

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 22nd March 2012

Report of the Acting Director of Children's Services

OfSTED Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children

Purpose of Report

1. To advise 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 the action plan to Scrutiny Committee with respect to the recommendations of the OfSTED inspection.
3. For NHS Dudley to present their strategic action plan.

Background

4. 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.
5. The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:
 - Discussions with children and young people receiving services, front line staff and managers, senior officers including the 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.

6. 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

7. The inspection was focussed on the contributions of all relevant Services in the Local Authority and is approached from a partnership perspective.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Thirteen individual outline 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

Two plans from this section are included for scrutiny at the March committee.

- Plan 1 (subdivided in 7 plans) lead by Health (Appendix 2)
- Plan 8 Common Assessment Framework (CAF) lead by Children's Services (Appendix 3)

Plans relating to section 2 Looked after Children are covered by plans 9 – 13.

- Plans 9 & 10 are being lead by Health
- Plans 11-13 are being lead by the Directorate of Children's Services and Partners

One detailed action plan for this section is included with this report (Appendix 4) for scrutiny in March-

- Plan 12 Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) – further developments are taking place with partner agencies to ensure all the recommendations are fully covered.

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

Finance

12. Following a review of existing budgets in light of Council priorities, additional legislative requirements and service pressures the Cabinet at the meeting on 8th 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

13. 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.

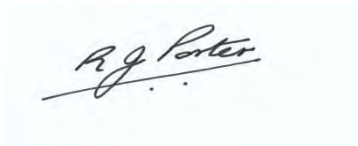
14. The law governing the Local Authorities duties in respect of referrals of a child protection nature, is set out primarily in the Children Act 1989, with further guidance under The Framework for the Assessment of Children In Need and their Families 2000 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010.
15. 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.
16. 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

17. 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.
18. 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

19. 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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