

## **Appendix 2: Update on key safeguarding activity in Leeds.**

### Focused work on Safeguarding:

- 1.1 In recent months, particular attention has been focused on issues that fall within the category of safeguarding. This attention reflects the importance Leeds attaches to its safeguarding performance and areas for development identified in both the JAR and APA assessments which graded safeguarding practice as 'adequate'. It is also helping Leeds to respond effectively to the intensified national attention in this area, particularly following the 'Baby P' case, and to prepare for more focused and rigorous inspections specifically around safeguarding activity in the future. This specific focus on safeguarding is at the forefront of children's services work in Leeds. In the APA Report submitted to Executive Board in January a number of actions were outlined as part of this. These were:
  - Strengthened arrangements for leadership and management: reviewing the role of Chief Officer for CYP Social Care and also concentrating more focus on strong operational management.
  - Investment in additional capacity for quality assurance and performance management.
  - An audit of child protection cases on all children aged 0-4 years.
  - Independently supported evaluation of services, to inform improvement and preparation for future inspections.
- 1.2 Progress against these areas of work has been good. The Chief Officer post was fully reviewed and subsequently advertised during March 2009, with recruitment on track to be completed by early summer 2009. Stronger operational management arrangements within the CYP Social Care leadership team are enabling the Acting Chief Officer to take a more strategic overview of current priorities and challenges across the service. Additional investment in capacity around quality assurance and performance management was agreed as part of the 2009/10 budget.
- 1.3 The audit of child protection cases was completed on time for the end of February 2009. Through this, a clearer understanding has been established around issues of caseload, quality, consistency and timeliness of recording practice, and supervision support in place for social workers. This has informed both longer-term planning within the service and a number of immediate actions including: clearer, distinctive focus on risk-assessment and case-work planning in organising Child Protection Plans; improved case recording practices; and training for social workers to support consistent evidence-based assessments, with feedback from the audit included in the training. This process has been approached positively by staff and led by Service Delivery Managers, with a clear message around opportunities to learn and improve practice collectively.
- 1.4 An initial evaluation of safeguarding practice was also completed at the end of February. This had a broader remit than the audit discussed above, looking at different aspects of practice including decision-making, service

management, performance management and workforce development. The evaluation identified a wide variety of good practice and strengths, as well as areas for improvement. Particular themes within the areas for improvement were: the need for greater consistency across a variety of areas of practice, for example in applying the common assessment framework and undertaking a common assessment in appropriate cases; the need to strengthen quality assurance arrangements across different areas of practice, for example by using the role of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) more effectively; and the need to support staff development and retention by providing clearer career structure and opportunities.

#### Next Steps: CYP Social Care Transformation Programme

1.5 The audit and inspection activity, coupled with input from recent external inspections makes clear the need for targeted activity to strengthen and support those services with particularly significant safeguarding responsibilities relating to many of Leeds' most vulnerable young people. Within this context of improving safeguarding performance and ultimately therefore outcomes for young people, a specific transformation programme has been implemented in CYP Social Care. Working with the relevant service leaders, the Director of Children's Services has identified eight distinct areas of practice that this programme will cover. These are listed below, along with a brief explanation of some key elements:

- *Service Delivery:* This strand will pay particular attention to looked after children, establishing a stronger focus on LAC outcomes and using more targeted fieldworker support.
- *Service Transformation:* This incorporates both the re-design of service delivery in key improvement areas, for example in assessments and care planning. It also involves looking at how the workforce can be better supported and developed to deliver improved quality of practice, particularly through improved training.
- *Human Resources:* This strand focuses on ensuring the service is able to evidence safe recruitment practice, meeting the requirements of both the Bichard Review by July 2009 and of the new Independent Safeguarding Authority scheme (an improved checking and monitoring scheme launched by the government).
- *Information Management:* This strand focuses on the Electronic Social Care Record (ESCR) system. It has two parts. In the first part immediate work is being done to ensure the system meets existing core business requirements and strengthening business processes to ensure they meet DCSF best practice guidelines. In the second part, by June 2009 a review will be completed to assess how effective the system is in meeting the future data recording and referencing requirements and therefore whether it will enable staff to meet the standards necessary to ensure strong safeguarding practice. Following this review,

recommendations will be made about the short and longer-term future of the system.

- *Financial Management:* Over the coming financial year work will be done to establish formal pooled budgets (with health) for areas such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Children with Disabilities and Looked After Children.
- *Performance Management:* As part of a wider framework of performance management review across children's services this strand will develop more capacity for performance management within CYP Social Care and help to embed a performance management culture across the service. It will also improve capacity and processes for the independent monitoring of front-line practice to increase quality assurance. It is anticipated that the review and first stages of implementation around this work will be completed by September 2009.
- *Preparing for inspection:* A forward-plan of all known inspection activity across Children's services is now being developed to help support more targeted and sophisticated preparation for inspections within services with a particular safeguarding focus.

1.6 An action plan for each of these strands of work is being led by a senior officer within children's services, and overseen by the Director through regular reporting to the CYP Social Care Commissioning and Improvement Board. A variety of communication and engagement work with employees both within the service and across children's services more widely has taken place and more work in this area is planned. Taken together these focused strands of work encompass significant change to strengthen safeguarding practice. They will ensure good momentum and self-awareness is in place for the arrival of a new Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care later in 2009.