

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2013
TITLE:	Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services Improvement Plan
WARD:	ALL

### AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

#### List of attachments to this report:

## 1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The report details further progress with the implementation of the Council's Children's Service Improvement Plan following the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services undertaken in January 2012. The full Improvement Plan and a progress report in respect of its early implementation was considered by the Panel on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2012, and this further progress report requested.

## 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 Health and Wellbeing Board.

2.3 Note that the Children's Service and Health Agencies will be presenting a combined report to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013 detailing and evidencing progress one year on from the Inspection.

## 3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

## 4 THE REPORT

4.1 The earlier report to the Panel detailed the process, contents, judgements and main findings from the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission's Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services undertaken between 9<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012, and outlined how the Council's Children's Service and its partners had responded to the inspection report's recommendations for areas for improvement. An attached report detailed progress with the Children's Service Improvement Plan as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

4.2 The Ofsted/Care Quality Commission's inspection in Bath and North East Somerset was undertaken within the then 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.

4.3 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 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

4.5 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)

4.6 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 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012. The LSCB gave 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 respective action plans in June, September and December 2012. The Board has requested that the Council's Children's Service and Health Service provide a combined report to the March 2013 meeting so that the Board can evaluate overall progress one year on from the Inspection.

4.7 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)

- 4.8 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 contributed 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.
- 4.9 Work was completed across Children's Service and the Health agencies to ensure that the respective Improvement Plans were coordinated and complemented each other.
- 4.10 The Children's Service has established an Inspection Improvement Group, chaired by the Strategic Director, 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 made for the Plan to be accessible to all staff via the Council's Information Service. Staff workshops were held to encourage and enable all staff to participate in progressing and evaluating the Plan. Particular attention was given 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.
- 4.11 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.
- 4.12 The progress report to September 2012 meeting of the LSCB confirmed that all actions have been completed, and that underpinning actions will be on-going, and detailed the immediate improvements that have been effected in practice and management arrangements – and highlighted the need for the Children's Service to ensure that there is evidence that all improvements have been effected and

sustained, and have had a demonstrable impact upon outcomes for children and young people. As a result, further actions have been taken to improve safeguarding practice and planning (e.g. Case Conference Chairs meeting with parents and young people prior **and** subsequent to initial conferences: actions to improve quality of all reports submitted to case conferences): and enhanced arrangements have been introduced for in-service and off-line case audits (including themed deep dive audits) which are being used to inform practice, professional development and training. Arrangements have also been made for an independent evaluation of progress with the Improvement Plan (completed w/c 26.11.12).

4.13 The progress report to the December 2012 meeting of the LSCB reported the following:-

- Required improvements have been effected in respect of notifications of care and protection plans: feedback to referrers: timeliness of Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews: involvement of health professionals and progress of health plans for LAC Reviews: and evidence that these improvements are being sustained.
- Required improvements effected in respect of core assessments following Section 47 investigations: reports to child protection conferences and LAC Reviews. Emerging evidence that these improvements are being sustained – to be evaluated over a longer period.
- Required improvements effected in respect of robust quality assurance arrangements (both in-service and off-line). Further work required to evidence that this is achieving and sustaining improvements in quality of reports to conferences and reviews: quality of protection plans: quality and work of core group meetings: case recording and chronologies. This work to focus upon attaining consistency across the Service.
- Robust arrangements in place (and being enhanced through the redesign of the Children's Social Care Service) for professional supervision: further training provided (and on-going): reflective supervision more prevalent. Further work required to evidence how this is impacting upon practice and outcomes.
- All actions completed in respect of the Children's Service lead role in ensuring that the Children's Trust Board and LSCB take actions to require progress reports and assurance from Health agencies.

And reported that, in summary, the Inspection Improvement Plan has been effectively implemented and is continuously reviewed and evaluated by the Children's Service Steering Group. Work completed has effected immediate improvements but also identified other areas requiring actions – and these actions will underpin the overall improvements required. Progress in some areas has been significant, whilst in other areas the levels of consistent performance required have not yet been attained. The next stage of our work will focus upon these and evidencing whether improvements have been sustained.

4.14 Further meetings of the Inspection Improvement Steering Group have received evidence that improvements are being sustained, and that continuing actions are being taken by the Children's Social Care Service to establish consistency across the Service. A comprehensive training programme is in place to support front line staff and managers, and robust quality assurance and audit arrangements with a focus upon learning from best practice.

4.15 This report can provide assurance to the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel that the Inspection Improvement Plan has been effectively implemented and that the required improvements in practice, management and Service arrangements are being effected and sustained, and that work will continue to build upon this.

4.16 There will be opportunities for external scrutiny of safeguarding services via upcoming Peer Challenges from other Local Authorities and the revised Ofsted arrangements for safeguarding inspections.

## **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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<b>Background papers</b>	Report to Early Years Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel 9 <sup>th</sup> July 2012 – ‘Safeguarding and Looked After Children’s Services Improvement Plan’; and attachment ‘Ofsted Inspection Improvement Plan’
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	