

CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

6 November 2008

OFSTED INSPECTION OF THE SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Strategic Priorities: Safe City

Corporate Improvement Objectives:

CIO1: Delivery Customer Focused Services

1 Why has this report come to Committee?

1.1 The Sunderland City Council Adoption Service is registered with Ofsted as a local authority adoption agency and is inspected every three years under the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000. Judgements are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 (though not all outcomes may be judged), in relation to the service's organisation, and overall effectiveness.

1.2 The four judgements that can be made in relation to each outcome area and overall are:

Outstanding: This aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: This aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: This aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: This aspect of the provision is not good enough

1.3 Ofsted inspectors visited the service for four days commencing 18 August 2008. They examined the files of children, adopters and staff; interviewed practitioners, managers, senior managers, adopters, birth parents and children; and observed an adoption and permanence panel. Verbal feedback was given immediately following the inspection and the written report received on 13 September.

2 Outcome

2.1 The judgements given by Ofsted were:

Helping children to be healthy: **Not judged**

Protecting children from harm and helping them to stay safe: **Good**

Helping children to achieve well and enjoy what they do: **Good**

Helping children to make a positive contribution: **Outstanding**

Achieving economic well being: **Not judged**

Organisation: **Good**

Overall: **Good**

- 2.2 The report overall is very positive, with comments like:

This is a strong agency that approaches its key responsibilities...with thoroughness, rigour and a clear focus...

There is a particularly impressive approach to the maintenance of children's heritage and background

The agency has developed in a positive direction since the last inspection

The agency's approach is sophisticated and innovative...and is carried out with great enthusiasm and commitment

- 2.3 There were three recommendations:

- a) Include in adoption panel procedures full information about constitution and when a quorum is reached
- b) Produce a children's guide suitable for all children where adoption is the plan
- c) Include on all staff and panel members' files all required information

3 Action Plan to Achieve Recommendations

- 3.1
- a) This recommendation has been implemented
 - b) Locality Service Manager (Permanence Team) to lead a working group of case management staff, adoption service staff and children to produce an improved children's guide.
 - c) Adoption Service Manager to work with HR team/business support to ensure that files on panel members and staff contain the required information.

4 Benchmarking

- 4.1 The table at 4.2 shows the most recent Ofsted judgements for other local authority adoption services in the region. It demonstrates that Sunderland's adoption service is ranked second out of five in terms of individual judgements.

4.2

	Stay Safe	Enjoy/ Achieve	Positive Contribution	Organisation	Overall	Date
Sunderland	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good	18.08
Gateshead	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	01.08
Durham	Outstanding	Outstanding	Good	Outstanding	Outstanding	12.07
North Tyneside	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Good	Good	11.07
Northumberland	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	01.08
South Tyneside						Not inspected under Ofsted
Newcastle						Not inspected under Ofsted

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 Members are invited to note the Ofsted inspection judgement for the adoption service and the planned actions to meet recommendations.

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