



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Children's Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet

15 June 2010
21 June 2010

Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services

Report of the Interim Divisional Director, Social Care and Safeguarding

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise on the new Ofsted inspection of children's services in relation to safeguarding and looked after children.
- 1.2 To summarise the activity undertaken to date by Leicester City Council in preparation for this inspection and agree future action.

2. Recommendations (or OPTIONS)

- 2.1 For Cabinet to note the contents of the report.
- 2.2 For Cabinet to note the work completed to date in preparation for the inspection together with the work planned for the next quarter and beyond.

3. Summary

- 3.1 Ofsted announced two new inspections of children's services which took effect from April 2009. An unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children in need of protection, which will take place every year over a two day period. Leicester received its first unannounced inspection in August 2009, the outcome of which was positive and has been reported previously to the Children's Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2 The other inspection is one of safeguarding and looked after children services that will take place every three years. The council will be given ten working days notice of the inspection. This report summarises the work that has taken place across the council in preparation for this inspection, plus the work that is planned for the next quarter and beyond.

4. Report

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 In response to the outcome of the Baby Peter case in November 2008, Ofsted announced its intention to introduce a new framework of inspections of safeguarding and looked after children's services.
- 4.1.2 The first inspection of the new framework is the annual unannounced inspection of contact, assessment and referral arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection. This inspection took effect across the country from April 2009, and is an unannounced inspection over a two day period carried out by two Ofsted inspectors. The focus is on the local authority as the lead agency for child protection, although multi-agency working is evaluated as part of the process.
- 4.1.3 Leicester City Council received its unannounced inspection in August 2009, the outcome of which has previously been reported to the Children's Scrutiny Committee. The outcome of the inspection was positive. The inspectors did not find any areas for priority action. This means that contact, referral and assessment arrangements for keeping children safe were seen as robust and complied fully with national guidance.
- 4.1.4 The outcome of the unannounced inspection informs the annual rating of children's services which then informs the Council's Comprehensive Area Assessment. In addition, Ofsted's inspection of regulated services such as schools, early years, Children's Centres (which are inspected from April 2010), fostering, adoption and children's homes also contribute towards the Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- 4.1.5 In April 2010, Ofsted announced that from now on, any Council that receives an 'area for priority action' rating following an unannounced inspection is now likely to be graded as 'performing poorly' in their annual children's rating.

4.2 Inspections of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services

- 4.2.1 The second new inspection arrangement is a three yearly inspection of safeguarding and looked after children. The council will be given ten working days notice of the inspection. The inspection teams will consist of three Ofsted inspectors and a Care Quality Commission Inspector. Inspectors will be on site for ten working days.
- 4.2.2 The inspection will be graded using a four point scale:
- 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
- 4.2.3 The judgements are based on an evaluation of 33 overall grade descriptors: 15 for safeguarding and 18 for looked after children. The report following the inspection will contain separate sections and grades for safeguarding and looked after children.

4.2.4 The outcome of the announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children informs the annual rating of children's service which then informs the Council's Comprehensive Area Assessment.

4.3 Work undertaken to date in preparation of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection

4.3.1 The council only receives ten days working notice of the inspection so it is vital that arrangements are in place to ensure the council is as prepared as possible. The amount of planning necessary for a successful inspection (in terms of process and outcomes) cannot be underestimated. The following action has been undertaken to date:

4.3.1.1 Monthly Inspection Planning Meeting chaired by the Divisional Director Social Care and Safeguarding with key officers, which has led to a detailed project plan.

4.3.1.2 Intelligent use of the feedback on other authorities from inspection reports as they are published by Ofsted to reflect on our own practice in the city, in order to learn from other authorities.

4.3.1.3 Systematic process for identifying, collating, and tracking all the key documents we will be required to send to Ofsted by day 2 of receiving the inspection notification. A dedicated officer within Children's Policy & Planning has been identified to coordinate this task, which is monitored on a monthly basis by the Inspection Planning Group.

4.3.1.4 Commissioning of key reports to ensure that all case related data the authority will be required to submit to the inspectors by day 4 can all be easily obtained from the Care First system.

4.3.1.5 Briefings given to all managers within Social Care and Safeguarding about the inspection.

4.3.1.6 Implementation of all the developmental areas identified during the unannounced inspection of front line child protection services completed in August 2009.

4.4 Work programme planned for the next quarter and beyond

4.4.1 Systematic review of all relevant recommendations made in the Joint Area Review and last Area Performance Assessment (both from 2008).

4.4.2 Extend the membership of the monthly planning meeting to include key partners from across the Children's Trust since there is an emphasis in the inspection on the quality of the partnership, both strategically and operationally.

4.4.3 Self-audit against the Ofsted grade descriptors.

4.4.4 Build on the case file audits which take place across the division in order to:

- a) Develop a process of quarterly themed case file audits which take place across the Social Care and Safeguarding Division, noting that the first of which is planned for early April; in addition to
- b) Developing a multi-agency case file audit process as part of the work of the LSCB Safeguarding Effectiveness Group.

4.4.5 It is important that the council and wider partnership maintains a focus on the inspection, which does present some challenges given that we do not know when it will take place. To this end, it is necessary to develop a more comprehensive communications strategy which includes:

- a) An article about the inspection in the Investing in Our Children *Keeping In Touch* publication.
- b) Development of a quarterly newsletter for internal and external stakeholders (e.g. front line staff, members of the Children's Trust Board and LSCB) about the inspection and the work being done in preparation.
- c) Programme of team and service briefings across Social Care and Safeguarding.
- d) Work with the Stand Up Speak Out Group to develop effective communications for children and young people about the inspection.
- e) Work with existing groups involving parents/carers to develop effective communications for families about the inspection and their possible involvement in the inspection process.

4.4.6 It is evident from talking to those authorities that have already received their full announced inspection and to the Ofsted Inspectors that those authorities where there is dedicated project management capacity to coordinate the inspection, particularly at the point authorities receive notification, tend to be better prepared. It also creates fewer difficulties for Ofsted and presents the authority as well prepared and organised. Indeed, this was the approach adopted by Leicester City Council prior the JAR, although of course the difference here was the long lead in time. To this end, project management capacity has been identified from the Planning and Commissioning Division to work with the Divisional Director and senior officers within the Social Care and Safeguarding division.

4.4.7 Whilst preparation for the announced inspection is the focus of this report, it is also important to recognise that the council will receive its second unannounced inspection of Duty and Assessment anytime from June 2010. The division can evidence progress against the developmental areas identified in August 2009 and the Divisional Director and Head of Service continue to undertake monthly unannounced monitoring inspections of Duty and Assessment (and Child Care Teams), which forms an important part of the division's quality assurance framework.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

There will be little additional direct additional expenditure to prepare for the inspections detailed in this report as existing staff will be used where possible across the Investing in our Children division. However this call on staff time to ensure that the Council is well prepared to respond when an inspection is announced will be significant. There will be opportunity costs as the staff will be unable to progress other tasks. However, as the risks to the council in not being adequately prepared are significant, the staffing resources to maintain a state of readiness for the inspection and to drive continuous improvement must be identified and other work prioritised accordingly. (Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance and Efficiency, CYPS, Exr. 29 7750)

5.2 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report (Kamal Adatia, Barrister, Ext 29 7044).

6. IMPLICATIONS

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/ NO	Paragraph/References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	Yes	Entire report
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	
Corporate Parenting	Yes	Entire report
Health Inequalities Impact	No	

7. REPORT AUTHOR

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