

<b>CABINET MEETING – 20 June 2012</b>  <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I</b>
<b>Title of Report:</b> ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES
<b>Author(s):</b> Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To provide Cabinet with the final inspection report and draft action plan arising from the recently successful announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services  The announced inspection report was published on the Ofsted website on 10 April and graded Sunderland as being 'good' against each of the four headline inspection judgements (i.e. the 'overall effectiveness' and 'capacity for improvement' of both safeguarding and looked after children services).
<b>Description of Decision:</b> Cabinet is recommended to note and comment on the contents of the report and the associated improvement actions the Council and its partners are undertaking in response.
<b>Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?</b> <b>*Yes/No</b>
<b>If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework</b>
<b>Suggested reason(s) for Decision:</b> To enable Cabinet to consider and comment on the contents of the report and the associated improvement actions the Council and its partners are undertaking in response
<b>Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:</b> No alternative options are considered appropriate.

**Impacts analysed:****Equality****Privacy****Sustainability****Crime and Disorder****Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution?**~~Yes~~/No**Is it included in the Forward Plan?**~~Yes~~/No**Scrutiny Committee:****Scrutiny Lead Member for Children’s Services**

**ANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services**

**1.0 Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with the final inspection report and draft action plan arising from the recently successful Ofsted announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services.
- 1.2 The announced inspection report was published on the Ofsted website on 10 April and graded Sunderland as being 'good' against each of the four headline inspection judgements (i.e. the 'overall effectiveness' and 'capacity for improvement' of both safeguarding and looked after children services).

**2.0 Description of Decision (Recommendations)**

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to note, and comment on, the contents of the report and the associated improvement actions the Council and its partners are undertaking in response.

**3.0 Introduction / Background**

- 3.1 Since April 2009 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have been undertaking a three year programme of announced inspections of safeguarding and looked after children's services, which evaluate how well agencies and services in an area work together in order to safeguard and improve outcomes for children and young people including looked after children.
- 3.2 The inspections are multi-agency, and a key focus is the contribution of Health agencies to the achievement of outcomes for the children and young people. As a result, a CQC inspector spends 100% of their time assessing the work of Health partners during the inspection.
- 3.3 By the end of July 2012 all single and upper tier local authorities will have been inspected against a set of specific criteria (i.e. the evaluation schedule and grade descriptors) which is then graded using the following judgements:

***Table 1: Ofsted grading criteria***

Outstanding (Grade 1)	A service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good (Grade 2)	A service that exceeds minimum requirements
Adequate (Grade 3)	A service that only meets minimum requirements
Inadequate (Grade 4)	A service that does not meet minimum requirements

- 3.4 For both Safeguarding Services and Services for Looked after Children, local authorities are given a separate grading by Ofsted to indicate their 'overall effectiveness' and 'capacity for improvement'. These four headline

judgements are underpinned by a further 18 judgements (8 for safeguarding and 10 for looked after children) which relate to specific outcomes and elements of service management.

## **4.0 Current Position**

### **4.1 The inspection process**

4.1.1 On 6 February 2012 the Executive Director of Children's Services was informed that Sunderland City Council and its partners were to be inspected. This immediately triggered a 45 day inspection period (up until 10 April), which included a two week on-site inspection visit by a team of six inspectors (five from Ofsted and one from CQC).

4.1.2 The on-site inspection was undertaken between 20 February and 2 March 2012 (on days 11 to 20 of the 45 day process). During this period the inspectors spoke to a range of stakeholders including:

- 37 children and young people
- 20 parents and carers receiving services
- Front line staff and managers
- Senior officers
- Elected members
- A range of community representatives
- Front line professionals, managers and senior staff from partner agencies

4.1.3 The inspectors also reviewed 84 case files and undertook analysis and evaluation of a number of documents and reports from a variety of sources. Evidence that the inspectors considered included:

- The council's self assessment and a suite of supporting case studies and briefing notes
- The findings of the safeguarding peer challenge undertaken in December 2011
- Progress made against the four areas for development identified during the Ofsted unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment in October 2011

4.1.4 The final report was published on Ofsted's website on 10 April 2012. A copy of the report is attached as **appendix 1**.

### **4.2 The inspection findings**

4.2.1 As mentioned in paragraph 3.4 above, the inspectorates score each council and its partners against 22 judgements – four headline judgements and a further 18 supporting judgements.

4.2.2 Sunderland was awarded a score of 'good' for all four of the headline judgements. 17 of the 18 supporting judgements were 'good', with the

remaining judgement being 'adequate'.

**Table 2: Ofsted Judgements**

<b>JUDGEMENT</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
<b>Safeguarding services</b>	
Overall effectiveness	Good
Capacity for improvement	Good
<b>Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people</b>	
Children and young people are safe and feel safe	Good
Quality of provision	Adequate
The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	Good
Ambition and prioritisation	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Performance management and quality assurance	Good
Partnership working	Good
Equality and diversity	Good
<b>Services for looked after children</b>	
Overall effectiveness	Good
Capacity for improvement	Good
<b>How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?</b>	
Being healthy	Good
Staying safe	Good
Enjoying and achieving	Good
Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	Good
Economic well-being	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Ambition and prioritisation	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Performance management and quality assurance	Good
Equality and diversity	Good

- 4.2.3 The one area where Sunderland was judged to be 'adequate' was the quality of provision in safeguarding. The inspectors explained that the primary reason for this was the inconsistent quality of assessments and plans. This was already a priority for the service and considerable work has been undertaken in recent years to have the infrastructure in place which would support an improvement in quality, for example ensuring a stable workforce through the recruitment and retention strategy, and making changes to the IT system (ICS / CCM) to facilitate qualitative thinking. However, the service recognises that there is still more to be done and so will be increasing its focus on quality throughout the next year.
- 4.2.4 The key findings for safeguarding and looked after children services which supported the inspectorates' headline judgements of 'overall effectiveness' and 'capacity for improvement' are provided below. The inspectorates also identified a small number of 'areas for improvement' which are to be addressed within a specified timescale, these are also outlined below.

#### **4.2.5 Safeguarding services - Overall effectiveness**

- Overall effectiveness is good
- Leaders within the council and its partners give safeguarding a high priority
- Services continue to develop and improve in a very challenging financial climate
- Efforts have been focused on ensuring a stable workforce
- Performance in most areas has been sustained and in some areas improved
- Actions arising from the unannounced inspection have been addressed promptly and proportionately
- Safeguarding concerns are responded to effectively to ensure children are safe
- Decision making processes have been strengthened to avoid unnecessary statutory investigations
- Assessments are generally undertaken in a timely manner although the overall quality requires improvement
- The views of children and families are not always sufficiently evident in assessments and the contribution of all agencies involved is not always clear
- Children are not always seen alone
- Child protection plans are generally robust although some could be more specific so that progress can be assessed more effectively.
- Child protection conferences are effective and ensure children are safeguarded appropriately
- Minutes of some conferences and core groups are not sufficiently specific and detailed
- Multi-agency thresholds have been revised as a result of insufficient understanding
- The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is an acknowledged area for development and the process is being reviewed
- The management culture is consultative and supportive
- Children's services controls its budget effectively and uses resources well
- Performance management is good
- Some aspects of quality assurance, such as the casefile auditing process, could be improved to drive overall improvement more rapidly
- Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) provides effective oversight and leadership
- A wide range of partners are actively engaged with the SSCB
- Health agencies contribute well to safeguarding, with several areas of good practice (e.g. support for children with complex needs, contraceptive and sexual health)

#### **4.2.6 Safeguarding services - Capacity for improvement**

- Capacity for improvement is good
- The council and its partners have a good understanding of the key strengths and weaknesses
- Thorough needs assessment and robust performance management framework
- Elected members are well informed of key issues, enabling them to

- respond appropriately to changing demands
- The council has been able to establish and act upon key priorities
- Plans are in place to address ongoing areas for development
- The Children's Trust's priorities appropriately include the most vulnerable children, and are based on an ambitious shared vision

#### **4.2.7 Safeguarding services - Areas for improvement**

##### **Immediately:**

- Ensure that all assessments clearly identify risk and protective factors and include contributions from partner agencies who are involved with the family
- Ensure that all assessments take into full account the views of children and families and that children are seen alone, when appropriate

##### **Within three 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
- Review the chairing of conferences to ensure that they are chaired by professionals who have the requisite experience and expertise to undertake this role
- Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust to ensure that revised pathways of care are effectively implemented for children and families who need specialist services from CAMHS
- 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

##### **Within six months:**

- The local authority designated officer's (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
- Reporting of private fostering arrangements should be more robust to ensure that senior managers are able to assure themselves that requirements are met
- Ensure that learning from complaints is identified more clearly and used to improve practice across safeguarding and looked after children's services

#### **4.2.8 Services for looked after children - Overall effectiveness**

- Overall effectiveness is good
- Multi-agency arrangements for ensuring needs are met are effective
- Thresholds for entering care are consistently applied and overall placement stability is good
- Outcomes for looked after children are generally good
- An effective range of support services promote the physical and emotional health of children and young people
- The lack of a designated doctor for looked after children is a significant strategic omission
- Looked after children live in safe and secure residential and foster placements
- Children are not always seen alone when visited by their social worker

- The reporting of outcomes of Regulation 33 visits is not sufficiently robust
- Strong commitment to achieving permanence, including for those traditionally hard to place
- Educational outcomes for looked after children are improving
- An acknowledged need to improve the number achieving good grades in English and Maths
- Care leavers are well supported in suitable accommodation
- A strong corporate commitment to reducing NEETs
- Effective joint working to divert young people from offending
- Views of looked after children and care leavers are central to the planning and development of services
- The Change Council provides an effective forum for children to express their views about the service. However, not all Care4Me survey respondents were aware of the Change Council
- Children have good access to advocacy services and independent visitors
- Performance monitoring is robust although quality assurance could be improved
- Reviews of looked after children's plans are generally timely and children routinely participate in their reviews through an inclusive range of media
- Recommended actions are not always sufficiently specific to ensure progress can be effectively tracked
- Management oversight is evident on case records and managers support staff well
- Overall quality of formal supervision is variable
- The service manages its resources well, ensuring the most appropriate and safe placements, while maintaining overall value for money
- Robust monitoring of externally commissioned placements
- Strong investment in the recruitment, retention and support of foster carers

#### **4.2.9 Services for looked after children – Capacity for improvement**

- Capacity for improvement is good
- Performance in key areas are at least as good as, or better than, comparators
- Consistently positive inspection outcomes
- Good track record in achieving permanence through adoption
- Coherent multi agency strategy focused on improving outcomes
- Effective performance management and a culture of constructive challenge
- Well aware that there remains scope for improvement in some areas of assessment and recording
- The workforce benefits from good access to training and support from managers
- The Corporate Parenting Board is well established and ensures required actions are undertaken. Membership to be reviewed to ensure that cross-departmental contribution is maximised
- Elected members support officers well

#### **4.2.10 Services for looked after children - Areas for improvement**

##### **Immediately:**

- Ensure that all looked after children, according to their age and



understanding, are seen alone when visited by their social worker

**Within three months:**

- Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust (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
- Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust to monitor the effectiveness of the new pathways of care for looked after children and young people who need services from CAMHS
- Ensure that robust and transparent reporting arrangements about the outcomes of Regulation 33 visits are in place

### 4.3 How Sunderland compares to other local authorities

***The national picture***

4.3.1 Sunderland City Council is high performing in comparison to the 100 other councils who had had their inspection reports published before 29 February 2012.

4.3.2 Only twelve local authorities nationally achieved 'outstanding' for one or more of the four headline outcomes and were therefore deemed, without further analysis, to be performing to a higher standard than Sunderland City Council for one or more of the four headline judgements. On this basis alone, it would suggest that children and young people in Sunderland are receiving services that are as good as, if not better than, 88% of the local authorities inspected so far.

**Table 3: High performing councils**

Councils achieving one or more 'outstanding' headline judgements	Councils achieving four 'good' headline judgements	
Durham Ealing East Sussex Halton Hammersmith & Fulham Hampshire Islington Knowsley Lancashire Lincolnshire Oldham Swindon	Barnet Blackburn with Darwen Bristol Buckinghamshire Derbyshire Enfield Hartlepool Hillingdon Hounslow Kirklees Liverpool	Merton Newcastle Nottingham Oxfordshire Plymouth Poole Westminster Wirral Sunderland Trafford Warwickshire
<b>Number = 12</b>	<b>Number = 22</b>	

4.3.3 When further analysis is undertaken of each council's supporting judgements, Sunderland City Council is placed in joint 24th place of the 101 authorities inspected. This performance data will obviously change as other local authorities are inspected and/or their data becomes available.

***The regional picture***

4.3.4 Sunderland City Council is performing well in comparison to the seven other councils in the region who had had their inspection reports published before

29 February 2012. As the table below demonstrates, Sunderland is ranked third.

**Table 4: Regional inspection judgements**

Rank	Council	Safeguarding		Looked after children services		Supporting judgement score (Low score = high performing)
		Overall effectiveness	Capacity for improvement	Overall effectiveness	Capacity for improvement	
1	Durham	1	1	2	1	27
2	Newcastle	2	2	2	2	35
3	Sunderland	2	2	2	2	37
4	Hartlepool	2	2	2	2	39
5	Stockton	3	3	2	2	47
6	Middlesbrough	3	2	3	3	49
7	Darlington	3	3	3	3	45
8	Gateshead	3	3	3	3	57

*NB 1 = Excellent; 2 = Good; 3 = Adequate; 4 = Inadequate*

4.3.5 Only one local authority regionally (i.e. Durham) achieved 'outstanding' for one or more of the four headline judgements and were therefore deemed, without further analysis, to be performing to a higher standard than Sunderland City Council for one or more of the four headline judgements.

4.3.6 Sunderland, Hartlepool and Newcastle achieved 'good' for each of the four headline judgements. The scores for the supporting judgements show the three councils to be performing at a very similar standard.

#### **4.4 Improvement planning and monitoring**

4.4.1 Since the final inspection report was received on 30 March, work has taken place within the council and across partner agencies to identify improvement actions to address the issues raised within the report. As well as picking up on the 13 formal 'areas for improvement' specifically identified within the report (see paragraphs 4.2.7 and 4.2.10 above), this improvement planning activity has also sought to address the 'softer' areas for improvement which are referenced throughout the main body of the report. A copy of the draft improvement plan is attached as **appendix 2**.

4.4.2 The final report and improvement plan is to be considered by the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board (SSCB) during the May / June cycle of meetings. In addition, all health actions will be escalated to the Health and Wellbeing Board by the Children's Trust.

4.4.3 Once approved the action plan will be monitored on a regular basis by the Safeguarding Service's Improvement Board (SSIB), with quarterly monitoring reports to SSCB and Scrutiny.

#### **4.5 Future inspections**

4.5.1 The current inspection programme will end in July 2012, by which time all single and upper tier authorities should have been inspected. From May 2012

Ofsted will introduce a new framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children, which will replace the current system of an announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services and an annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment.

- 4.5.2 The new inspection will combine the two inspections with a single unannounced inspection, with authorities contacted on Day 1 to advise that a two week inspection will commence that morning. Ofsted will then spend the first two days inspecting contact, referral and assessment, and the remaining days will then be spent undertaking a wider ranging inspection. As these inspections are intended to be risk based, it is not anticipated that Sunderland will be inspected early within the first round of inspections.
- 4.5.3 As well as delivering the improvement actions arising from the announced inspection, the service and the council will need to undertake some preparation so that it is able to meet Ofsted's new inspection requirements at short notice. Strategy, Policy and Performance Management (SPPM) will provide support to Children's Services in this respect.

## **5.0 Reasons for the Decision**

- 5.1 To enable Cabinet to consider and comment on the contents of the report and the associated improvement actions the Council and its partners are undertaking in response.

## **6.0 Alternative Options**

- 6.1 No alternative options are considered appropriate.

## **7.0 Impact Analysis**

- 7.1 **Equalities** - Ofsted has undertaken an equality impact assessment (EIA) for the announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services, and has identified that the inspection positively impacts upon each of the equality strands. Improving care, education and training opportunities for children and young people in need are central to the announced inspection. Inspections assess and report on any evident equality disparities between outcomes and the quality of services, and the resultant areas for improvement are designed to address any disparities.
- 7.2 **Sustainability** – The action plan supports the aims of the Sunderland Strategy and delivery of the priorities set out within the Children and Young People's Plan, by supporting improved outcomes for children in need, children looked after and children who have left care. There are no significant environmental impacts associated with the report and action plan.

## **8.0 Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations**

- 8.1 To arrive at their findings the inspectorates consulted a range of key stakeholders including the council (officers and elected members), partner agencies, and a number of service users (children, young people, parents and carers).

## **9.0 Glossary**

AEN	Additional Educational Needs
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CDOP	Child Death Overview Panel
CHSNHSFT	City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust
CIN	Children in Need
CCM	Children's Case Management
CP	Child Protection
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CSWS	Children's Social Work Service
DT	Designated Teacher
EIA	Equality impact assessment
ESCR	Electronic Social Care Record
FTE	Fixed Term Exclusion
GP	General Practitioner
ICS	Integrated children's system
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
LAC	Looked after children
LADO	Local authority designated officer
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
NEETs	Not in education, employment, or training
NQSW	Newly Qualified Social Worker
NTWNHSFT	Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
Ofsted	Office for standards in education
PEP	Personal Education Plan
QA	Quality Assurance
QPR	Quality Performance Report
RAG	Red, Amber, Green
SMT	Senior Management Team
SPPM	Strategy, Policy and Performance Management
SSCB	Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board
SSIB	Safeguarding Service's Improvement Board
STPCT	Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust
SVS	Sunderland Virtual School

## **10.0 List of Appendices**

- 1 - Final report
- 2 – Draft Action Plan