

**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND
SKILLS INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND SERVICES FOR LOOKED
AFTER CHILDREN 2009**

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **24th November 2009**

From: **Executive Director: Children's Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **N/A**

Key decision: **No**

Purpose:

- **To inform Cabinet of the results of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children.**
- **To provide Cabinet with details of actions being undertaken to respond to the areas for improvement identified within the inspection report.**

Recommendation:

Cabinet is invited to comment on the contents of the report and the responses to the areas identified for improvement.

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact</i>	
Name:	Laura Wilkinson	Name:	Cllr Martin Curtis
Post:	Performance and Quality Assurance Manager	Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Children
Email:	Laura.Wilkinson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email:	Martin.Curtis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 712265	Tel:	01223 699173

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment Framework Ofsted have introduced two new inspection processes for Children's Services:
- An annual, unannounced inspection of local authority contact, assessment and referral centres for Children's Social Care
 - A full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children at least once every three years.
- 1.2 Cambridgeshire has now been subject to both inspection processes. The Unannounced Inspection took place on 7th and 8th of July and the inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children took place between 15th September and 26th September. The notice period for the full safeguarding inspection was two weeks.

2.0 INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- 2.1 The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate how well children and young people are safeguarded and the quality of service provision and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. During their visit, Inspectors met with a wide range of services, professionals, children, young people and parents and carers, as well as scrutinising a range of evidence and case records.
- 2.2 It should be noted that there have been significant changes to inspection regimes during 2009. The new framework for inspecting safeguarding and looked after children's services follows a period of intense public scrutiny and concern for safeguarding. Following the death of Baby P and the subsequent Laming Report, Ofsted have raised their standards and honed their focus on safeguarding and vulnerable groups. The expectation on local authorities in safeguarding is understandably high and has resulted in processes and grade criteria that are significantly more challenging than previous inspection frameworks. The Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment earlier this year and the Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children have both been rigorous, demanding and appropriately challenging.

3.0 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- 3.1 Under this new framework the Local Authority is assessed against 34 judgement areas using the following four-point scale:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Inadequate

- 3.2 Overall, Cambridgeshire was considered adequate for safeguarding and adequate for Looked After Children, with good capacity to improve and good features. In the context of a more challenging inspection regime, this result is considered positive. Details of the gradings for each of the separate judgements are set out in the sections below.
- 3.3 The inspection report confirms the ongoing improvements that are being made within the service and that all statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are being met. Inspectors recognised the considerable efforts that have been made to towards establishing clear vision, structures and detailed operational arrangements for the service and commented that the service were committed, had good self-awareness and recognised what further improvements needed to be made. This is considered a solid platform from which to achieve further improvements.
- 3.4 The remainder of this report provides a summary of the strengths and areas for improvement, along with commentary on the service's response to these issues. Work around many of these is already captured in the Social Care Improvement Plan, which collates the areas for development identified from the various reviews and inspections, including the Cambridgeshire Safeguarding Review following the death of Baby P and the recent Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment. Further improvement planning is currently being undertaken to assess what additional action needs to be taken and ensure that this is reflected in the Social Care Improvement Plan.

4.0 KEY FINDINGS FOR SAFEGUARDING

- 4.1 There are 15 separate judgements relating to safeguarding. These are set out in the table below.

Safeguarding services	
Overall effectiveness	Adequate
Capacity for improvement	Adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	
Children and young people are safe: effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people are safe	Adequate
Children and young people feel safe: effectiveness of services in helping to ensure that children and young people feel safe	Adequate
Quality of provision	
Service responsiveness including complaints	Adequate
Assessment and direct work with children and families	Adequate
Case planning, review and recording	Adequate
Leadership and management	
Ambition and prioritisation	Adequate
Evaluation, including performance management, quality	Adequate

assurance and workforce development	
User engagement	Adequate
Partnerships	Adequate
Equality and diversity	Adequate
Value for money	Adequate

4.2 Areas of strength

4.2.1 Key areas of strength highlighted in the inspection report include:

- Improvements in coordinated services are taking place, with a notable pace of change over the last year
- Operational management provides a supportive and enabling environment for the work force and staff morale is high
- The number of initiatives to recruit Social Workers have had a positive impact
- Safeguarding needs are assessed effectively leading to appropriate actions to ensure that children and young people are suitably protected
- Many key performance indicators have shown improvements and are in the same range as statistical neighbours.
- Children and young people report that they mostly feel safe
- There is a range of services and initiatives providing good or very good focus on the safeguarding needs of children. In particular, the Education Child Protection Service, targeted provision for pupil support, work around domestic violence and young people who offend.
- The council has well-established and strong practices to ensure safe recruitment and staff development in its workforce

4.3 Areas for improvement

4.3.1 The report outlines 7 formal recommendations for improvement, which are:

Within 3 months:

Recommendation	Response
Ensure that new referrals are allocated when a decision has been made to undertake an initial assessment	All referrals awaiting allocation are subject to rigorous monitoring by Team Managers. Additional resources have been allocated to the Contact Centre to improve triage of referrals.
Improve the timeliness and quality of initial assessments, case planning and the consistency of managerial oversight of cases	Performance and quality assurance arrangements for the service are currently being reviewed which will contain clear practice standards and expectations for managers when reviewing the assessments and quality of plans. Revised exemplars have also been developed for Initial Assessments and will be launched shortly.

	This should support improved completion of assessments as the exemplar is more focussed and user friendly.
Ensure that record keeping is improved and completed in a timely manner to ensure closure or transfer of case management responsibility to appropriate services	The quality assurance framework will set out clear expectations in relation to record keeping and will require managers to have oversight of and audit the quality of case file recording.

Within six months:

Recommendation	Response
Improve the contribution of children and young people and their parents/carers to service development and evaluation	The approach to gathering the views of service users and the process for using these in service development is being explored as part of the development of the quality assurance framework.
Ensure that performance management arrangements are consistently applied and embedded within safeguarding services and are clearly linked to outcomes	<p>A Social Care Performance and Quality Assurance was established in August 2009. The functions of the board include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining an overview of all the performance and management information reports that are currently produced for social care • Revising and scrutinise the monthly monitoring data <p>The 3 Area Teams are also planning to establish Area Performance Management meetings to review all performance information relating to the area and ensure appropriate action is taken to address any performance issues.</p> <p>The Integrated Children's System has had a major impact on the accuracy of performance data. A review of functionality and accuracy of ICS reports is being undertaken. Improved reports will support managers with performance management within their teams.</p>
Ensure that thresholds for early intervention and child in need services are better understood and consistently applied across the area	<p>New Child in Need procedures have been developed which provide clarity in relation to Social Care thresholds. These should support better consistency and understanding about levels of intervention. There are plans to promote the procedures with partner agencies.</p> <p>An audit of thresholds in relation to contacts is planned to take place.</p>
The Local Safeguarding Children Board should develop performance management, to ensure	A performance management framework for the Local Safeguarding Children Board will be produced.

that services are in line with strategic objectives and plans and that these are monitored and evaluated	
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5.0 KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

5.1 There are 19 separate judgements relating to safeguarding. These are set out in the table below.

Services for looked after children	
Overall effectiveness	Adequate
Capacity for improvement	Good
Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers	
Being healthy	Good
Staying Safe	Adequate
Enjoying and achieving	Adequate
Making a positive contribution	Good
Economic well-being	Adequate
Quality of provision	
Service responsiveness	Adequate
Assessment and direct work with children	Adequate
Case planning, review and recording	Adequate
Looked after children are safeguarded	
Leadership and management	
Ambition and prioritisation	Good
Evaluation, including performance management, quality assurance and workforce development	Adequate
User engagement	Good
Partnerships	Good
Equality and diversity	Adequate
Value for money	Good

5.2 Areas of strength

5.2.1 Key areas of strength highlighted in the report include:

- The political and managerial leadership across the council and a wide range of safeguarding agencies demonstrates good ambition commitment and to service improvement.
- Arrangements for corporate parenting are strongly supported, and energetically pursued by committed and well supported elected members.
- There is a good service for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

- Educational support and guidance provided through Virtual School Arrangements are highly regarded by partner agencies and well targeted to need.
- Services to promote good health among children in care are good.
- Improvement in reducing the number of placement changes experienced by children and young people is commendable and continues to be better than similar councils and the national average
- There are good opportunities for looked after children and young people to make a positive contribution. The G2G Card has provided young people with good access to positive activities.
- Good support is provided by and to foster carers, who are readily able to access training.
- User engagement is good, with strong commitment across the partnership.
- The Aiming High for Disabled Children initiative is starting to show improvements to services.

5.3 Areas for improvement

5.3.1 The report outlines 5 formal recommendations for improvement, which are:

Within 3 months:

Recommendation	Response
Ensure that the initial case planning processes within contact referral and assessment teams and transfer arrangements to area teams appropriately meet the needs of children and young people newly looked after	<p>The Independent Reviewing Officer Service is working with casework teams to ensure more consistent and earlier planning.</p> <p>The revised Quality Assurance Framework will contain clear practice standards and expectations of Managers and Independent Reviewing Officers for monitoring and reviewing the quality of plans.</p> <p>The new Children in Need procedures will also address this issue. These will be launched on 17th November 2009.</p>
Ensure that all care leavers are living in accommodation that is safe	<p>A few young people the inspectors spoke to reported that they did not feel safe in their accommodation. This issue will be investigated as part of the improvement planning process. The authority's performance for care leavers in suitable accommodation is 100%. This performance is based on clear assessment processes to ensure that accommodation is suitable for the individual. Unlike some authorities, Cambridgeshire does not</p>

	have any young people in bed and breakfast accommodation. However, it will be important to ascertain where and why some young people do not feel safe.
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Within 6 months:

Recommendation	Response
Ensure that the service is able to respond to the cultural needs of an increasingly diverse looked after children population	The increasing diversity of looked after children is related to an increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People and the inspection report praises the work of the service in responding to the needs of these young people. The Home Office has also positively acknowledged the approach Cambridgeshire has taken. However, inspectors felt that more attention should be paid to cultural aspects, for example, observing religious ceremonies. This issue will be explored with the relevant services.
Improve the range of opportunities for looked after young people and care leavers to access education, employment and training	In 2008/09 65.9%% of care leavers were in education, employment and training, compared to 68.8% the previous year. This fall is commensurate with the numbers of young people in our mainstream population becoming Not in Education Employment or Training. This is a national trend, related to the economic recession. Despite this fall, Cambridgeshire's performance is above the national average and statistical neighbours, 63.0% and 62.2% respectively. The authority has launched its apprenticeships scheme which places focus on supporting care leavers to access employment and training.
Ensure that the 16+ service is able to respond to increasing demand for its services appropriately and consistently	This issue will be investigated as part of the improvement planning process, as it is not clear as to what the issues of responsiveness are. The service has increased the capacity of the 16+ team by recruiting additional workers, including 6 Qualified Social Workers (there were previously no qualified staff in the service) and increasing the purchasing budget four fold.

6.0 MONITORING THE IMPACT OF THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 6.1 The Improvement plan will be monitored on a regular basis by Children's Services Management Team. The service could be subject to an Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment within the next 8 months and inspectors will be looking for evidence of improvement against the recommendations of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection. Reviews and audits of key aspects of the service will be undertaken to measure whether improvement actions are having an impact on quality of services and outcomes for

children and young people. The first review is planned to take place in January 2010.

7.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Resources and performance information

7.1.1 The action plan will be delivered within existing resources.

7.2 Statutory duties/requirements and partnership working

7.2.1 Partnership working will be crucial to delivering further improvements in services. The emergence of the Children's Trust will provide the environment for the next phase of developments. In particular, the revamped Local Safeguarding Children Board, led by Flick Schofield will be a significant driver.

7.3 Climate change

7.3.1 There are no significant climate change implications arising from this report.

7.4 Access and inclusion

7.4.1 One of the recommendations of the inspection is to ensure that the service is able to respond to the cultural needs of an increasingly diverse looked after children population. Work will take place to ensure the cultural needs of children and young people are considered in service provision.

7.5 Engagement and consultation

7.5.1 The findings of the inspection will be discussed at the Children's Trust and Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Source documents	Location
Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children report 2009	Available via the following link http://camweb/cyps/inspection.htm