



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
**Type in Ward**

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

**Scrutiny**  
**Cabinet**

**10<sup>th</sup> December 2009**  
**14<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

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**Outcome of the Unannounced Safeguarding Inspection**

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**Report of the Strategic Director, Children**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To advise on the outcome of the Ofsted Unannounced Safeguarding Inspection of 'Duty and Assessment' Services in Social Care and Safeguarding Division on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> August 2009.
- 1.2 To summarise the findings of the Inspection, the recommendations and the response of the Division.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The Social Care & Safeguarding division was subject to an unannounced Inspection by Ofsted on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> August 2009. This Inspection was the first annual unannounced inspection completed by Ofsted. These inspections are being undertaken across the country as a response to the Case of Baby 'P' and the subsequent findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Haringey Council in London in 2008. Inspectors focused on Frontline Duty and Assessment Services with a particular emphasis on whether children and the work being done with them and their families by social work staff was safe, timely and minimized risk.
- 2.2 The Inspection concluded that there were no areas for priority action and only 5 areas for further development. It is estimated that half of the Local Authorities so far inspected have had areas identified for priority action.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the findings of the inspection and in particular the considerable strengths of the service as identified by the Inspectors and the hard work and dedication of staff who helped ensure the inspection was a success.

- 3.2 That Cabinet notes the identified areas for development, the immediate steps already taken in relation to some of the areas identified and the intention to develop an action plan to ensure that all areas so identified are actioned by December 2009.
- 3.3 That CYP Scrutiny note the report and make any comments to Cabinet.

#### **4. Report**

- 4.1 On the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> August 2009 Ofsted conducted an 'Unannounced Inspection' of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within Leicester City Council Children's Services and specifically within the Social Care and Safeguarding Division.
- 4.2 The Social Care & Safeguarding division was subject to an unannounced Inspection by Ofsted on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> August 2009. This Inspection was the first annual unannounced inspection completed by Ofsted in Leicester. These inspections are being undertaken across the country as a response to the Case of Baby 'P' and the subsequent findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Haringey Council in London in 2008. The Inspections are designed to determine whether a Council's initial response to issues of risk to children are adequate and that the Council delivers a safe service in accordance with national guidance.
- 4.3 The Outcome of the Inspection significantly contributes to Ofsted annual review of the performance of the Authorities Children's Services, a rating which will be awarded later in the year.
- 4.4 The inspection was rigorous and robust, and involved sampling the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on minimising the incidence of child abuse and neglect. Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including: electronic case records; supervision files and notes; observation of social workers and senior practitioners undertaking referral and assessment duties; and other information provided by staff, managers and professionals from some partner agencies. Inspectors also spoke to a range of staff including managers, social workers, other practitioners and administrative staff.

#### **4.5 Outcome of the Inspection**

- 4.5.1 The Inspection identified no areas for priority action but did identify 5 areas for further development.
- 4.5.2 From the evidence gathered, the inspection identified a number of areas where the contact, referral and assessment arrangements were delivered satisfactorily in accordance with national guidance, in particular:
- i) Practice and procedures comply with statutory requirements and action needed to ensure children's safety is identified and implemented promptly.
  - ii) Children suffering or at risk of significant harm are identified and receive a prompt response.

- iii) Management overview of assessments and interventions by workers is timely, focused and relevant.
- iv) Referrals are allocated in a timely way, and inspectors found no unallocated work within the Duty and Assessment Service.
- v) Work identified as requiring a child protection response is allocated to qualified and, mostly, experienced social workers.

#### **4.5.3 Strengths Identified**

- i) Evidence of child centered work, with an effective focus on the protection of children. Direct work with children is often good, leading to their wishes and feelings being identified and taken seriously within assessments.
- ii) The diverse and individual needs of children and their families are identified and contribute demonstrably to assessments of risk and need.
- iii) Child protection enquiries are thorough and include a sustained focus on the child, particularly where their parent or carer also need support or are vulnerable.
- iv) Workers reported very good support, guidance and direction given by their team managers. Reflective professional practice and continuous staff development are evident throughout the service.
- v) Staff have good access to a wide range of training from internal and external providers. The training undertaken is relevant and focuses well on improving service delivery.
- vi) Operational and senior managers focus effectively on performance management and quality assurance. The recently enhanced audit programme aims to ensure that the service focuses on risks and needs of children and young people.
- vii) Support services, notably legal services and the emergency duty team, are timely and provide clear and robust support in delivering safeguarding objectives.
- viii) Child protection enquiries in relation to disabled children are sensitive to their additional vulnerabilities.

#### **4.5.4 Areas for Development Identified**

- i) Initial responses by social care staff are inconsistent in identifying the needs of children who do not meet the threshold for child protection enquiries. Thresholds are not clearly or consistently articulated between referrals within the Common Assessment Framework and those requiring an initial social care assessment.
- ii) Workforce capacity is sufficient overall to meet the demand for service but the proportion of qualified social workers is too low. The duty team currently has no qualified social workers, although the team manager provides active oversight and appropriate prioritising and allocating of child protection work to qualified social workers in other teams.

- iii) The arrangements for transferring cases between teams are not sufficiently efficient to support continuity in services experienced by children and young people.
- iv) Record keeping overall was insufficiently focused and analytical although some excellent examples of timely case recording of purposeful practice were seen by inspectors.
- v) While supervision records demonstrate timely case management, guidance and direction, recording of the individual, professional development of staff is poor.

## **4.6 Response to the Inspection**

4.6.1 The Division and Children's Services have accepted the Inspection findings as accurate and in accordance with our own evaluation of our services. We are particularly pleased that the hard work and commitment given by our staff has been recognised by Inspectors and that staff have continued to deliver a quality service despite a difficult national climate regarding child protection and social work in general. The Division also accepts the areas for development identified and whilst is in the process of drawing up an action plan to ensure that these areas are tackled has already taken a number of steps to address the issues identified.

### **4.6.2 Action already taken in relation to developmental areas**

Overall the Inspection determined that our services in Duty and Assessment were child focused, timely in their responses and sought to identify and minimise risk through concerted and co-ordinated intervention by skilled and motivated staff.

#### **4.6.2.1 Initial Response**

- i) This issue had already been identified as an area for action prior to the unannounced inspection with Staff training on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) already planned for September 09. This training has now taken place.
- ii) In addition the current re-structuring of the Fieldwork Service with a greater emphasis on integrated working and the development of Inter-Agency relationships through Integrated Service Hubs should help to ensure a greater consistency in the operation of thresholds between CAF and Initial Social Work Assessments.

#### **4.6.2.2 Workforce Capacity**

- i) In identifying this area Inspectors were making a comment on one of six teams in Duty and Assessment, which had two vacancies for Qualified Social Work staff both of which had arisen only 6 weeks before the Inspection began. Both posts were advertised at the time of the Inspection. One post has now been filled and we have made a decision to strengthen the team overall by the inclusion of a Senior Practitioner post.

#### **4.6.2.3 Transfer of Work between Teams**

- i) The current system for transfer of work between teams is complex but will be greatly simplified by the re-structure of Fieldwork Services due to be implemented in January 2010.

#### **4.6.2.4 Record keeping and Analysis**

- i) Improvement in this area has been a focus of the service for some time. We are not assisted by relatively high turnover of staff and the requirements of ICS (Integrated Children’s Systems – Software for assessment and analysis), which at times restricts recording, by the requirement to follow a rigid pathway. Recent decisions by DCFS to allow local changes in ICS will help us in this regard.

#### **4.6.2.5 Supervision Records**

- i) Inspectors found that records demonstrated timely case management, although they felt that more attention needed to be paid to the recording of individual and professional development of staff. Supervision formats have since been revised in the Duty and Assessment Service and are due to be re-launched in October.

### **4. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

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#### **5.1. Financial Implications**

There are no significant financial implications arising from this report.  
(Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance and Efficiency, CYPS, ext. 29 7750)

#### **5.2 Legal Implications**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Whilst Safeguarding obligations are heavily intertwined in statutory and case law principles, the inspection report acknowledges that the Safeguarding Division has robust practices in this regard and strong links with the Legal Division.

(Kamal Adatia, Barrister, ext 7044)

### **6 Report Author**

Peter McEntee, Head of Children’s Fieldwork, Social Care & Safeguarding  
Andy Smith, Divisional Director, Social Care & Safeguarding

<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Reason</b>	N/A
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	N/A
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	Executive (Cabinet)