
Meeting: Executive
Date: 21 August 2012
Subject: Safeguarding and Looked After Children Post Inspection Action Plan
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services
Summary: The report presents the action plan following the Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer: Sylvia Gibson, Health & Special Projects Coordinator
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive
Key Decision No
**Reason for urgency/
exemption from call-in
(if appropriate)** Not applicable

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The report supports the Council to deliver the following priorities:

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people.
- Promoting healthier lifestyles.

Financial:

1. The improvement actions for the Council and for NHS Bedfordshire and Luton will be funded from existing resources. The regional challenge and support programme is funded from the Children's Improvement Board.

Legal:

2. The Children Act 2004 requires Ofsted to provide an evaluation of the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded, and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers.

3. The Council has a duty under the Education Act 1996 to promote high standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and to promote the fulfilment by every child of his/her educational potential.

Risk Management:

4. The following risks have been identified:
 - Failure to deliver the improvement actions which would negatively impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people.
 - Failure to discharge statutory responsibilities.
 - Negative inspection outcomes.
 - Reputational risks.
 - Failure to deliver corporate objectives.
 - Failure to work effectively with partners.
5. The identified risks will be managed through the implementation of the Action Plan.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

6. Any required adjustments to staffing will be addressed as part of the implementation of the post inspection action plan.

Equalities/Human Rights:

7. Equality and Diversity for both Safeguarding and Looked After Children were judged adequate. There is a particular need to ensure that the needs of looked after children, which is a vulnerable group, are addressed. There is therefore a strong emphasis in the action plan on actively addressing equality and diversity issues. Action to improve equality and diversity forms a discrete section of the Action Plan.

Public Health:

8. Inspectors judged that Health outcomes for looked after children are poor and that outcomes to enable looked after children to be healthy are inadequate. Implementation of the discrete work streams within the Action Plan has, and will continue, to address health related issues for Looked After Children. This will result in improved health and wellbeing for looked after children.

Community Safety:

9. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

10. Not Applicable.

Procurement:

11. Not Applicable.

Overview and Scrutiny:

12. This matter has been considered by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee agreed to fully endorse the action plan to support improvement in services for Safeguarding and Looked After Children.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive is asked to:

1. **agree the Action Plan to support improvement following the inspection of services for Safeguarding and Looked After Children.**

Reason for Recommendation: So that the health and wellbeing of children can be improved.

Executive Summary

13. The Children Act 2004 requires Ofsted to provide an evaluation of the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded, and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers.
14. The inspection was carried out between 20 February and 2 March 2012. The report was published on 10 April 2012.
15. The overall effectiveness of safeguarding services was judged to be good and capacity for improvement was also judged to be good. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children was judged to be adequate.
16. The Action Plan to address the issues identified in the inspection report is attached at Appendix C.

Background

17. The Children Act 2004 requires Ofsted to provide an evaluation of the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded, and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers.
18. The inspection was carried out between 20 February and 2 March 2012. The report was published on 10 April 2012.
19. The Council has a lead role in providing services for children, and works with its partners, other agencies and the private and voluntary sectors to improve outcomes for children and young people. The action plan has been developed with partners.

Inspection Outcomes

20. The overall effectiveness of safeguarding services was judged to be good and capacity for improvement was also judged to be good. Inspectors concluded that partnership working is good and is well embedded, and that the Council and its partners have clear ambition and appropriate priorities. Robust performance management and quality assurance systems were judged to be embedded across the partnership.
21. Safeguarding arrangements were assessed as good or better in the very large majority of provision in Central Bedfordshire, and the inspection report notes that this performance is better than that in similar areas and when compared with national averages.
22. Leadership and management were judged to be good. Inspectors concluded that strategic leadership within the Council and its partners gives safeguarding the highest priority. It was also noted that elected Council Members and managers across the partnership have a shared commitment to ensuring that safeguarding services for children and young people are a priority.
23. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children was judged to be adequate. Capacity for improvement, and ambition and prioritisation for looked after children were also judged to be adequate.
24. Opportunities for looked after children and care leavers to make a positive contribution were judged to be good overall. Performance management and quality assurance were also judged to be good. It was noted that strong leadership within the Council has led to some improvement in the provision of services and improved coordination of support for looked after children and care leavers.
25. Inspectors judged that Health outcomes for looked after children are poor and that outcomes to enable looked after children to be healthy are inadequate. Ofsted concluded that health services face significant challenges in ensuring that the health needs of looked after children are addressed. NHS Bedfordshire and Luton carry out the commissioning and planning of national health services and primary care for children and are responsible for leading on the action needed to improve Health outcomes.
26. The Record of Main Findings is attached at Appendix A. A summary of inspection outcomes in the region is attached at Appendix B.

Action to Support Improvement

27. The Action Plan was developed with partners and is divided into work streams. Each work stream has a designated lead with responsibility for coordinating the action and for monitoring progress and reporting performance.
28. Some issues identified in the inspection report must be addressed speedily. Actions to address the issues which must be completed within the first six months following the inspection (Phase 1) are contained in Workstreams 1 to 4. The actions in Phase 1 will need to be completed by October 2012.

29. The overall approach to improvement planning for Phase 2 reflects the need to move practice to good and outstanding and to ensure sustainable improvement. Longer term improvement actions are contained in workstreams 5 to 9.
30. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services will oversee the delivery of those workstreams in the Action Plan which are the responsibility of Central Bedfordshire Council. The Director of Nursing and Quality for NHS Bedfordshire and Luton will oversee the delivery of the Health related workstreams in the Action Plan which are the responsibility of NHS Bedfordshire and Luton.
31. Regular reports on progress will go to the Children's Services Project Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services. This Board will monitor the delivery of the plan, including the Health related aspects of the Plan. The Action Plan also sits within the reporting structures and delivery arrangements of both the Children's Trust Board and the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board.
32. It is expected that Central Bedfordshire will be re-inspected in the autumn of 2013. The aim of the Action Plan is to ensure that the required improvements are implemented by the autumn of 2013. To this end, Central Bedfordshire Council and NHS Bedfordshire and Luton will be working with the Eastern Region on a peer support and challenge programme to ensure that action leads to sustainable improvement.
33. The Action Plan is attached at Appendix C.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Summary of Inspection Judgements

Appendix B - Summary of Inspection Outcomes in the Region

Appendix C - Action Plan

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services - Central Bedfordshire Council – Ofsted (www.ofsted.gov.uk)