

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>10 DECEMBER 2010</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN HEREFORDSHIRE- JUNE AND SEPTEMBER 2010: OUTCOMES AND ACTION PLAN</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR SAFEGUARDING AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN</b>

**CLASSIFICATION:** Open

### **Wards Affected**

County-wide.

### **Purpose**

To inform Committee of outcomes of the first unannounced and announced Ofsted inspections.

### **Recommendations**

**THAT Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report and the draft action plan.**

### **Key Points Summary**

- In June 2010 Ofsted undertook the first annual inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children's safeguarding in Herefordshire. This inspection highlighted significant weaknesses in the referral and assessment service resulting in one area for priority action. Prompt and effective remedial action was taken to ensure safety of all children referred for a service and work to substantially and sustainably improve this particular service is ongoing.
- Ofsted undertook a full announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services across the partnership during September 2010. The overall judgments were, for safeguarding – overall effectiveness and capacity to improve both adequate; for looked after children – overall effectiveness and capacity to improve both good.
- Ofsted has published its annual rating of children's services in Herefordshire as adequate overall.

### **Alternative Options**

- 1 There are no alternative options.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
Daniel Crampton, Head of Safeguarding and Review on (01432) 260261

## Introduction and Background

### Key Considerations

- 1 This report summarises the outcome of the first full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children in Herefordshire and outlines the key areas highlighted as good or better and those requiring development and action.
- 2 Attached to this report is an outcome and action plan which consolidates learning from:
  - Unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children's safeguarding – June 2010
  - Announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services – September 2010
  - Improvement and Development Agency peer review of safeguarding for children commissioned by HSCB – May 2010.
  - Annual Ofsted rating letter for children's services – October 2010.
- 3 Herefordshire children's services last full inspection was under the Joint Area Review in 2005 which judged children's safeguarding services to be inadequate. Formal intervention was arranged until November 2007 and improvements had been slow up until mid 2009 when a stable senior safeguarding management team was established. Internal reviews were commissioned by an experienced consultant in November - December 2008 and May 2009.
- 4 In May 2010 Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) commissioned a peer review from the Improvement and Development Agency. This high level review highlighted the following themes:
  - Relationship between the Children's Trust and the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board to be defined, i.e. delivery v scrutiny and monitoring
  - Child's voice to be strengthened and systems for capturing these to be improved
  - Data analysis performance management, scrutiny, quality assurance to be improved.
  - Developmental issues identified as inter-agency working, training, serious case reviews.
- 5 In June 2010 Ofsted undertook the first annual inspection of contact and referral and assessment arrangements for children's safeguarding in Herefordshire. This inspection highlighted significant weaknesses in the referral and assessment service resulting in one area for priority action. Prompt and effective remedial action was taken to ensure safety of all children referred for a service and work to substantially and sustainably improve this particular service is ongoing.
- 6 Ofsted undertook a full announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services across the partnership during September 2010, which included a review of progress from unannounced.

### Summary of safeguarding findings

- 7 The outcomes for children and young people were judged to be adequate with good features. The council were judged to show robust and decisive leadership in safeguarding following the unannounced inspection in June which highlighted significant problems in the referral and assessment team, particularly regarding timeliness of seeing children, poor quality of assessments and poor management information from Frameworki.
- 8 Between June and September 2010 intensive resource and focus was applied to the referral and assessment service resulting in robust oversight of all cases, changes to systems and

management and the start of improving practice. From October 2010 a referral and assessment improvement plan is in place to overhaul systems and practice including partner contributions with the aim of a redesigned and relaunched fit for purpose referral service from early 2011.

- 9 Improvements were particularly noted in the areas of elective home education, children missing from home and school, raised awareness of domestic abuse and private fostering. Good elements of safeguarding were identified as a well conceived CAF model and interface with Referral and assessment service; effective safe recruitment; safeguarding training through HSCB; excellent result for young people who are NEET. (not in education, employment or training)
- 10 Overwhelmingly children and young people told inspectors that they felt safe at school and in their communities and cited excellent examples of approaches to reduce bullying.
- 11 The quality of safeguarding provision overall was judged to be adequate. Positive areas identified include to Family Intervention Project, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) officer. Areas for improvement were identified as being:
  - Escalation of concerns in and between agencies
  - Effective sexual offence examination arrangements for children
  - Hospital reception areas for children
  - Understanding of best interest decision making in NHH
  - Understanding of ethnicity religion and culture in assessments
- 12 Leadership and management across the Children's Trust and the council was seen to be robust, visible and effective with strong ambitions and vision for the future. Morale of staff is good and there is an effective multi agency workforce strategy. The HSCB has effectively disseminated learning from serious case reviews undertaken and has clear priorities for the Board. User engagement was judged as having outstanding features with active involvement of children and young people that influences the council and children's trust.
- 13 The most significant areas for improvement were identified as performance management and quality assurance and these were judged inadequate by inspectors. Although the HSCB has clear priorities and is recognised as starting from a low base it does not yet receive nor effectively analyse sufficient information in order to scrutinise agencies' safeguarding practice. Frameworki, as the main reporting and recording system for children's social care, does not yet support the effective delivery nor performance monitoring of safeguarding services. A specific improvement plan is well underway to address this issue.
- 14 A further area judged adequate with improvements to make are commissioning and ensuring value for money.

### **Summary of looked after children findings**

- 15 The overall effectiveness of services and outcomes for looked after children, young people and care leavers were judged as good with some outstanding features. Services provided by health staff including CAMHs are reported as good by professionals and looked after children. Children and young people reported consistently that the care they receive is good or very good. Stability of placement is very high in Herefordshire, above national average. Children are seen and supported by qualified social workers and a range of professional partners.
- 16 The impact of agencies to ensure looked after children are successful in enjoying and achieving is outstanding with children and young people achieving and attaining very well in

Herefordshire.

- 17 Opportunities for children and young people to make a positive contribution is judged as good. Looked after children are actively involved in service design including recruitment of staff, chairing own reviews. Youth Offending Service impact on offending rates for looked after children is effective. The impact of agencies in enabling looked after children and young people to achieve economic well being is good with an effective aftercare service and plans to offer apprenticeships through the partnership for all care leavers who want it.
- 18 The capacity to improve in this area is judged as good.

## **Community Impact**

- 19 Public confidence in safeguarding services from the public is vital.

## **Financial Implications**

- 20 None

## **Legal Implications**

- 21 None

## **Risk Management**

- 22 None

## **Consultees**

- 23 Senior managers and staff in Children's Services.

## **Appendices**

- 24 Outcomes and action plan

## **Background Papers**

- None identified.