

CABINET – 24 MAY2011

OUTCOME OF OFSTED INSPECTION OF OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICES

Report by Meera Spillett, Director for Children, Education & Families

Introduction

1. This report sets out the findings of the recent inspection by Ofsted of Oxfordshire's Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services. The purpose of the inspections was to evaluate the contribution made by all relevant services including those provided by the county council in Oxfordshire and partners particularly those involved through the Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Trust (OCYPT) and Oxfordshire's Safeguarding Children's Board (OSCB) 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. The inspection was carried out under the Children Act 2004. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected Health at the same time as our inspection and the Lead Inspector co-ordinated both inspections.

Context and Background

2. Safeguarding services for children are subject to two different inspection processes undertaken by Ofsted.
3. The first is an annual unannounced inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment services. The last one in Oxfordshire was conducted in November 2010, and a report on this inspection was presented to Cabinet on 15 March 2011. A further unannounced inspection will take place at some point during 2011.
4. The second type of inspection (to which this report relates) is an announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services conducted every three years. This is a joint inspection with Health and is conducted by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and examines the work of all partner agencies in planning and delivering safeguarding services and services for looked after children.
5. The inspection fieldwork took place between 7 and 18 March 2011. A team of five inspectors consisting of three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), a social care additional inspector and one inspector from the CQC, spent two weeks inspecting 76 case files for children and young people; visiting eight services; and they conducted over 65 focus groups. Over 550 people, including parents, carers, children and young people were interviewed as part of the process. Our partner agencies were also heavily involved and the Care

Quality Commission was part of the inspection with our PCT and health colleagues.

They also met with the lead members, the Chief Executive and reviewed the Children's Trust arrangements and work of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. The final report was published on the 6 May 2011 and is available electronically via the Ofsted website

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_view/\(leaid\)/931](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_view/(leaid)/931).

Findings of the Safeguarding and Looked After Inspection

6. All inspection judgements are made using the following four point scale:
 - Outstanding (Grade 1): A service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements. Currently only one Council in England or Wales has been judged as 'outstanding' in all domains.
 - 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.
7. Ofsted concluded that in Oxfordshire:
 - Overall effectiveness of safeguarding services is **good**.
 - Capacity to improve is **good**.
 - Overall effectiveness of services for looked after children is **good**; and
 - Capacity to improve is **good**.

(Full details of the main findings can be found in the attached report – see Annex 1).

It is important to note that the judgement for “Making a positive contribution, including user engagement” for looked after children and care leavers was **outstanding**.

Safeguarding Services

8. The inspection identified the following area of strengths in Oxfordshire:
 - The effectiveness of services to ensure that children and young people are safe and feel safe, is good.
 - The quality of our safeguarding provision is good.
 - The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe is good.
 - Ambition and prioritisation are good. The council and its partners provide strong and effective leadership in safeguarding and promoting

the welfare of children and young people. The well-established Children's Trust offers strong and effective leadership to the partnership.

- The Children and Young People's Plan effectively reflects the needs and aspirations of the county and is based on robust evidence and consultation with service users.
- Leadership and management are good. Effective systems are in place to ensure that children and young people are adequately protected and are kept safe.
- Performance management and quality assurance arrangements are good. The merging of the performance boards of the Children's Trust and the LSCB to become a joint planning, performance and quality assurance group, has increased the focus on key performance target areas and on avoiding duplication.
- Performance management is also well embedded throughout the council.
- Partnership working is good. Oxfordshire has maintained its long history of effective working between partners at both a strategic and operational level.

9. The inspection report made the following recommendations:

Immediately

Review the participation and attendance of adult services at child protection conferences.

Within three months

- Ensure that all reports for child protection conferences are distributed in advance.
- Improve the quality of child protection plans.
- Improve the timeliness of the convening of core groups following initial case conferences.
- Improve the attendance of key agencies at Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) meetings.
- Ensure that all children who return home after being reported missing to the police are offered the chance to talk to someone independent.
- Improve systems of recording to ensure all relevant documentation is easily accessible.

Services for Looked After Children

10. Inspectors found the following areas of strength in looked after children services:

- Health outcomes for looked after children and young people are good.

- The arrangements for ensuring that looked after children and young people are safe are good.
- Children and young people who are looked after have outstanding opportunities to make a positive contribution.
- The impact of services to support and improve the economic well-being of looked after children, young people and care leavers is good because of considerable efforts made by the care leaving service to engage young people in planning for independence and to develop successful adult lives.
- The quality of provision for looked after children and young people is good.
- Ambition and prioritisation for looked after children and young people is good. Aspirations for children, young people and care leavers are high.
- The leadership and management of services for looked after children and young people are good.
- The quality of performance management, management oversight and quality assurance is good. Overall, performance against national indicators is in line with or exceeds that of similar councils or that found nationally. In particular placement stability is improving well.

11. The inspection report made the following recommendations:

- Increase the pace of improvement in educational attainment and attendance.
- Ensure that the assessment of risk posed, to or by the child or young person, is clearly outlined in one specific document.

Within three months

- Review the capacity of independent reviewing officers.
- Improve the quality of recording in care plans and assessments to ensure that targets set for child or young person are clear and progress is monitored.
- Improve access to independent visitor provision for children and young people placed outside Oxfordshire.
- Ensure that reports on complaints made by looked after children and care leavers are regularly reported to the corporate parenting panel and action resulting from these complaints is clearly recorded.
- Improve the quality of reporting on the needs of looked after children to the LSCB.

Action Plan

12. A detailed action plan has been established and work to implement the recommendations is in hand. This forms part of the action plan for year two of the Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan and will be monitored via the Children, Education & Families Directorate Leadership Team and the

Quality, Performance and Planning sub-group of the Oxfordshire Children and Young Peoples Trust Board. The action plan is attached at Annex 2.

Financial and Staff Implications

13. These actions will be completed using existing resources. Any additional resources that might be needed for training and development will be addressed within the context of existing training initiatives or will be funded from existing resources within the directorate.

RECOMMENDATION

14. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
 - (a) receive this report and acknowledge the findings of the inspection report (Annex 1).
 - (b) note the recommendations in the inspection report, and
 - (c) approve the proposed actions and timescales to address the recommendations in the report.

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Background papers:

None

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