information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision and the evaluations of a serious case review undertaken by Ofsted in accordance with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2010.
- A review of 94 case files for children and young people with a range of need. This provided a view of services provided over time and the quality of reporting, recording and decision making undertaken.
- Direct observation of practice and working groups. Visits to a range of safeguarding and looked after children's services across the partnership.
- The outcomes of the most recent annual unannounced inspection of local authority contact, referral and assessment services undertaken in January 2011.
- Interviews and focus groups with front line professionals, managers and senior staff from; NHS Bath and North East Somerset and NHS Wiltshire, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust; Sirona Health and Social Care; The Royal United Hospital; Great Western Hospital Foundation Trust; Avon and Wiltshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and Bath NHS Healthcare Centre.

4.5 All inspection judgements are made using the following four point scale.

Outstanding (Grade 1)	A service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good (Grade 2)	A service that exceeds minimum requirements
Adequate (Grade 3)	A service that only meets minimum requirements
Inadequate (Grade 4)	A service that does not meet minimum requirements

4.6 The following judgements were provided for safeguarding services:-

- Overall effectiveness – Grade 3 (Adequate)
- Capacity for improvement – Grade 3 (Adequate)

- Children and young people are safe and feel safe – Grade 2 (Good)
- Quality of provision – Grade 3 (Adequate)
- The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe – Grade 4 (Inadequate)
- Ambition and prioritisation – Grade 3 (Adequate)
- Leadership and Management – Grade 3 (Adequate)
- Performance Management and Quality Assurance – Grade 3 (Adequate)
- Partnership working – Grade 3 (Adequate)

4.7 These judgements and the actions required by the Council and its partners to improve the quality of provision and services for safeguarding children and young people in Bath and North East Somerset were reported to the Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and to its constituent members. A briefing paper was presented to the LSCB meeting on 6th March 2012. The LSCB has given priority within its Work Programme for 2012/13 to actions to strengthen its own governance arrangements and how it challenges and holds to account member agencies; and to receiving reports from the Council's Children's Service and Health agencies detailing progress with their representative action plans in June and September 2012. The first such progress reports were presented to the LSCB on 12th June 2012.

4.8 The following judgements were given for services for looked after children:-

- Overall effectiveness – Grade 2 (Good)
- Capacity for improvement – Grade 2 (Good)
- Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers: being healthy – Grade 4 (Inadequate)
- Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers: staying safe – Grade 2 (Good)
- Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers: enjoying and achieving – Grade 2 (Good)
- Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers: making and positive contribution, including user engagement – Grade 2 (Good)
- Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers: Economic wellbeing – Grade 3 (Adequate)
- Overall quality of provision – Grade 3 (Adequate)
- Ambition and prioritisation – Grade 2 (Good)
- Leadership and Management – Grade 2 (Good)
- Performance Management and Quality Assurance – Grade 3 (Adequate)

4.9 The Inspection report has been shared with staff across the Children's Service and all teams have discussed its contents, judgements and recommendations for areas for improvement. Some actions have been taken immediately to improve practice and management oversight and learning points from the inspection have been used to inform further work in the re-design of the Children's Social Care Service – for which a revised timetable and work programme has been established.

4.10 The Children's Service reviewed the Ofsted recommendations for actions immediately, within 3 months and within 6 months and identified themed areas for improvement in terms of (i) practice and management and (ii) service management – Children's Service and cross-services. Managers and staff across the Children's Service were invited to contribute to the Improvement Plan.

Actions, and underpinning actions, were identified for each area of improvement with lead officers, completion dates, assurance methods, desired outcomes, progress ratings, evaluation of impact, and review dates established for each.

- 4.11 Work was completed across Children's Service and the Health economy to ensure that the respective Improvement Plans were coordinated and complemented each other.
- 4.12 The Children's Service has established an Inspection Improvement Group, chaired by the DCS to monitor and evaluate progress with the Improvement Plan and this meets monthly. The Plan was formally signed off and distributed to the social care teams on 26th April, and arrangements have been made for the Plan to be accessible to all staff via the Council's Information Service. Staff workshops have been held to encourage and enable all staff to participate in progressing and evaluating the Plan.
- 4.13 The report presented to, and discussed at, the 6th March 2012 meeting of the LSCB highlighted the specific areas to which the Board should give attention, as well as emphasising the role that the Board and its members must play in holding the Children's Service to account for delivering its Improvement Plan.
- 4.14 Actions have been implemented to progress all areas of the Improvement Plan, and those due for completion by May and June 2012 have been formally reviewed. Particular attention has been paid to providing guidance, revising processes and systems to improve case recording and managerial oversight, improving in-service quality assurance and off-line auditing arrangements and practice, and enhancing staff supervision, training and reflective practice. Arrangements are in place to evidence that improvements have been effected, and will be sustained, which will include feedback from service users and partner agencies.
- 4.15 The Inspection Improvement Steering Group will make arrangements to provide progress reports and evidence of improvements to the Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing, the Corporate Parenting Group, and the In-Care Council, as well as the LSCB.
- 4.16 This report can provide assurance to the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel that the Improvement Plan has been established and is being implemented. Future reports will evidence the impact and determine whether improvements are being sustained.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The risks associated with ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements and the provision of services to children and young people are assessed by the Children's Service (and partner agencies) and included in the Service's risk register.
- 5.2 The risks associated with ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements are also assessed and managed by the LSCB (which receives quarterly performance reports) and the Board has established its own risk register.

5.3 The risks associated with ensuring the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers are assessed and managed by the Children's Service (and partner agencies) and included in the Service's risk register.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 Promoting diversity and supporting individual identity and recognising and valuing the cultural diversity of Bath and North East Somerset's communities and a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice are values underpinning the work of the Children's Service and the LSCB.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Staff; Other B&NES Services; Stakeholders/Partners.

7.2 Staff across Children's Service have been involved in discussions about how the Service will respond to the recommendations for areas for improvement: in detailing the action plan: and in evaluating progress and evidencing improvements.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Social Inclusion: Customer focus: Young People.

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director, Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director, Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	