

OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICES**Report of the Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide this Committee with the final inspection report and draft action plan following the recently successful Ofsted inspection of the council's Adoption Service. A copy of which are provided as **appendix 1 and 2** respectively. The inspection report was published on the Ofsted website on 3 April 2013 and judged the service's 'Overall Effectiveness' to be 'Good'. The service was considered to be 'Good' for each of the four sub-judgements, with the exception of 'Quality of service' which was considered to be 'Outstanding'.
- 1.2 To provide this Committee with a second progress update on the implementation of the action plan arising from the announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services, which took place in February / March 2012. A copy of which is provided as **appendix 3**.

2. ADOPTION INSPECTION REPORT AND DRAFT ACTION PLAN**2.1 Introduction And Background**

- 2.1.1 Ofsted conducts inspections of local authority Adoption Services on a three yearly cycle to provide assurance that services are being delivered in line with the Children Act 2004 and within the National Minimum Standards. Sunderland Council's Adoption Service has been inspected on three previous occasions (i.e. November 2010, August 2008 and August 2005), with the 2010 inspection finding the service to be 'Good' with a number of 'Outstanding' features.
- 2.1.2 In April 2012, Ofsted began a further round of Adoption Service inspections. The current round of inspections grades services using the following judgements:
 - **Outstanding:** A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
 - **Good:** A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements
 - **Adequate:** A service that only meets minimum requirements
 - **Inadequate:** A service that does not meet minimum requirements

2.2 The inspection process

- 2.2.1 On 28 January 2013 the council received notification from Ofsted that the Adoption Service was to be inspected. Two Ofsted inspectors were on-site between 11 and 14 February 2013 (i.e. four days) during which time they

reviewed a range of key documents and evidence, management information and case files. They also spoke to a range of stakeholders, including:

- Service managers
- Social Workers and Adoption Service staff
- Independent Review Officers (IROs)
- Adoption Panel Chair
- Key partners from Health and Education
- Children and young people who have been adopted
- Adopters
- A birth parent

2.2.2 During their four days on-site, the inspectors also observed examples of practice, including a Permanence Monitoring Group meeting, a Pre-planning meeting and a Review of the introductions meeting. The latter meeting enabled the inspector to meet with a foster carer, an adopter and a sibling group that had been introduced prior to an adoption placement.

2.3 The inspection findings

2.3.1 Ofsted judged the Adoption Service to be ‘Good’ overall. Three of the four sub judgements were graded as ‘Good’, with a fourth graded ‘Outstanding’, i.e.

Overall Effectiveness	Good
Outcomes for children and young people	Good
Quality of service	Outstanding
Safeguarding children and young people	Good
Leadership and management	Good

2.3.2 A copy of the report is attached as **appendix 1**, however some of the key findings included:

- A good and effective adoption agency.
- The service is ambitious for its children and successfully places a much higher than average proportion of children for adoption, a significant number of whom are older, part of large sibling groups or disabled (a large majority of these within appropriate timescales).
- The service excels at matching, and is extremely professional and thorough when planning introductions and placements. This results in placements which last, with the disruption rate much lower than the national average.
- Children, adopters and their families are thoroughly prepared and well supported.
- Good and effective multidisciplinary working contributes to the positive outcomes which children experience. As a result, children live in safe and secure families who meet their needs.
- The whole service, including members, managers and staff, are fully committed to adoption, and demonstrate a high level of understanding,

skills, experience and qualifications to enable them to provide an effective service.

- Leaders and managers are ambitious for the service and have a good and realistic understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

2.3.3 To improve the quality and standards of care further, Ofsted made the following recommendations:

- Continue to develop ways of using the wishes, feelings and views of children to monitor and develop the service (NMS 1.6)
- Ensure children have prompt access to specialist services, with particular reference to psychological support (NMS 5.4)
- Continue to improve on adhering to timescales, particularly in addressing the child's need for a permanent home and making a permanence plan at the four month review. (Adoption and Children Act 2002 Statutory Guidance paragraph 2.2)

2.3.4 An action plan has been developed to address the formal recommendations in the report, which is attached as **appendix 2**. During the final feedback to the service, the inspectors also offered some suggestions as to how the council could further strengthen service delivery and support continuous improvement. The service has reflected upon these and included in the draft action plan those where the necessary resources exist to deliver the improvements.

3. ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICES ACTION PLAN PROGRESS

3.1 Introduction And Background

3.1.1 The announced inspection report was published on the Ofsted website on 10 April 2012 and graded Sunderland as being 'Good' against each of the four headline inspection judgements.

Judgement	Safeguarding services	Services for looked after children
Overall effectiveness	Good	Good
Capacity for improvement	Good	Good

3.1.2 17 of the 18 supporting judgements were 'Good', with the remaining judgement (which related to the quality of provision within safeguarding) being 'Adequate'.

3.1.3 An action plan was developed by the council and its partners to address the 13 'formal' areas for improvement specifically identified within the Ofsted report. The action plan also sought to address the 'softer' areas for improvement which were referenced throughout the main body of the Ofsted report and the subsequent CQC report. The improvements centred around eight key themes i.e.

Improvement themes	
A – Quality of assessment and planning	E – Early intervention / partnership working
B – Service user engagement / views	F – Education
C – Health services	G – Workforce
D – Quality assurance / performance management	H – Offending

3.1.4 It was agreed that regular monitoring reports would be provided to the Scrutiny Committee and the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB), and that these would be shared with the Children’s Trust. This is the second update report for the Scrutiny Committee. A first update was provided in September 2012.

3.2 Progress to date

3.2.1 A detailed update of progress against each action within the action plan is attached as **appendix 3**. This demonstrates that all areas of the action plan have begun implementation with all actions RAG rated as either Amber or Green.

3.2.2 Of the 13 formal areas for improvement, eight are Green and five are Amber. A summary of the progress is provided within the table below.

Formal area for improvement	RAG rating	Plan ref no	Progress summary
SAFEGUARDING SERVICES			
Immediately			
Ensure that all assessments clearly identify risk and protective factors and include contributions from partner agencies who are involved with the family	Amber	A1 & A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forms amended and managers / staff reminded of their responsibilities. Risk assessment model in use across the service. Analysis workshops held. Casefile audit process modified and improved. Joint case file audits undertaken with Health to inform planning for new assessments, which was positive.
Ensure that all assessments take into full account the views of children and families and that children are seen alone, when appropriate	Green	A14 & A15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views of children and families added as a drop down flag on CCM. Managers have reminded staff of their responsibilities. Case file audits will monitor translation into practice. Joint audit undertaken with Health which was positive.
Within 3 months			
Ensure that all child protection plans are specific and measurable including clear timescales for action and that all core group discussions are effectively minuted so that progress can be monitored more effectively	Amber	A4 & A5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New formats and templates developed and are being used. Outline plan with sample outcomes developed and in operation. Positive feedback received from social workers, partners and families. Monitoring of practice through audit process. Admin support to CP review panel reviewed, improved and now implemented,
Review the chairing of conferences to ensure that they are chaired by professionals who have the requisite experience and expertise to undertake this role	Green	D2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review has taken place. SSCB agreed to not pursue the use of partner agency chairs.

Formal area for improvement	RAG rating	Plan ref no	Progress summary
NTWNHSFT to ensure that revised pathways of care are effectively implemented for children and families who need specialist services from CAMHS	Green	C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathways developed and are being monitored.
Ensure, as far as is practically possible, that the ethnicity of all staff is known so that the local authority can evaluate accurately whether the workforce reflects the diversity of the local population	Amber	G1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An on-line questionnaire was issued to all council staff in October 2012 to gather this information (as part of the wider council response to the new Public Sector Equality Duty). The response rate for Safeguarding was 32% and so consideration is currently being given to how Safeguarding staff who did not complete the questionnaire are encouraged to supply this information.
Within 6 months			
The LADO annual report should include more detailed analysis of activity to ensure senior managers and partner agencies have a good understanding of the effectiveness of the service	Green	D3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outcome based report was presented to SSCB in October 2012.
Reporting of private fostering arrangements should be more robust to ensure that senior managers are able to assure themselves that requirements are met	Amber	D4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An annual report was presented to Safeguarding SMT in November 2012 and will be presented to SSCB in February 2013. Private fostering data to be included in weekly performance monitoring reports.
Ensure that learning from complaints is identified more clearly and used to improve practice across safeguarding and looked after children's services	Green	B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new process has been developed and is starting to be implemented. Complaints Manager attends quarterly Safeguarding Managers Meeting
SERVICES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN			
Immediately			
Ensure that all looked after children, according to their age and understanding, are seen alone when visited by their social worker	Green	A16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See A14 and A15 above.
Within 3 months			
STPCT to identify a designated doctor for children and young people to ensure that a health practitioner is in a position to have a strategic influence and overview on the health of looked after children	Green	C20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Specification agreed – needs sharing with all Designated LAC professionals. LAC Designated Doctor appointed. Designated Nurse's role outlined in service specification which accords with Statutory Guidance.
NTWNHSFT to monitor the effectiveness of the new pathways of care for looked after children and young people who need services from CAMHS	Green	C21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathways developed and are being monitored. LAC Team understand how to get support for children and young people. Working Group on Care Pathways has been developed – led by Project Manager
Ensure that robust and transparent reporting arrangements about the outcomes of Regulation 33 visits are in place	Amber	D9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new reporting format and governance arrangements have been agreed. Reg 33 report presented to Corporate Parenting Board and MALAP in October 2012.

3.2.3 In addition to the formal areas for improvement, the primary focus within the council has been on driving up the quality of safeguarding provision, which

was the one area in which Sunderland failed to be assessed as 'Good'. Prior to the inspection it was already recognised that improving the quality of children's assessments and plans was the highest priority for the safeguarding service. The inspection outcome brought this imperative into even sharper focus and gave the service a strong mandate to come up with a new approach.

- 3.2.4 In recent years, considerable work has been undertaken to ensure the infrastructure was in place to support an improvement in quality in the Children's Social Work Service, for example ensuring a stable workforce through the recruitment and retention strategy, and making changes to the ICT system (CCM) to facilitate qualitative thinking and analysis. Prior to the inspection the main method employed to address quality issues had been the case file audit system. Although it had been useful in identifying areas of concern to be flagged up with Team Managers and social workers, it had limited efficacy in improving the overall quality of case files.

Case file audits

- 3.2.5 The Case File Audit system has been reviewed and revised following feedback from Ofsted. The case file audit tool has now been amended to ensure that it gives an overall judgement of quality and an on-line system has been developed which will generate regular monitoring reports. These reports will provide the service with quantitative data around the quality of casefiles, against which a baseline and targets can be set and improvement demonstrated over time.

Multi-agency audits

- 3.2.6 In October 2012, an audit of 20 Children's Social Work assessments was undertaken by Health and Social Work professionals, considering a random sample of initial and core assessments from a variety of social work teams (the majority being in the newly formulated risk / parenting assessment format).
- 3.2.7 Improvements to the new assessment format were identified through the audit and these have now been incorporated into the document. Health colleagues requested anonymised copies of some of the outstanding assessments to share with staff as good practice examples. Further multi-agency audits are now being planned.

Total quality management

- 3.2.8 Although, it has a part to play, the revised case file audit system cannot alone drive the improvement in quality that is needed in the required timescale and so a broader approach has been developed. The new broader approach draws on the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), a quality improvement system that originated in industry but has been successfully applied to social care organisations in the U.S and the U.K. The principles of TQM can usefully be applied to the problem of inconsistent quality of children's case files. The three main components of TQM are:

- Shared leadership and employee involvement – based on the concept that the staff doing the work can create better processes to produce a higher quality product
- Customer focus and emphasis on service quality
- Management by fact and continual improvement

TQM principles have been applied to develop the plan to deliver improvements in the quality of assessments and plans.

3.2.9 Progress to date includes:

- A new management structure, which reduces the number of “layers” between social workers and senior managers, has now been implemented
- Significant improvements have been made to the CCM documentation, for which there has been positive feedback from social workers, families and other professionals.
- The Quality Assurance system for reports and plans to Court has been reviewed and revised.
- Senior managers have met with nearly all social work teams to identify the barriers to producing good quality assessments, plans and case recording, and to identify what needs to change to overcome them.
- Social Work practice standards have been updated and revised with an emphasis on quality and outcomes. These have been re-launched, reconfirming high expectations of staff
- The Training and Development programme for social workers has been reviewed with particular emphasis on the quality of assessments, including analytical skills. The programme incorporates a Quality workshop with legal services drilling down into the fundamentals of producing high quality reports for court.
- A number of high quality pieces of work have been identified that can be used as model examples and ensure consistency in “knowing what good looks like” across the service.
- The Independent Reviewing Team has reviewed and strengthened the Quality Assurance Framework in relation to their QA role in assessment and planning for individual children. As part of this, the Compliance monitoring form has been updated and re-launched, and now reflects whether the child / young person’s views have been shared in the conference and how that was enabled in the conference.
- The formal professional dispute procedure in relation to IROs is very rarely used, however a range of different interventions are utilised by IROs to question and challenge both the quality of child protection planning and care planning and the progress of agreed actions following Conferences and Reviews. The Acting IRO Manager is exploring ways in which these less formal challenges can be recorded and quantified, and the best way to demonstrate the impact of this level of challenge on outcomes.

Summary

3.2.10 The announced inspection action plan sets out the actions being taken to ensure that all children and young people in Sunderland are safe and have

the best possible quality of life. All areas of development identified in the Ofsted report are noted in the action plan including items for immediate attention and items for action within 3 and 6 months respectively. It shows how we mean to maintain and improve our high standards. Significant progress has been made since Ofsted and CQC were on-site in February / March 2012. However the full impact of the action plan on improved outcomes for children and young people will inevitably take some time.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the very positive Adoption Inspection report and the associated actions the council plans to undertake in response.
- 4.2 The Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the progress to date in implementing the announced inspection action plan.

5. APPENDICES

- 1 Sunderland City Council Adoption Service inspection report (February 2013)
- 2 Adoption inspection: Draft action plan
- 3 Announced inspection action plan update – February / March 2013

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