

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 SEPTEMBER 2009

NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR SAFEGUARDING INSPECTIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee on the new arrangements for safeguarding inspections from April 2009 and the Sunderland arrangements in relation to this.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following the death of Baby Peter and the subsequent Laming Report of March 2009, recommendations were made for the urgent review of inspections of safeguarding services.
- 2.2 As a result, from April 2009, Joint Area Review (JAR) inspections of children's services ceased, and were replaced by a new programme of inspection. Outcomes for all children and young people will now be fed through the new Comprehensive Area Assessment, including inspections of regulated services, i.e. children's homes, fostering and adoption, and also of private fostering.
- 2.3 However, two new inspections will take place relating to safeguarding children and young people. They are:
- Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment of children in need and children who may be in need of protection
 - Announced inspections of safeguarding and looked after children services.
- 2.4 These two inspections also feed into the Comprehensive Area Assessments, which assess how well councils are working together with other public bodies to meet the needs of the people they serve.

3. UNANNOUNCED INSPECTIONS OF CONTACT, REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 These are annual inspections of front-line practice in relation to contact, referral and assessment processes for children in need and children who may be in need of protection. The authority will have no prior warning that the inspections will take place. Inspectors will literally present themselves at 8.00am on the morning of their visit, and stay for two days.
- 3.2 During their visit, inspectors will scrutinise case files, performance information and speak with managers and practitioners to inform themselves of the activity and effectiveness of the work of the teams.

- 3.3 These short inspections will focus on the local authority as the lead agency for child protection. However, the contribution of partners will also be evaluated, particularly around the quality of multi-agency prevention and support for safeguarding children and young people. The impact of the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board and Children's Trust Board will be considered.
- 3.4 No grade is awarded for these inspections, however a letter will be sent to the Executive Director of Children's Services setting out the strengths of the service and any areas for development in observed practice. It will always identify if there are any areas for priority action identified during the inspection. If serious weaknesses are identified, this could bring forward the timing of a full inspection (details below).

4. INSPECTIONS OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICES

- 4.1 These inspections will take place once every three years. The authority will receive ten working days notice of the inspections, after which time two to three inspectors will be on site, also for ten working days.
- 4.2 For each element (i.e. safeguarding and looked after children) inspectors will evaluate:
- Capacity to improve
 - Leadership and management
 - Quality of provision
 - Outcomes
- 4.3 Before and during inspection, the following activities will take place:
- Analysis of performance information
 - Ofsted holds information on all local authorities and inspectors will be fully briefed about Sunderland's performance before they arrive
 - Documentation analysis
 - Ofsted has set out a list of documents they want to examine before they come on site
 - Interviews with officers, partners and stakeholders
 - Ofsted has set a list of those professionals and stakeholders inspectors are likely to want to hold focus groups with. This includes the "Lead Member for Children's Services (and where appropriate support members)", which may include Scrutiny Committee
 - Case file analysis
 - Ofsted will inform us which case files they will review when on site
 - Survey of children and young people.

- Ofsted will contact all looked after children and those young people who have left care in the last twelve months, and invite them to complete a survey, to gather their views on the services they receive.
- 4.4 The inspection will specifically evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Children's Trust Board, including the impact they have on improving outcomes for children and young people. Any important weaknesses identified by inspectors during the inspection will be reflected in the judgements.
- 4.5 The authority will receive a report following this inspection and will receive a 'grade', based on Ofsted's four-point scale: Outstanding, Good, Adequate, Inadequate.

5. SUNDERLAND ARRANGEMENTS

- 5.1 As part of the preparation for the impending inspections, a Project Board and two task groups, one for the Unannounced Inspection and one for the Announced Inspection have been established. These task groups have formed several focussed sub-groups to gather evidence and identify gaps. Project plans have been developed to manage each process. Furthermore, a Project Team has been appointed on a temporary basis within the Performance Improvement and Policy Service to support the streams of work. As a result of the Ofsted preparation we have improved the following:
- External auditors were commissioned to undertake an audit of all case files within five priority areas (Appendix 1). An audit was then undertaken of all cases within priorities 1 – 4 and a 10% random selection of case files within priority 5. Case files and electronic records were audited using a comprehensive audit tool developed internally for this purpose. A total of 556 cases were audited. A number of lower level actions were identified from the audit, these have been or are being dealt with by team managers and social workers.
 - In the Initial Response Team there are now two Permanent Team Managers.
 - The Initial Response Team will be working closely with Northumbria Police to consider the domestic violence referrals on a daily basis from October 2009.
 - Arrangements have been made with Newcastle City Council to conduct a reciprocal mock inspection with Sunderland City Council.
 - An exercise was carried out on Wednesday, 12 August to test that the response of the service, on notification of the unannounced inspection, was adequate. There were a number of lessons learned through this process and actions to improve these areas have been implemented.
 - The Chief Executive has requested that a staff survey within the Safeguarding Service and a multi-agency partner survey is conducted to feed into the inspection process. These are in addition to the surveys that Ofsted will conduct, namely the survey of social workers that will take place from September 2009, and the survey of all children in care

and those who have left care in that last 12 months, which will take place upon notification of the announced inspection.

- Six briefing sessions were delivered by the Deputy Executive Director of Children's Services during July and August. These were aimed predominantly at social workers, and were designed to disseminate information regarding the inspections and help staff within the service understand their role before and during the event. The briefings also provided an opportunity for staff to feed their views and concerns into the process.

Work with partners

- 5.2 The Project Team will begin to work with partners in the coming weeks, particularly around the dissemination of information and identifying appropriate stakeholders who could potentially be involved in focus groups with inspectors.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS / IMPACT ON CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.
- 6.2 Members are asked to agree to be involved in focus groups with inspectors, should that be a requirement.
- 6.3 Members are asked to agree to receive feedback information regarding the inspections when they occur, and monitor implementation of any actions that may arise.

Appendix 1

Priority Definition	No of Cases in the Priority Group	No Files Audited	Audit Target (%)
Priority 1: All unborn babies subject to a child protection plan and all children with child protection plans currently transferring in or out of Sunderland	7	7	100%
Priority 2: All children subject to a child protection plan, aged 0-4 years	107	107	100%
Priority 3: All children subject to a child in need plan, unborn - 4 years	226	226	100%
Priority 4: All children subject to a child protection plan, aged 4-18 years (148)	148	148	100%
Priority 5: All children subject to a child in need plan, aged 4-18 years (682)	682	68	10%
Total Case files Audited		556	