

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Report to Children and Families Scrutiny Board

Date: 10th November 2011

Subject: Findings of the Announced Ofsted Re-inspection of Safeguarding Services for Children and Young People in Leeds

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| Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-In? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

Summary of main issues

1. This report presents the findings of the announced Ofsted re-inspection of safeguarding services for children and young people in Leeds. This follows an on-site inspection that took place between 12th and 16th September 2011. The Ofsted report on the inspection was published on 10th October and is attached at appendix 1.
2. This latest inspection reflects positively on the improvements made across safeguarding services in Leeds since the last announced inspection in December 2009. Overall, five of the nine categories that Ofsted assess have been rated as 'good' and four are 'adequate' - there are no longer any categories rated as inadequate. On the key judgements of 'overall effectiveness' Leeds has been rated as 'adequate' and Leeds 'capacity to improve' is now rated as 'good'.
3. This is a notable improvement on the December 2009 announced inspection (with the report published in January 2010), which found the overall effectiveness of safeguarding services to be inadequate and capacity to improve to be adequate.
4. After the 2009 inspection an Improvement Notice was placed on Leeds by the Government. An Improvement Plan was drawn up and an Improvement Board, with an Independent Chair, was established to monitor the implementation of this. Since then, a significant amount of work across the council and the partnership of children's services in Leeds has been taking place to deliver improved safeguarding services. Elected Members have played an important role in this.
5. This announced inspection provided a key assessment of the impact of this work and the basis on which the service will look to progress and continue developing. The

recognition of improvements made, along with the work still to be done, provides a strong foundation on which children's services can now move forward and maintain momentum to deliver better outcomes for children and young people in Leeds.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the announced Ofsted re-inspection of safeguarding services for children and young people in Leeds. This follows an on-site inspection that took place between 12th and 16th September 2011. The Ofsted report on the inspection was published on 10th October and is attached at appendix 1.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Ofsted undertook their last announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services in Leeds in December 2009 (with the report published in January 2010). That inspection found the overall effectiveness of safeguarding services to be inadequate and capacity to improve to be adequate. In light of that inspection and wider issues identified across the service, an Improvement Notice was placed on Leeds by the Government. An Improvement Plan was drawn up and an Improvement Board, with an Independent Chair was established to monitor the implementation of this. Progress against this work has been regularly reported to the Scrutiny Board.
- 2.2 Since then, a significant amount of work across the council and the partnership of children's services in Leeds has been taking place to deliver improved safeguarding services. This announced inspection provided an important assessment of progress on this work and the basis on which the service will look to move forward and continue improving.
- 2.3 Ofsted published a revised framework for announced inspections of safeguarding and looked after children's services in October 2010. Subsequently, in line with revised monitoring arrangements for Authorities with inadequate judgements against safeguarding or looked after children services, Ofsted entered into correspondence with Leeds Children's Services in May this year about undertaking a re-inspection of key services. This took place in light of the measurable progress achieved under the direction of the Improvement Board and the upward momentum gained through subsequent inspections of fostering and adoption services and in particular the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment services in January 2011.
- 2.4 Ten days notification of the intention to undertake an inspection was received from Ofsted on August 26th. The inspection framework was slightly different from that anticipated. Its focus was solely on safeguarding (and not on looked after children's services as well, as had been the case in the 2009 announced inspection), the inspection was carried out by a team of three HMI inspectors over a timescale of five days. This is consistent with a change in practice by Ofsted whereby announced re-inspections are targeted more intensively at service areas previously found to have been inadequate. Throughout the process a particular focus was maintained on assessing compliance with recommendations made at previous announced and unannounced inspections.
- 2.5 During the week on site the inspectors held over 30 meetings, saw approximately 100 people and examined 25 case files in detail. Methodology for the inspection had a strong practice emphasis, based on a detailed analysis of this sample of case

work files, where families were the subject of safeguarding interventions. The meetings that took place were with a number of key individuals and groups across the partnership together with off site visits to referral and assessment teams, the contact centre and one children's centre. The inspection team had access to a range of documentation and performance data including a comprehensive self assessment carried out in advance by the Authority against the Ofsted evaluation schedule.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The report attached at appendix 1 confirms that the changes put in place in Leeds are making a significant difference to the wellbeing and safety of children in Leeds. The inspection notes that 'arrangements to ensure children are safeguarded are now secure', and highlights 'significant progress in improving outcomes'. The inspectors did not identify any children left at potential risk of harm, and no cases they reviewed were deemed to be inadequate.
- 3.2 Overall, five of the nine categories that Ofsted assess have been rated as 'good' and four are 'adequate' - there are no longer any categories rated as inadequate. On the key judgements of 'overall effectiveness' Leeds has been rated as 'adequate' and Leeds 'capacity to improve' is now rated as 'good'. The full list of ratings is as follows:

Safeguarding services

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Adequate |
| Capacity for improvement | Good |

Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people

| | |
|--|----------|
| Children and young people are safe and feel safe | Adequate |
| Quality of provision | Adequate |
| Ambition and prioritisation | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Performance management and quality assurance | Good |
| Partnership working | Adequate |
| Equality and diversity | Good |

- 3.3 The inspectors have also highlighted the pride that staff feel in the improvements that have been made in Leeds, whilst recognising that there is no complacency and a shared focus on continuing to improve.
- 3.4 Amongst the other areas that the inspectors have highlighted are:
- That Leeds is developing more child centred approaches, for example through the way that children are now involved in child protection conferences so that their wishes and views are fully taken into account.
 - That there have been many improvements in the way partnership between different services to safeguard children works, especially in terms of shared

responsibility, vision and priorities, and the overall understanding that in Leeds, 'safeguarding is everyone's business'.

- That the Improvement Board set up following our last announced inspection has 'very effectively overseen improvements'.
- That the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board is much improved.

3.5 As such the inspection report shows clear recognition of progress across the service. However, it is critical that this is seen as an important stage on an ongoing improvement journey. The Council and our partners, whilst recognising the effort made to delivering these improvements, are not content with providing services rated only as adequate. Our shared ambition in Leeds is to provide outstanding services for children and young people.

3.6 The first stage in the next part of the improvement journey is to address those areas in the announced inspection that the inspectors highlighted should be priorities for further improvement. These include:

- The need to improve our electronic social care record system (ESCR) – where we've started the work to put in place a new system.
- Continuing to improve the timescales for initial children protection conferences.
- Improving the quality of assessments to help achieve a consistent standard across the service.
- Information sharing between partner agencies in relation to domestic violence.

3.7 These areas had been identified as priorities for improvement in the self-assessment that Leeds submitted prior to the inspection and therefore work was already underway to address them. To provide further focus and direction an action plan has been developed setting out how improvements will be made against each priority. Members will already be aware of the work taking place around the ESCR system through the scrutiny working group looking at this issue. More details on the other areas highlighted will be provided to the Scrutiny Board as part of the regular performance information presented to it.

3.8 As well as being an important measure of progress in its own right, the announced inspection also contributes to the Annual Assessment of Children's Services, due for publication this year on 8th November. The Annual Assessment looks across the full range of inspections of settings and services that Ofsted conduct during the year and considers this along with the wider performance information to give an overall assessment for the service. This latest announced inspection places children's services in Leeds in a strong position to improve on the inadequate rating from the 2010 Annual Assessment. More details about the outcomes of this assessment will be brought to the Scrutiny Board when available.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 In preparation for the inspection a significant amount of staff and wider stakeholder engagement and where appropriate, consultation was carried out. Communications notifying staff, Councillors and wider partners about the inspection were sent

shortly after notification was received, staff workshop events were held for those staff most immediately affected by the inspection and a series of communication documents were distributed widely. Partners from health, the police and other relevant services helped prepare information relating to the key lines of enquiry that Ofsted identified. Representatives from partners organisations, as well as a small number of parents were also interviewed as part of the inspection process.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Improvements in children's services and particularly in services for vulnerable children and young people are a key priority for the city as reflected in key plans. This inspection is therefore an important mark of progress in this area that will shape the future prioritisation and direction of travel for this work.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 There are no specific resource implications to this report, other than to highlight that the Council's investment in safeguarding services was an important area of interest for the inspectors.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The Council and its partners have invested significant focus and resource on improving safeguarding practice for children, young people and families in Leeds since 2009. Previous to this announced inspection the unannounced Ofsted inspection in January 2011 and the monitoring work of the Improvement Board had already indicated that significant progress has been made. The findings of this announced inspection provide further evidence of this and give a strong basis on which the service can now continue improving services for children and young people in Leeds.

6 Background documents

6.1 Ofsted framework for announced inspections of safeguarding and looked after children's services (October 2010).
Children's Services Improvement Arrangements' – report to Executive Board, 10th March 2010.
Children's Services Improvement Update Reports – a series of regular reports to Executive Board and Children's Services Scrutiny Board detailing progress against the Improvement Plan and wider related developments in Children's Services.