

**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2012**

**Report of the Acting Director of Children's Services**

Action Plans in Response to OfSTED Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children

**Purpose of Report**

1. To remind Children's Services Scrutiny Committee of the outcome of Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children Services in Dudley which took place between 28 November 2011 to 9 December 2011.
2. To present further examples of action plans in response to the inspection report to Scrutiny Committee.

**Background**

3. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the local 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. Attached as Appendix 1 is the full report from OfSTED.
4. The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:
  - Discussions with children and young people receiving services, front line staff and managers, senior officers including the Acting Director of Children's services and the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, elected members, senior NHS health representatives 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 over 60 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.
- The outcomes of the most recent annual unannounced inspection of Local Authority contact, referral and assessment services undertaken in March 2011.
- Interviews and focus groups with front line professionals, managers and senior staff from Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust and NHS Dudley.

5. All inspection judgments 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

6. The inspection was focussed on the contributions of all relevant Services in the Local Authority and is approached from a partnership perspective.
7. The inspection provided two overall ratings for Safeguarding Services in relation to their overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement and individual ratings for specific outcomes relating to those Services.
8. The inspection provided two overall ratings for Looked after Children in relation to their overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement and individual ratings for specific outcomes relating to those Services.
9. Thirteen individual outlined action plans have been developed by the Directorate of Children's Services and partner agencies to meet the recommendations outlined in the report. Eight plans have been developed to support section one of the report i.e. safeguarding.
- Plans 1 & 2 are being lead by Health

- Plans 3,4 & 5 are being lead by the Directorate of Children's Services and supported by partners
- Plan 6 is being lead by the Police Service
- Plans 7 & 8 are being lead by lead by the Directorate of Children's Service
- Plans 1, 8 &12 were scrutinised at 22 March 2012 committee.

Four plans are included for scrutiny at the June committee.

- Plan 4; Joint and agreed quality standards for safeguarding practice across the partnership and implementation of a joint quality assurance and performance framework underpinned by efficient information systems. (Appendix 2)
- Plan 6; Ensure MARAC is fully operational and effective leadership is in place in order to meet the level of demand for such arrangements. (Appendix 3)
- Plan 7; Improve the consistency of recording and assessments (Appendix 4)
- Plan 10; NHS to review the capacity of the specialist health services to looked after children and young people to ensure health support, including dental health care and annual health assessments, is accessible, timely and user-friendly. (Appendix 5)

10. Further plans and information regarding progress will be reported at the following committee meetings later this year and into 2013.

## **Finance**

11. Following a review of existing budgets in light of Council priorities, additional legislative requirements and service pressures the Cabinet at the meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2012 approved additional spending to target key service areas. For Children's Services, a one off allocation of £400k was identified to be spent in 2012/13 for Support to Social Care Services. The £400k will enable Children's Services to respond to the recommendations as a result of the inspection.

## **Law**

12. The legislation and guidance which relates both generally and specifically to looked after children and care leavers is the Children Act 1989, the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, Adoption Children Act 2002, the Children Act 2004, the Children and Young People's Act 2008.

13. The law governing the Local Authorities duties in respect of referrals of a child protection nature, is set out primarily in the Children Act 1989, with further guidance under The Framework for the Assessment of Children In Need and their Families 2000 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010.
14. Under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 there is a duty on the LA and its partners to safeguarding and promote the welfare of children.
15. The Council and can do anything incidental thereto, conducive thereto, or which facilitates the discharge of this function under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Equality Impact**

16. The provision of Looked after Children Services contributes to the provision of stable, secure and safe care for children looked after children in order that they can achieve good life chance outcomes. It assists the Council in discharging its corporate parenting responsibilities to ensure that looked after children are not disadvantaged by being in care and that they receive the support, care and security that we would wish for our own children.
17. The Local Authority and its Partners have a duty under Section 11 of the Children Act to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and ensure that they are not disadvantaged by living in circumstances which compromise their care and well being.

### **Recommendation**

18. That Children's Services Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the action plans presented and receive further action plans for scrutiny and subsequent meetings.



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