



Report of the Interim Director of Children's Service

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 28th January 2010

Subject: The Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services in Leeds: Outcomes and wider improvement activity

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity



Community Cohesion



Narrowing the Gap



1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 9th November 2009, Leeds received notification that there would be an announced inspection of Leeds' safeguarding and looked after children's services taking place two weeks later between 23rd November and 4th December. The report into the findings of the inspection was published on 7th January 2010. The inspection forms part of Ofsted's wider framework for inspecting Children's Services, published in May 2009. Leeds was early in the programme of these new announced inspections, only a small number of others had been completed as at the date Leeds received notification.
- 1.2 This report to the Scrutiny Board presents the findings of the integrated Ofsted and Care Quality Commission announced inspection, with the full report itself attached at appendix 1. This report also provides a brief update on some of the key activities that are supporting improvement in Children's Services, particularly in view of the recent announced inspection and the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment from July 2009.
- 1.3 The importance of making the improvements highlighted in the inspection has been fully recognised and is being given the highest priority within the Council. Work to achieve this in the coming weeks and months will build on

the momentum gained during 2009 through a range of improvement work. This progress is acknowledged positively in the announced inspection report.

Details about the inspection process

- 1.4 On 9th November, Leeds were notified of Ofsted's intention to carry out an announced inspection. Before the inspection took place a list of over 50 key lines of enquiry were provided by Ofsted, highlighting the issues they had a particular interest in exploring. The inspection was carried out by a team of five Ofsted inspectors and one inspector from the Care Quality Commission. The two week on-site inspection involved over 100 meetings, with inspectors seeing over 25 parents and over 80 children and young people. There was a formal, detailed analysis of 20 case files, as well as follow-up work on 35 case files, linked back to the unannounced inspection from July 2009.

2.0 Key Findings

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 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. More detail around this issues has been discussed with the Scrutiny working group looking at resources as part of their safeguarding inquiry.

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

2.3 The 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.

2.4 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.

2.5 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.

3.0 Improvement Planning

- 3.1 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 (much of which has been reported to Scrutiny previously, or discussed in detail at safeguarding inquiry working groups). 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.
- 3.2 To help with this and to feed in to the new Improvement Board (discussed below), 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.
- 3.3 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

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.
- 3.4 This Improvement Plan will be reported to the March 2010 Executive Board meeting and will then be used regularly by the Improvement Board. Further details about it could be brought to scrutiny if requested, possibly as part of the suite of quarterly performance management information.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 The Improvement Plan and the actions it will underpin will form a comprehensive 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.

4.0 Wider Improvement Activity Update

- 4.1 Much of the work that will impact on the issues identified in the announced inspection is taking place within specific services (particularly Children and Young People's Social Care) and directly involves front-line staff. However, members are also aware that in addition to the development of the Improvement Plan, a range of wider activity is currently taking place to deliver the necessary rapid change and improvement in children's services that is a high priority for the Council. Below is a brief update on these areas, with the intention that any further and more timely updates will be shared at the scrutiny meeting and future meetings as appropriate:

Appointment of an Interim Director of Children's Services

- 4.2 Following the retirement of Rosemary Archer at the end of December 2009, since the start of January, Sandie Keene has temporarily taken on the role of interim Director of Children's Services. Sandie is also Director of Adult Social Care in Leeds and will divide her time between these two roles with support from the leadership teams in both areas. As well as having a well-established understanding of the current context and challenges facing Leeds, Sandie also has a background of working in Child Protection and helping to implement the Every Child Matters agenda. This is helping Sandie support

work on the key improvement priorities within the service, as well as contributing to the wider Children Leeds agenda.

- 4.3 It is anticipated that Sandie will be in the role for several weeks whilst an interim Director of Children's Services is appointed for a more extended period, prior to the role being filled permanently later in the year.

Establishment of an externally Chaired Improvement Board

- 4.4 Following the outcomes of the July 2009 unannounced inspection the Council responded quickly, establishing a Children's Services Corporate Improvement Board, Chaired by the Chief Executive and consisting of senior corporate officers and Elected Members, to oversee the improvement plan in response to the unannounced inspection. This work has helped provide a greater degree of reassurance that children and young people in Leeds are safe from the potential risk of serious harm.
- 4.5 However, during November 2009 in view of the outcomes from the unannounced inspection and the then pending Comprehensive Area Assessment Ofsted performance rating, Elected Members and Senior officers held detailed discussions with Ministers and officials from the DCSF. These discussions focused on the need to satisfy all those involved that the response to Leeds' children's services performance issues had sufficient pace, support and challenge to bring about the required improvement.
- 4.6 Through these discussions it was agreed that to build on the impact of the internally led improvement board, there would be an externally led Improvement Board. This will be able to provide additional challenge and oversight of Leeds improvement priorities for Children's Services.
- 4.7 A report providing the background to the establishment of this Board was submitted to Executive Board on 6th January and a further update on this work will be submitted to the March Executive Board. The key points from the January report are outlined in a summary attached at appendix 2.
- 4.8 A key role for this Improvement Board will be to monitor the implementation of the overarching Improvement Plan discussed earlier in this report, which will incorporate and clearly reference the actions resulting from the announced inspection. It will be for the Council's Executive Board to agree the Improvement Plan, prior to it being submitted to the DCSF.
- 4.9 The information at appendix 2 makes reference to the possibility of an Improvement Notice being issued by the DCSF, setting out targets and milestones that Leeds is expected to deliver over the coming months. The requirements within such a notice would be built into the Improvement Plan before it is finalised. If available, more details on any such improvement notice can be shared with Scrutiny members at their meeting, by which point more detail should be known.

- 4.10 The new Improvement Board will meet for the first time on 19th January, it will be chaired by Bill McCarthy, Chief Executive of NHS Yorkshire and the Humber and previously a Chief Executive of City of York Council.

Review of Children's Services

- 4.11 The regular children's services update report considered by the Scrutiny Board in December 2009 outlined the work underway to carry out a broad review of children's services in Leeds. It informed members of the context for this review in terms of: the changing context for children's services around inspections, trust arrangements and safeguarding; the desire across Leeds to learn from progress and challenges over the last three years; and most importantly the need to ensure children's services move forward in a way that best delivers the priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan. The December report included the terms of reference for the review as an appendix.
- 4.12 Work on the review has continued and extensive feedback will build a clearer picture of how children's services arrangements are currently positioned and what must be considered for the future to respond appropriately and effectively to the challenges outlined above. The findings will be reported to Executive Board in March.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 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 the necessary areas of 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, some important wider developments around leadership, monitoring and challenge and wider service review are continuing. This report has outlined recent developments in these areas. Scrutiny will continue to be kept informed.

Background Papers:

Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan: Update Report (December 09) – report to Children's Services Scrutiny Board 10th December 2009

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.