



Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services

Executive Board

Date: 12th February 2010

Subject: The Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services in Leeds

Electoral Wards Affected: All

☐

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity ☐

Community Cohesion ☐

Narrowing the Gap ☐

Eligible for Call In

☐

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.0 This report provides Executive Board with details of the outcomes of the announced Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services in Leeds. Leeds was notified of the inspection on 9th November and the inspection was carried out between 23rd November and 4th December, with the final report published on 7th January. This inspection was carried out in line with Ofsted's Inspection Framework, published in May 2009. The full report of the integrated Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection is attached at appendix 1.
- 2.0 Leeds is giving the highest priority to addressing the current performance challenges in children's services. As such, the importance of making the improvements highlighted in the inspection has been fully recognised. Work to achieve this in the coming weeks and months will build on the momentum built during 2009 through a range of improvement work, which is acknowledged positively in the announced inspection report.
- 3.0 This report concentrates on summarising the main points of the inspection report and outlining how these will be responded to as part of a wider Improvement Plan and through investment of resources. Given the broad context of current improvement work in children's services, it should be seen in the context of several other Executive Board reports:
- The January report on the establishment of an externally chaired Improvement Board.

- The report on the review of children's services, which is planned for the March Executive Board.
- A report on the overarching Improvement Plan for Children's Services and an update on the Improvement Board and any developments relating to an improvement notice from the Department of Children, Schools & Families (DCSF) for children's services in Leeds, which will be brought to Executive Board in March.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That members note the findings of the announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services and how these fit into the wider improvement work currently taking place.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Executive Board with details about the outcomes of the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services in Leeds. The inspection was carried out between 23rd November and 4th December 2009 and the final report was published on 7th January 2010. The full report is attached at appendix 1.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In May 2009 Ofsted issued new guidance for the annual rating and inspection of children's services. This included the provision to carry out an on-site inspection lasting up to two weeks and examining safeguarding and looked after children's services. Ofsted notified Leeds of their intention to carry out such an inspection on 9th November 2009. Before arriving on site, Ofsted provided a list of over 50 key lines of enquiry that they wished to focus on during their inspection. The inspection was carried out by a team of five Ofsted inspectors and one inspector from the Care Quality Commission.
- 2.2 The inspection involved over 100 meetings, with inspectors seeing over 25 parents and over 80 children and young people. There was a formal analysis of 20 case files, as well as follow-up work on 35 case files, linked back to the unannounced inspection from July 2009.
- 2.3 Leeds is giving the highest priority to addressing the current performance challenges in children's services. As such, the importance of making the improvements highlighted in the inspection has been fully recognised. Work to achieve this in the coming weeks and months will build on the momentum built during 2009 through a range of improvement work, which is itself acknowledged positively in the announced inspection report.
- 2.4 As well as the specific activity being taken forward within services (particularly Children and Young People's Social Care) to address the priority areas for action highlighted in Ofsted's report, there are also a number of important wider developments that are helping to progress leadership, monitoring and challenge and wider service review work in children's services. The announced inspection report should therefore be considered in the context of several other Executive Board reports:
- The January report on the establishment of an externally Chaired Improvement Board.
 - The report on the review of children's services, which is planned for the March Executive Board.
 - A report on the overarching Improvement Plan for Children's Services and an update on the Improvement Board and any developments relating to an improvement notice from the Department of Children, Schools & Families (DCSF) for children's services in Leeds, which will be brought to Executive Board in March.

3.0 MAIN ISSUES

3.1 The full inspection report is attached at appendix 1. Unlike some previous inspection reports (such as the Joint Area Review), the announced inspection does not provide a single, definitive judgment across the full range of issues covered. Instead it makes a number of important judgments within different categories under both the safeguarding and looked after children themes.

3.2 These judgments are accompanied by narrative highlighting strengths and recent improvements and areas for further development and focus. It is very encouraging that the report recognises the significant effort and impact made by staff since the unannounced inspection and the positive direction of travel. It also highlights some specific areas of good practice and in particular important progress in relation to some key outcomes for looked after children. However it continues to raise some significant challenges requiring intensive focus and effort. The list below is not comprehensive, but covers several of the key themes within the report. Following this, the two tables summarise the judgments under first the safeguarding and then the looked after children themes:

- As suggested above, the report is largely positive about the improvement work that has been taking place in recent months, particularly following the unannounced inspection, including the commitment amongst members and senior officers to taking this forward.
- It is too early however, to see or assess the full and longer term impact of many of these improvements in terms of safeguarding work. As such, a number of important issues identified in the July 2009 unannounced inspection continue to be highlighted as challenges. These include the quality of assessments and recording, the timeliness of actions, management oversight of quality and the levels of caseloads of social workers.
- On the important judgments about the effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people *feel* safe and *are* safe, Leeds has been rated as adequate. This stems from extensive analysis of case files and is different to the judgment formed at the time of the unannounced inspection in July 2009, where it was found that there were children left at potential risk of serious harm.
- The report praises a number of aspects of partnership working within the children's trust arrangements including the contributions of particular partners. However, it identifies the importance of strengthening the role and effectiveness of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board. This issue is being addressed through an independent review of the Safeguarding Board, which is being finalised and will be implement in spring 2010.
- A variety of good work and strong commitment in relation to services for looked after children is highlighted, with outcomes relating to 'health' and 'enjoy and achieve' issues rated as good. This is balanced against several areas requiring further improvement and focus, for example around external placements, quality of assessments and implementing the Care Promise.
- Resources are a key theme throughout the report and are seen as an important influence on capacity for future improvement. Proposals for increased investment to address the issues raised in the report are discussed later in this report. Resources have also been considered by the Children's Services Scrutiny Board Working Group into Safeguarding, whose interim report, along with a response

from the Interim Director of Children's Services are included in the February Executive Board papers.

Summary Tables:

Safeguarding:

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Capacity for Improvement	Adequate
Children and young people are safe	Adequate
Children and young people feel safe	Adequate
Quality of Provision	Inadequate
Service responsiveness	Inadequate
Assessment & direct work with children & families	Inadequate
Case planning, monitoring & review	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Ambition and prioritisation	Adequate
Evaluation, including performance management	Inadequate
User engagement	Adequate
Partnerships	Adequate
Equality & diversity	Good
Value for Money	Inadequate

Looked After Children:

Overall effectiveness	Adequate
Capacity for Improvement	Adequate
Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers	
Being Healthy	Good
Staying safe	Adequate
Enjoying and achieving	Good
Making a positive contribution	Adequate
Economic well-being	Adequate
Quality of Provision	Adequate
Service responsiveness	Adequate
Assessment & direct work with children & families	Inadequate
Case planning, monitoring & review	Adequate
Leadership and management	Adequate
Ambition and prioritisation	Good
Evaluation, including performance management	Inadequate
User engagement	Adequate
Partnerships	Good
Equality & diversity	Good
Value for Money	Adequate

3.3 The inspection report identifies 14 specific areas for improvement in relation to safeguarding and 10 in relation to looked after children. These were identified as requiring either immediate action, action within three months, or actions within six months.

3.4 The areas for improvement in relation to safeguarding are:

Immediately:

- Refresh the existing children's service improvement plan to take account of the priorities for action and other issues set out in this report.
- Undertake a full evaluation of the allocation of children's service resource to ensure that the capacity of the workforce is sufficient to meet the demand for service at the published threshold.
- Tackle the unacceptably high level of social worker caseloads and insufficient team manager capacity, and ensure that newly qualified social workers are protected from carrying high and complex caseloads.
- Re-configure the contact centre procedure and practice for the classification of contacts and referrals so that these are more closely aligned with the definitions set out in national guidance; and evaluate the implementation of recent improvements to consolidate and inform further development.
- Improve the timeliness and quality of social work responses for assessments, case planning and recording, including the analysis of risk, to meet minimum standards.
- Accelerate plans to introduce a comprehensive performance management and quality assurance framework to support casework practice relating to contacts, referrals and assessments.
- Ensure that the combined resources and expertise of the council, partners, the Government Office and specialist contractors prioritise and tackle the difficulties associated with the electronic recording system.
- Ensure that the capacity for the delivery of child protection conferences matches the demand for service, that child protection core group meetings are effective and actions and outcomes for individual children are monitored against their child protection plan.

Within three months:

- Ensure children and young people and their parents receive information on how to make complaints and gain access to the advocacy service.
- Ensure that the involvement of children, young people and their families in the child protection process is consolidated and records demonstrate that practice is being implemented effectively and their views taken into account.
- Improve access to multi-agency child protection training delivered by the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board in order to ensure all partner agency staff are well informed and they know and understand their child protection roles and responsibilities.

Within six months:

- Strengthen the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board arrangements in providing challenge and monitoring safeguarding across the partnership so that more rapid progress is made in delivering robust safeguarding services across Leeds for children and young people.
- Complete an analysis of why there is such a high proportion of children who are the subject of a child protection plan for two or more years.
- Ensure that there is a suitably trained, experienced paediatrician available across the city 24 hours every day of the week to support effective child protection medical examinations involving children.

3.5 The Areas for Improvement in relation to looked after children are:

Immediately:

- Review the level of resource made available to deliver key social work tasks for the looked after children's service so that a sufficient professional social worker capacity is provided to meet the demand for service.

Within three months:

- Improve the quality of core assessments and case records.
- Strengthen the arrangements for monitoring the quality and outcomes of external placements, particularly in residential special schools and for those children and young people who are in schools out of the city.
- Ensure all looked after children and young people are made aware of how to make a complaint; that clear systems exist so lessons learned from complaints can help shape services and strengthen access to the children's rights services, particularly for those in out of city placements.
- Ensure the views of looked after children and young people are sought and taken into account in the reshaping of services for looked after children.
- Develop a clear and understandable set of measures and targets for the achievement of the Children's Promise.
- Review the level of resource available to support the children in council care and increase awareness of its role and membership so that it is more representative of the looked after children population.

Within six months:

- Improve the range of placement choice available, particularly those from minority ethnic communities or for those children and young people with complex needs.
- Improve the effectiveness and relevance of personal education plans.
- Improve the regularity and timeliness of information-gathering on the progress of looked after children at a strategic level to enable regular tracking of pupils' progress and more timely evaluation of the impact of actions and interventions on progress and learning of looked after children.

4.0 Responding to the inspection findings

Developing an Improvement Plan

- 4.1 The Council recognises the importance of addressing all of the areas highlighted in the report. As the inspectors acknowledged, many of the issues raised are already starting to be addressed through a range of improvement activity, particularly in support of front-line staff. It is anticipated that as this activity continues, so the positive impact it is making will become more embedded. Nevertheless, there must be an ongoing significant effort to respond directly to the areas for action from this report and ensure this is done in a way that connects to the other improvement work currently ongoing.
- 4.2 To help with this and to feed in to the new Improvement Board, a single Improvement Plan is currently being developed that is clear about priority areas for action and how these link to and address actions from recent inspection feedback.

This Improvement Plan will be the key monitoring tool for the new Improvement Board and an early version of formed part of the report to Executive Board in January.

4.3 This Improvement Plan will draw together the key drivers of priority areas for improvement across children's services work, specifically:

- The 2009-14 Children and Young People's Plan priorities
- The findings of the announced and other key Ofsted inspections, in particular the unannounced inspection from July 2009
- The 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment (specifically the annual rating for children's services within this).
- Feedback and input from central government including key areas identified within an improvement notice.

It will structure these drivers under the key themes of:

- Effective leadership and governance of integrated children's services in Leeds
- Excellent safeguarding standards and practice
- Improve outcomes for looked after children
- All young people participating fully, socially and economically
- A highly skilled, well supported, motivated and continually developing workforce.

4.4 This Improvement Plan will be reported to the March 2010 Executive Board meeting and will then be used for regular monitoring by the Improvement Board. Regular progress updates will be submitted to Executive Board and Scrutiny as appropriate.

4.5 The Improvement Plan will be a particularly important tool for monitoring actions from the announced inspection because, unlike with previous children's services inspections, such as the Joint Area Review, Ofsted does not set out a specific requirement for local authorities to submit an Action Plan of response to the issues raised in the announced inspection. The Improvement Plan will therefore be clear in referencing which inspection findings are being addressed by which set of actions.

4.6 The Improvement Plan and the actions it will underpin will form an overview of priorities and key actions across children's services over the coming months. It will build on the momentum gained over the past year and will support the Council's senior leadership and key partners across the city to understand the improvement agenda and contribute as necessary.

Investment of Resources

4.7 Resources are a key issue highlighted in the inspection. During 2009/10, both before and since the announced inspection, analytical work around safeguarding improvements has helped to build a better understanding of the critical areas to concentrate resources. This is reflected in initial investment in, for example, Advanced Practitioner posts in Children and Young People's Social Care, as acknowledged in the announced inspection report. The seriousness of the issues around resources raised by inspectors are fully recognised. For 2010/11 a proposal has been put forward for £6.2m of additional resources re-directed and prioritised for Children & Young People's Social Care identified both from within children's

services and across the wider council. This investment would be targeted to those services supporting some of Leeds most vulnerable children and young people and playing a critical safeguarding role. More detail is contained in the report on the proposed Revenue Budget for 2010/11 also being submitted to the February Executive Board.

- 4.8 Furthermore, the Children's Services Scrutiny Board is considering the resources issues raised in the announced inspection report as part of its wider inquiry into safeguarding. The full inquiry will be concluded and reported on soon, but in the meantime the Scrutiny Board has submitted an interim report, specifically on the issue of resources to Executive Board, this includes a response from the Interim Director of Children's Services that ties across to the investment discussed above.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

- 5.1 Whilst there are no specific implications for Council Policy and Governance in this report, the Council is affording a high priority to the improvements required in Children's Services. The formation of an independently chaired Improvement Board and the wider work being done at present reflects this, and is the subject of separate reports submitted to, or planned for Executive Board.

6.0 LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific legal and resource implications from this cover report, however the announced inspection report does make recommendations with potential resource implications. As highlighted above, these are addressed as part of the wider children's services budget planning process, covered within the report on the proposed Revenue Budget for 2010/11 also being submitted to the February Executive Board.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services, whilst recognising recent improvement and some examples of good practice, has highlighted some significant ongoing challenges for Leeds. Improvements in children's services are being given the highest priority. As well as the specific service related activity that is continuing, particularly in Children and Young People's Social Care, important wider developments around leadership, monitoring and challenge and wider service review are continuing. The overarching Improvement Plan being developed will incorporate and clearly indicate the actions necessary to address the issues in the announced inspection. Proposals for additional resource allocation will also support this. Executive Board will continue to be given full details about this and the wider improvement activity taking place.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That members note the findings of the announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services and how these fit into the wider improvement work currently taking place.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Children's Services Improvement Board: Report to Executive Board 6th January 2010

- Ofsted Guidance on the Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services (published May 2009) see www.ofsted.gov.uk.
- Children's Services Inspections: Continuity, Response and Future Developments: Report to Corporate Governance and Audit Committee 12th May 2009