



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Council
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<u>Item/Paper</u>
Public

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## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER STATEMENT ON SAFEGUARDING**

### **Summary**

The attached report from the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services sets out the Safeguarding monitoring arrangements and achievements, for 2009/2010 and the key priorities for 2010/2011.

### **Recommendations**

That Council note the contents of this report.

## **REPORT**

### **Monitoring arrangements**

1. The responsibility of the Lead member is to ensure that children's safeguarding services are robust and effective. Strategic and operational progress is scrutinised through the regular meetings held with the Chief Executive, the Director of Children's services and the Assistant Director Social care and Safeguards.
2. Additional meetings with the AD Social Care and Safeguards are held to review the progress of action plans and to review senior manager monitoring.
3. As Lead Member I have had involvement in case file audits and safeguarding visits to children's homes as outlined below and I oversee the development of these important activities.
4. I ensure attendance at Scrutiny committee where safeguarding governance, performance and monitoring is reported twice yearly.

### **Regulation 33 Visits to Children's Homes**

5. These visits are carried out on a monthly basis by members. Each of our three children's home, The Rowans, Chelmaren and Havenbrook have a linked member who is accompanied by a pool member. On an alternate monthly

- basis officers at Head of Service level accompany the link member.
6. Detailed analysis of the safeguarding systems takes place and records made of findings and recommendations. These are shared with the DCS and senior officers and copies sent to Ofsted. The recent visits have reported upon very good provision in all three homes. There is an annual review of these arrangements: the next review will see the increase in members taking part in these visits.

### **Representation on Fostering and Adoption Panels**

7. Member representation on the Panels that recommend approval of prospective adopters and foster carers is a statutory requirement. This is fulfilled by the attendance of Aggie Caesar–Homden and Peggy Mullock respectively. This is extremely important as many safeguarding issues are considered.

### **Case File Audits**

8. Case file Audits are undertaken on a monthly basis using a format originally developed after the Victoria Climbié report. The audits take place in all Social Care and Safeguards Services.
9. Elected members attended the majority of audits and, since the establishment of the new pool in 2009, have been present at all audits.
10. Each audit results in an action plan which the appropriate Head of Service is responsible for overseeing.
11. In general, many improvements in practice were noted by the audits conducted in 2009/2010. Most services are now keeping files in good order, complying with the divisional guidance on file maintenance, and all services ensure contact recording is typed. Within the Looked After Children Service and the Leaving Care Team there had been a marked improvement in the recording of supervision and case management decision making. Photographs of looked after young people were placed on most files, either as a printed photograph or as a CD containing the images. Key documentation for the placement of young people was up-to-date and on file, whether the young person was looked after or living 'independently'
12. The audits have identified the following areas for increased focus: the regularity of core groups, the updating of assessments and the evidencing of statutory visits in a consistent manner. These findings have influenced the priorities set out in the overall improvement plan.

### **Performance**

13. Short term and long term stability of Looked After Children's placements, a Local Area Agreement outcome, has met the end of year targets and is much improved on previous years. This has been achieved in tandem with reducing the costs of placements through block contracts.

14. Initial Assessment timeliness, while just missing local targets improved to reach the best 25% of authorities nationally, and the timeliness and stability of children placed for adoption remains top quartile.
15. On 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2010 the Ofsted unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements took place. This focused on the Stay Safe Service examining in detail the response of that Service to referrals relating to children at risk of harm or requiring children in need services.
16. The inspectors gave positive feedback on seven areas which led them to conclude that these were being delivered in accordance with national guidance. These included the systems for dealing with referrals, the allocation of cases and the supervisory arrangements. Four areas of strength were identified. No priority areas were identified and the areas of development are areas that have been already identified by the Social Care and Safeguards Division. These were the subject of individual action plans, for example in relation to the timeliness of assessments and the recruitment and retention of staff.
17. Completion of a detailed Improvement Plan is already underway in response to:
  - the performance levels of some indicators, including improving Core Assessment timeliness and reducing the duration of children being subject to Child Protection Plans through enhanced monitoring and management of case progress;
  - the unannounced inspection findings;
  - a Data Quality Review; and
  - the review of the Help Desk.
18. The planned relocation of the Stay Safe Service to the Shrewsbury Business Park will bring many benefits. Taking place in August this will have an overall impact on the priority areas, improving efficiency and communication due to the co- location of services.

### **Priorities 2010/2011**

19. The Improvement Plan focuses on 5 key priorities for 2010/11:
  - a) Data Quality: To improve the timeliness and accuracy of recording.
  - b) Practice Standards: To ensure consistently high quality assessments and child protection plans.
  - c) Management: To maximise the use of management practices to support staff performance and welfare.

- d) Joint Access Team: To ensure consistently applied and appropriate decision making in relation to child protection and children in need referrals.
- e) Staffing: To recruit and retain the expertise required to deliver a good service.

20. These are all critical areas for development. The services have been under considerable pressure in 2009/2010 due to the rise in demand for child protection and looked after children services at a time of reduced availability of experienced staff and will remain priority areas for the Children and Young People's Directorate.

<p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b></p>
<p><b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b></p> <p>Responding to concerns regarding child welfare and safety inevitably raises issues such as the right to privacy and family life. Our responses at all times should be 'proportionate' with the main focus always on the safety and welfare of the child.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Appraisal</b></p> <p>There are no environmental appraisal issues arising from this report.</p>
<p><b>Risk Management Appraisal</b></p> <p>The authority has a very considerable responsibility in respect of children at risk and as a corporate parent. It should keep under regular review its capacity to deliver these duties effectively in light of revised statutory guidance.</p>
<p><b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b></p> <p>The examination safeguarding service delivery is regularly held through the SSCB.</p>
<p><b>Cabinet Member:</b></p> <p>Cllr Cecilia Motley – Lead Member</p> <p>Cllr Aggie Caesar-Homden</p>
<p><b>Local Member</b></p> <p>Applicable to all members</p>
<p><b>Appendix</b></p>