

**CABINET MEETING – 11 JANUARY 2012**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I**

**Title of Report:**

Children’s Services Inspection Outcomes (Ofsted Annual Assessment of Children’s Services and Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements)

**Author(s):**

Executive Director of Children’s Services

**Purpose of Report:**

This report provides a summary of the outcomes from both the Annual Children’s Services Assessment and the Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements published by Ofsted in November 2011.

**Description of Decision:**

Cabinet is asked to note the outcomes of the Annual Children’s Services Assessment and the Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment.

**Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?** Yes

**If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework**

**Suggested reason(s) for Decision:**

The report is presented to inform Cabinet of the inspection outcomes and the actions for improvement noted within the judgement.

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

This report is presented to Cabinet to provide an update on the outcomes from two recent inspections as noted above, and as such there are no viable alternative options.

**Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution?** No

**Is it included in the Forward Plan?** No

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee:**

Children, Young People and Learning



**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES INSPECTION OUTCOMES 2011 (OFSTED ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND ANNUAL UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF CONTACT, REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS)**

**1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the outcomes from both the Annual Children's Services Assessment and the Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements.

**2 Description of the Decision**

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the outcomes of the Annual Children's Services Assessment and the Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment.

**3. Ofsted Annual Assessment of Children's Services**

**3.1 The Assessment Process**

- 3.1.1 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 charged Ofsted with the responsibility to assess annually the quality of children's services for each local authority. In 2009, Ofsted provided this assessment as one element of its contribution to the joint inspectorate's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). In May 2010, as part of the new Coalition's programme for government, CAA was abolished. However, Ofsted's statutory duty to provide a children's services assessment remains.
- 3.1.2 In July 2010, Ofsted published guidance which set out the arrangements for the children's services assessment in 2010 in terms of performance profile and principles that would be applied in determining the assessment. The scope of the assessment includes the full range of services, from universal such as education through to specialist services, for example those for looked after children.
- 3.1.3 The assessment is also derived from Ofsted's performance profile, which reports on the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people. This data comes from Ofsted inspections and data provided by the local authority. The rating relates to all key areas of children's services, including education and safeguarding.

3.1.4 The outcomes from the most recent inspections, including those carried out for schools and the outcomes from the Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements will also be taken into consideration by Ofsted to reach their judgement.

### 3.2 Current Position

3.2.1 On 8 November 2011, Children's Services received confirmation from Ofsted of the outcome from the annual assessment of children's services (attached at Appendix 1). Using the measures noted above, Sunderland's Children's Services was judged as **Performs Well (3): an organisation that exceeds minimum requirements**.

3.2.2 This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011.

3.2.3 It should also be noted that whilst the number of local authorities who perform excellently (4) has increased by 8, there has also been an increase in the number of local authorities whose rating has been downgraded (10), with an additional three local authorities performing poorly as shown below:

Assessment Outcome	LA's in 2010	LA's in 2011
Performing excellently (4)	20	28
Performing well (3)	77	71
Performing adequately (2)	37	33
Performing poorly (1)	12	15
* 5 judgements have yet to be finalised.		

3.2.4 Overall, Sunderland's inspection judgements across services, places Sunderland firmly within the Performing Well category.

3.2.5 The report in particular highlights:

- The large majority of nurseries being good or outstanding, with all children's centres providing good support.
- Over the past four years, Early Years Foundation Stage has improved faster than nationally.
- The local authority provides good support to the small number of schools in an Ofsted category of concern.
- The proportion of good local authority schools remain the same as last year.
- At age 16, young people's GCSEs A\*-C including English and maths have risen at a faster pace than the national rate over the past four years.

- All special schools, 6<sup>th</sup> forms and independent special schools are good or better.
- Post 16 provision is consistently good in colleges. Of the two specialist colleges for young people with autistic spectrum disorder, one is good and the other outstanding.
- Reduction in NEET figures.
- Young people's involvement in commissioning youth services is well embedded.
- Looked after children provision is mostly good in children's homes has improved from 2010.

### 3.3 Key Areas for Further Development

3.3.1 Although the majority of the outcomes within the report were positive, there were a number of key areas for further development, as noted below.

- Half of childminding provision remains satisfactory.
- Over a third of primary schools are satisfactory.
- Too much secondary provision is remains satisfactory.

3.4 Cabinet is asked to note that the improvement of these areas remain core outcomes for Children's Services and as such, actions will be put in place to ensure that outcomes for children and young people are continuously improved.

## 4. Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements

### 4.1 The Inspection Process

4.1.1 Ofsted inspects Local Authority contact, referral and assessment arrangements and undertakes full safeguarding arrangements. Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements were introduced in June 2009 and had covered all local authorities by August 2010; they are now in their second cycle.

4.1.2 Inspections focus on the local authority as the lead agency for child protection and assess how well practice helps to manage the risk of harm to children and young people and minimises the incidence of abuse and neglect.

4.1.3 Inspectors spend the majority of their time looking at direct practice, including scrutinising individual case files with frontline workers. These inspections do not grade the effectiveness of the services but identify where the authority is meeting the requirements of statutory guidance, and identify areas of particular strength, areas for develop and any areas for priority action (which identify a serious weakness that is placing children at risk of inadequate protection and of significant harm).

4.1.4 No grade is awarded from the inspection, however as noted in 3.1.4, the outcomes will contribute to the overall performance assessment of Children's Services.

## 4.2 Current Position

4.2.1 On 18 and 19 October 2011, the Unannounced Inspection of contact, referral and assessments arrangements was carried out in Sunderland, under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Following inspection, the Executive Director of Children's Services received a letter on 16 November 2011 from Ofsted confirming the outcomes from this inspection. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix 2. This was the second such inspection that Sunderland had received (the first being undertaken on 22 June 2010).

4.2.2 The inspection identified areas of strength, areas of practice which met requirements and some areas for development. It should be noted that, in line with the previous inspection, there were no Priority Actions.

4.2.3 From the evidence gathered during the inspection, the following strength was identified:

- The council's continuing commitment to Safeguarding and the significant investment made to strengthen the Safeguarding workforce.

4.2.4 The inspection identified a number of services which met the requirements of statutory guidance, including:

- Section 47 enquiries are timely, risks effectively identified and decision made are appropriate.
- Record keeping is up to date and management decisions are clearly recorded.
- Staff demonstrate appropriate awareness of the diverse needs of children and families.
- Staff are suitably qualified and benefit from a wide range of training opportunities.
- Lessons learned from serious case reviews are shared and contribute to improvements in practice.
- A well established and effective out of hours service is staffed by qualified and experience social workers.

### **4.3 Areas for Development**

4.3.1 The following areas were identified for development:

- The quality of assessments need to be more consistent, the views of children are not always clearly recorded or taken into account when planning. The quality of analysis is too variable. However, Children's Services has made this a priority action in its service improvement plan.
- Greater understanding of the thresholds. Improved screening process will lead to a higher take up by early intervention services.
- ICS does not support efficient practice. This was an area highlighted for development in the previous inspection. Through the recommendations from the Munro Review, local authorities have been given greater freedoms to develop systems and processes which better fit the needs of the service.
- Strategy discussions are held with police as a matter of course, however improvement is required in regard to multi-agency strategy meetings.

### **5. Next Steps**

5.1 Children's Services have recently identified their three year priorities and actions to address the key areas for further development will be included in any plans associated with these priorities. The three year priorities are:

- New relationship with schools
- Early Intervention/Review of Early Years/Children's Centres
- Safeguarding – an improving story which includes ...  
Whole family, whole community responsive services approach.

### **6. Reasons for the Decision**

6.1 The report is presented to Cabinet to provide an update on the outcomes and the actions to address the areas for development.

### **7. Alternative options**

7.1 This report is presented to Cabinet to provide an update on the outcomes from the Annual Children's Services Assessment and the Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements, and as such there are no viable alternative options.

## **8. Relevant Considerations/Consultations**

- 8.1 In reaching its judgement, Ofsted takes account of the users, children and young people, parents and carers in all its inspections. Through these inspections, Ofsted assesses the extent to which views about service satisfaction, in particular, are taken into account in reviewing and improving these services.

## **9. Appendices**

- 9.1 Annual Children's Services Assessment letter  
9.2 Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements letter

## **10. Background Papers**

- Ofsted: Children's services assessment for 2010. Arrangements and guidance for local authorities and their partners on Ofsted's annual assessment of children's services.
- Cabinet report of 8 September 2010: Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements
- Cabinet report of 16 February 2011: Annual Children's Services Assessment 2010