

DECISION-MAKER:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
SUBJECT:	SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
DATE OF DECISION:	12 JULY 2012
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES & DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEARNING
STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
None	

BRIEF SUMMARY

An 'Announced' inspection of Safeguarding and Children Looked After services by OfSTED took place during 23 April to 4 May 2012. The report was published by OfSTED on 13 June 2012. A copy of it is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The report recommends that the Council works with its partners to address 17 areas for improvement identified by OfSTED as being important in the future improvement of services. Three of these are highlighted for immediate implementation; 10 are identified as being important to progress within three months and four to be addressed within six months. The areas for immediate implementation are concerned with: quality of social work, 'core group' meetings and delivery of statutory visits to children in care. A quality improvement plan has been developed to respond to the recommendations. This is set out as Appendix 2 to this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the Committee consider this report with supporting appendices and discuss the content of the Plan and identify any related issues or concerns with the Cabinet Member to address with the service.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To adhere to the external inspection judgements following the Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspection.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

2. The inspection makes 22 judgements across the two main areas of service. 10 of these relate to 'safeguarding' services provided by the council and its partners and 12 of them relate to services and outcomes for 'children looked after'. These are set out in Table 1. Of the 22 judgements there are four regarded as the overall key judgements which OfSTED then uses to categorise its overall view of Safeguarding in Southampton. These are;
 1. Safeguarding: overall effectiveness
 2. Safeguarding: capacity to improve
 3. Children Looked After: overall effectiveness
 4. Children Looked After: capacity to improve.
3. On all four of these judgements rated Southampton as 'adequate'. The 22 individual judgements comprised: 1 'good', 18 'adequate' and 3 'inadequate'. The one 'good' judgement is for health outcomes for children looked after. The three inadequate judgements are for: a) safeguarding: quality of provision; b) children

looked after: economic well-being and c) children looked after: quality of provision.

4. The inspection report sets out the detail behind the findings. Whilst there are areas of both strength and weakness identified throughout the report, there were key messages.
5. The kernel of the city's ability to safeguard and look after children is its children's social care workforce. The quality of this is not fit-for-purpose. Efforts over the last two years in particular to make it so have been undermined significantly by very high staff turnover and too many agency staff, particularly in critical areas of child protection and court proceedings. This is related directly to the changes to terms and conditions.
6. Whilst children's social care managers have established effective processes to manage cases and ensure processes are well implemented, there remains far too much inconsistency and variability of front-line practice.
7. Basic building blocks of practice remain too inconsistent. For example, file chronologies, whilst completed, are not sufficient to inform the care planning for individual children.
8. Whilst strong partnerships are evident (e.g. the CYPT, the LSCB), these are operating at a level to be expected, and there is a need for evidence of greater challenge being posed with a view to positively effecting outcomes.
9. Some specific strengths and weaknesses highlighted are as follows:

Strengths

- Safeguarding – systematic application of common assessment processes across agencies.
- Parents, carers and children are satisfied with services when their social worker is consistent and experienced.
- Transparency for parents and carers regarding expectations of them.
- Thresholds for intervention are clear.
- Specialist teams (e.g. fostering, adoption, disability) provide consistently high quality services that are child focused.
- Strength and expertise of senior managers in working to maximise the ability of the existing workforce, and growing strength of leadership team in children's social care.

Weakness

- Level of staff turnover.
- High percentage of agency social workers.
- Preponderance of newly qualified social workers.
- Quality of practice including the quality of assessments and variability of supervision
- Evidence of engagement of children, young people, parent and carers to shape service provision.
- Ability and capacity of the services to address ethnicity meaningfully at an individual level.
- Formulating, implementing and pursuing child protection and care plans at a single and multi agency level.
- Insufficient preparation for independence and adulthood, including the provision of suitable long term housing solutions.

10. Our response to the outcomes

At December 2011, the Directorate self assessment, updated every six months, concluded that the service was continuing to improve and had the prospect of being judged good overall, though adequate in some important respects. This self assessment was submitted, as part of evidence to the inspection team. The difference between the inspection outcome and the self assessment is shown in Table 1. The reason for the difference in judgements is linked to the three inadequate judgements a) safeguarding: quality of provision; b) children looked after: economic well-being and c) children looked after: quality of provision. OfSTED looked in depth at case management over a period of several years. The self assessment was more focussed upon evidence relating to current practice, evidenced also by the quality assurance of other OfSTED inspections of Safeguarding (unannounced), and inspections of Private Fostering, Adoption and Fostering that rated these important parts of Safeguarding services as good or better.

11. Whilst the areas of development identified by OfSTED were known to the management team a judgement was drawn on the level of improvements that was being achieved and the evidence to support this. This evidence whilst considered was not deemed to have been consistent enough or in place for long enough to warrant a better judgement than 'inadequate' in three areas, including quality of provision judgements in both safeguarding and children looked after services. The fact that two of the three inadequate judgements relate to 'quality of provision', which in Ofsted terms relates directly to staff calibre, capacity and the consistency of case work, these judgements, impacted negatively on the conclusions that inspectors reached on for the remaining 19 areas of judgement.

12. How are we progressing the development and implementation of an action plan

The report recommendations require a response from a range of parties, across the city council, NHS Southampton City and the wider Children and Young People's Trust partners – e.g., police, schools and voluntary services.

Table 1 – Self Assessment vs OfSTED Announced Inspection judgements

	Southampton Self Assessment Grade December 2011	OfSTED Announced Inspection Grade May 2012
Safeguarding Services		
Overall effectiveness	Good	Adequate
Capacity to improve	Good	Adequate
Equality and diversity	Adequate	Adequate
Quality of provision	Adequate	Inadequate
Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people	Adequate	Adequate
The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	Good	Adequate
Partnership working	Good	Adequate
Performance management and quality assurance	Good	Adequate
Leadership and management	Good	Adequate

Ambition and prioritisation	Good	Adequate
Children Looked After Services		
Overall effectiveness	Good	Adequate
Capacity to improve	Good	Adequate
Quality of provision	Good	Inadequate
Being healthy outcomes	Good	Good
Staying safe outcomes	Good	Adequate
Enjoying and achieving outcomes	Adequate	Adequate
Making a positive contribution (including involvement)	Adequate	Adequate
Economic well-being outcomes	Adequate	Inadequate
Performance management and quality assurance	Good	Adequate
Leadership and management (ambition and prioritisation)	Good	Adequate
Leadership and management	Good	Adequate

14. The City Council is establishing a working group to lead and manage the implementation of a quality improvement plan centred on a commitment to securing a fit for purpose children's social care workforce; and ensuring sufficient high calibre supervision, training and career development to sustain and retain the workforce, e.g., capacity to assist newly qualified social workers manage complex care procedures. NHS Southampton City, is taking responsibility for ensuring health providers respond to the recommendations, particularly those specific to the health arena. The Children and Young People's Trust 'Stay Safe' working group will hold responsibility for joining partners together.
15. The Department for Education (DfE) has recently commissioned the development of a national Children's Improvement Board to oversee and advise on improving outcomes for children and young people across a number of areas. One key activity for the Board has been the development of a Peer Review programme. The programme is designed to complement external inspections regimes, such as OfSTED. The expectation, from the DfE, is that all 152 Local Authorities Children's Services will participate in a Peer Review during the financial year 2012/13. Peer reviews are led by a Director of Children's Services from a local authority in the same region as the authority being reviewed. They are supported by a team of three experienced senior officers from different local authorities, also from the same region.
16. Southampton's Children's Services and Learning are taking part in a Peer Review of its proposals for responding to the recommended improvements identified by OfSTED. This Peer review will take place in December 2012. This timetable aligns with the completion date for all the recommendations. Findings from the peer review will be available to the Council and its Partners in February 2013 in the form of a report.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

17. To not respond to the considered views of the national regulatory service for inspecting the collective effectiveness of safeguarding and children looked after services would potentially put the Local Authority and its partners at risk of failing to meet the safeguarding needs of vulnerable local children and young people. Not responding to areas for improvement identified by OfSTED would also have

significant reputational consequences for the council when its safeguarding arrangements are next assessed by OfSTED.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

18. There are no capital implications as a direct result of this report.
19. In order to respond to a large number of the recommendations revenue resources will be found within the existing Children's Services and Learning budgets

Property/Other

20. None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory Power to undertake the proposals in the report:

21. This report has not had the benefit of Legal Services input.

Other Legal Implications:

22. This report has not had the benefit of Legal Services input.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

- 23 None.

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Non-confidential appendices are in the Members' Rooms and can be accessed on-line

Appendices

1.	Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services
2.	Draft quality improvement plan

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
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Integrated Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject/recommendations in the report require an Integrated Impact Assessment to be carried out.	Yes/No
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Other Background Documents

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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1.	None	
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Integrated Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
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