



Committee  
Shadow Health & Well-Being Board  
  
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Item  
  
**8**  
  
Public

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## **OFSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN SERVICES**

### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to share the outcomes of the Ofsted Inspection which took place between the 7 and 18 February 2011 and to outline the indicative action plan which is being progressed by Shropshire Council and other statutory partners.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Health and Well-Being Board to note the outlined key improvement actions.
- 2.2 To provide feedback on the progress made so far

### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1.1 Attached at appendix 1 is the full report that was published on 25 March 2011. This was a thorough inspection involving five inspectors. The methodology is outlined on page 2 of the report and a summary of the main findings is given on the final page of the document. The overall grades awarded in respect of all partners' contributions to services were that Safeguarding services are Adequate and Looked After Children's Services are Good. No areas were considered to be inadequate.
- 3.1.2 The Ofsted judgements were very much in line with our own evaluation. Whereas a judgement of Adequate for Safeguarding is not as good as we would have liked, this needs to be seen in the context of a difficult couple of years with high workloads and difficulty recruiting key staff. The direction of travel was strongly supported by the Ofsted team and an endorsement of the steps taken so far to tackle the underlying challenges faced by the service. This rating was a judgement of all partners involved in Safeguarding in the County.

- 3.2 In a time of limited resources it was recognised that in Shropshire, strategic decisions have been made to ensure that resources are appropriately targeted at the most vulnerable children and young people.
- 3.3 Inspectors noted particular Safeguarding strengths for Shropshire in relation to a number of areas including the following:
- social work staff recruitment retention and training;
  - that the wishes and feelings of children are taken into account; and
  - that safeguarding practices were robust.
- 3.4 There were five areas graded as good and five as adequate.
- 3.5 It was noted that ambition and prioritisation are good. They continued that there is a strong commitment to safeguarding, demonstrated by elected members, the Chief Executive and the wider partnership.
- 3.6 For Looked After Children's services, inspectors awarded seven areas with a grade of good, two achieved adequate and the education of LAC was deemed outstanding. Particular strengths were noted regarding sustained improvement of stability of children's placements, having a skilled and stable workforce and investment in developing the skills of foster carers. The capacity for improvement is given as good, with a clear vision and refocused and ambitious priorities for looked after children set out in the Children and Young People's Strategy for 2011.
- 3.7 Inspectors noted that Shropshire Council gives high priority to improving educational outcomes.

#### **4.0 Areas for development**

- 4.1 The draft action plan attached is focused around the areas identified for improvement. There were 3 for immediate action (early intervention support, conference reports being shared with family and information being shared between hospitals). A further 6 areas were for improvement over the next 3 months and two to be addressed within 6 months. Further details are given in the attached action plan.
- 4.2 The Action Plan focuses on Ofsted's recommendations and at this stage covers the immediate actions that have or are being undertaken. Each is being further developed to specify measurable outcomes.
- 4.3 The successful completion of these actions depends upon wider service development work that is underway.
- 4.4 The important strands are:

- Continued efforts to retain the valued social work workforce and to avoid the use of temporary agency staff.
- Developing effective communication between Accident and Emergency, minor injury units and Community Health professionals
- Supporting front line managers to ensure high quality supervision and performance management
- Strengthening and developing the role of Independent Chairs to ensure effective Quality Assurance of all individual cases
- Making sure the Safeguarding board is an effective partnership with a real focus on the outcomes for the most vulnerable children
- Building robust links between specialist Child Protection services and other agencies and organisations
- Ensuring GP involvement in respect to Safeguarding
- Putting in place measures to reduce the numbers of Children coming into the care system or remaining subject to safeguarding plans
- Strengthening Health arrangements for LAC children particularly in respect to initial assessments
- Ensuring the completion and follow up to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Review
- Ensuring the effectiveness of the newly changed Children's Trust

## **5.0 Conclusion**

- 5.1 The OFSTED report noted that the overall direction of services was positive and that there was real potential for strengthening and improving services for the most vulnerable children
- 5.2 At a time of rapid organisational change it will be important to ensure the effectiveness at every level of multi-professional working
- 5.3 The Safeguarding Board together with the Children's Trust will be the key bodies for monitoring and driving improvement

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

**Human Rights Act Appraisal**

The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998.

**Environmental Appraisal**

The broader service reviews referred to within this report will aim to reduce the amount of travel-linked costs and carbon footprint associated with the service.

**Risk Management Appraisal**

The need for recruitment of sufficient social work staff was identified as a Corporate risk and the progress identified in this report contributes towards reducing that risk.

**Community/Consultations Appraisal**

None specifically for this report - service users, parents, carers and stakeholders were consulted during the inspection.

**Cabinet Member**

Ann Hartley

**Local Member**

All

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – The Ofsted Report March 2011

Appendix 2 – Initial Action Plan