
Meeting	Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date	16 April 2012
Subject	Plan to address recommendations from the Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children
Report of	Director of Children's Service
Summary	Barnet's Safeguarding and outcomes for Children Looked After by the Council were inspected by Ofsted in January 2012. The outcome of the inspection found that safeguarding services were good overall and that the outcomes for Looked After Children were good overall. This paper outlines the findings of the inspection report and responds to the recommendations within the report.

Officer Contributors	Ann Graham, Assistant Director, Social Care, Children's Service; Jay Mercer, Deputy Director, Children's Service; Lindsey Hyde and Caroline Glover, Strategy and Project Officers, Children's Service
Status (public or exempt)	Public
Wards affected	All
Enclosures	Appendix 1
Reason for urgency / exemption from call-in	Not applicable

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1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That Members consider the implications of the Ofsted Action Plan and comment as appropriate on the proposed actions for the council and its partners.**

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 None

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The implementation of Ofsted recommendations will ensure that Barnet continues to support the Corporate Plan (2012/2013) strategic objective 'Safeguarding vulnerable children and adults'.
- 3.2 The implementation of Ofsted's recommendations relating to safeguarding supports the Barnet Children and Young People Plan (2010-2013) objective to 'Identify and protect those most at risk of harm'.
- 3.3 The implementation of Ofsted's recommendations relating to services for looked after children supports the Barnet Children and Young People Plan (2010-2013) objectives to 'Support children in care to have a happy childhood and successful transition into adulthood' and 'Enable every child and young person to achieve their full potential, narrowing the gap for those whose attainment is at risk'.
- 3.4 Recommendations from the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspection of safeguarding and looked after children have been embedded in the Children and Young People Plan actions for 2012/13 to support a joined up response to continual improvement of these services across partner agencies.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.2 There is a risk that if the council does not adequately implement the recommendations proposed in the February 2012 Ofsted Inspection report for Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services in the Borough of Barnet, there would be an adverse impact on our most vulnerable children and young people. Failure to implement the recommendations would also have an adverse impact on the annual assessment of Barnet's Children's Service, which is currently 'performs excellently' (4). This could lead to Barnet being seen as a less successful borough in which to live and work.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 5.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in decision-making in the council pursuant to the Equality Act 2010. This means the council and all other organisations acting on its behalf must have due regard to the equality duties when exercising a public function. The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality and good relations into day to day business requiring equality considerations to be reflected into the design of policies and the delivery of services and for these to be kept under review.
- 5.2 The Ofsted report demonstrates that equality and diversity issues are given proper consideration, for example at paragraph 120 "managers pay good attention to the diverse needs of children and families and take appropriate steps to ensure these are considered in case planning. Where necessary, advocates and interpreters are

commissioned to enable children and young people to access services and make representation.” Other examples of equality considerations are referenced in the report.

- 5.3 The implementation of the Ofsted recommendations will continue to ensure that the diverse needs of children and families are given due consideration in case planning and service provision.

6. USE OF RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (Finance, Performance & Value for Money, Staffing, IT, Sustainability)

- 6.1 The implementation of Ofsted’s recommendations will be achieved within existing Children’s Service budgets.

7. LEGAL ISSUES

- 7.1 The council must continue to discharge all of its statutory functions pursuant to the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, and all other relevant Acts, Regulations and statutory guidance. Implementation of Ofsted’s recommendations will further continue to drive improvement, efficiency and secure better outcomes for Barnet’s children in need and looked after children.

- 7.2 At paragraph 110 Ofsted state “good legal support is also available with evidence of well considered court applications in order to secure children’s futures. Legal services’ input to statutory officers group also ensures that the group is well informed with regards to performance of the children’s service.

8. CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

- 8.1 The scope of Scrutiny Committees is contained within Part 2, Article 6 of the constitution; the Terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Committees are in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the constitution).

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background

- 9.1 In January 2012, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook an announced 10 day inspection of the safeguarding and looked after children services in Barnet. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate 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.
- 9.2 The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:
- discussions with children and young people receiving services, front line staff and managers, senior officers, elected members and a range of community representatives
 - analysing and evaluating reports and performance data from a variety of sources
 - a review of 73 case files for children and young people with a range of needs.
 - interviews and focus groups with front line professionals, managers and senior staff from Barnet’s Health organisations, including North Central London NHS Barnet.

- 9.3 The Ofsted and CQC report gave the Borough of Barnet an overall rating of 'good' for both safeguarding and the outcomes for our looked after children. As at 24 February 2012, of the 97 Local Authorities for whom such an inspection has been undertaken (excluding those who had been re-inspected) in relation to the safeguarding judgement 2 were rated as 'outstanding', 31 as 'good', 47 as 'satisfactory' and 17 as 'inadequate'. For the looked after children judgement, 0 were rated as 'outstanding', 50 as 'good', 44 as 'satisfactory' and 3 as 'inadequate'.
- 9.4 Areas that Ofsted picked out for particular praise include Barnet's overall vision and direction; the partnership of services for children were praised for being ambitious and having a clear vision to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people. Inspectors reported that staff across the partnership enjoy working in the borough and demonstrate commitment to the values of the partnership and sense of direction.
- 9.5 The strategy for early intervention and prevention was seen as a real strength. The delivery of a range of services through the safer families and family focus model in particular were seen as demonstrating discernable, improved outcomes. Effective work was highlighted in the report as having prevented some children coming into care, and enabling some child protection plans to cease. The report highlighted that this has resulted in a corresponding reduction in costs for the council and partners. Inspectors also found clear evidence that children and young people's educational outcomes and life chances are improving.
- 9.6 The report highlighted the leadership shown by both the Children's Trust and the Corporate Parenting role of the Council and Council Members. Elected members were viewed as committed to listening to the views of children and young people and to giving them opportunities to influence the development of services.
- 9.7 It was recognised that the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board continues to be developed to ensure an effective structure which promotes ownership, accountability and challenge. Good partnership work was identified as taking place, for example, the work of the multi-agency domestic violence strategy group which has resulted in improved support and services to victims of domestic abuse.
- 9.8 The participation of young people in Barnet and their involvement in service planning was highlighted throughout the report. Inspectors found that there was a strong focus on children and young people having a voice through a variety of groups including the Youth Shield, the Youth Board, and the Role Model Army (the Children in Care Council).
- 9.8 The report emphasised that the borough is committed to improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people and narrowing the gap between these young people and others in the borough is a priority. There was recognition that the borough takes its corporate parenting role seriously and there are strong links between the borough's corporate parenting function and the work of the virtual school team.
- 9.9 Adoption support services were seen as good and the report acknowledged that workers in this field are very experienced and provide imaginative approaches including post adoption support to parents, carers and children.
- 9.10 20 out of Ofsted's 22 assessment criteria received a rating of 'good'. The Ofsted report highlights that the support provided to children and young people is good, but the recording and monitoring of assessments and service provision is variable. Therefore two of the assessment criteria, the quality of provision for safeguarding and the quality of

provision for looked after children, received a rating of at least 'adequate'.

9.11 In their final report Ofsted made 15 recommendations, which will enable Barnet Council and its delivery partners to improve the quality of service provision for both safeguarding and looked after children's services.

9.12 An action plan has been developed (Appendix A) to enable Barnet Council and its delivery partners to take forward Ofsted's 15 recommendations. The majority of actions required to make these improvements are based on a need to ensure more consistent implementation of procedures and guidelines, SMART target setting and effective auditing. The action plan outlines the key actions, a named lead officer and a specified reporting mechanism to ensure that each of the recommendations are implemented. In addition to the Ofsted recommendations, CQC will also be making some health-specific recommendations.

Recommendations and key activities

9.13 Recommendation 1

The Domestic Violence Strategic Board to review the services provided through housing for victims of domestic abuse.

Key Action - to be completed within 3 months

- Carry out a review of services provided through housing for victims of domestic abuse.

Future Action

- Following on from the review, refresh the Domestic Violence Strategy and action plan to include a focus on housing.

9.13 Recommendation 2

The council to review its current processes for initiating child protection enquiries and the use of strategy discussions and follow up meetings in order to be fully compliant with Working Together 2010 and local safeguarding procedures.

Key Action - to be completed within 3 months

- Review current process in relation to recording section 47 enquiries and the use of strategy discussion.

Future Action

- Use the findings of the review to produce relevant guidance for officers and monitor to ensure that the guidance is being complied with.

9.14 Recommendation 3

Strategy discussions and meetings should be chaired as a matter of routine by team managers including those undertaken through the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)¹ service.

Key Action - to be completed within 3 months

- Going forward team managers to chair strategy discussions and meetings and these arrangements to be monitored to ensure compliance.

9.15 Recommendation 4

LADO arrangements to be reviewed to ensure the procedures, especially in relation to

¹ The role of the LADO is set out in the HM Government guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2006). The LADO works within Children's Services and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has behaved in a way that may have harmed a child.

advice given, strategy discussions and meetings are compliant with Working Together 2010 and local safeguarding procedures.

Key Action - to be completed within 3 months

- Commission and undertake an independent review of protocols around child protection decision making and the role of the LADO.

9.16 Recommendation 5

The BSCB to ensure that all schools adopt the correct safeguarding procedures by referring appropriate safeguarding concerns to either the LADO or children's social care before interviewing children in detail or undertaking any further investigative actions before a strategy discussion or meeting has been held.

Key Actions - to be completed within 3 months

- Reissue safeguarding guidance to schools.
- Highlight safeguarding guidance at primary and secondary heads meetings.
- Consider providing further safeguarding training to schools.

9.17 Recommendation 6

Review child protection and children in need plans to ensure actions are specific and timescales are identified.

Key Actions - to be completed within 3 months

- Undertake a dip audit of Children in Need Plans and Child Protection Plans and formulate an action plan based on findings.
- Issue guidance/training to support smarter plan writing.

Future Action

- After the guidance has been circulated and publicised undertake an audit of child protection and children in need plans to review progress.

9.18 Recommendation 7

Ensure that supervision records are suitably detailed and contain actions that are clear and measurable

Key Actions – to be completed within 3 months

- Issue SMART guidance for recording supervision to team managers, social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers
- Consider commissioning training from an external agency with a specialism in supervision

Future Action

- Undertake dip audits of supervision records to ensure compliance with guidance on supervision

9.19 Recommendation 8

Council to ensure looked after children and young people are made aware of the existence of the Pledge² and how they can use this to monitor the commitment of partners to providing good quality care and support

Key Actions – to be completed within 3 months

² 'The Pledge' refers to the London Pledge for children and young people in care, which is a commitment by all Children's Trusts and their partners. It aims to ensure that children and young people in care in London have equal access to the same range of key services and support wherever they live.

- Work with Role Model Army and focus groups of children in and leaving care to begin the design of a Barnet-specific Pledge.
- Develop an action and/or monitoring plan for the Pledge to review commitment and progress made by the council and partners

Future Action

- Publicise the Pledge to all children in care and leaving care

9.20 Recommendation 9

Council to ensure that robust case audit systems and reporting mechanisms in both looked after children and safeguarding services are sufficiently challenging, particularly in relation to the quality of practice and direct work. Ensure that audit findings are routinely shared with the senior management team to drive improvement

Key Actions – to be completed within 3 months

- Strengthen and clearly outline reporting mechanisms for case audits to ensure findings report up from the front line to management and senior management and vice versa
- Safeguarding and social care management to develop an audit forward plan

9.21 Recommendation 10

Develop the existing mechanism to support complaints to ensure that there is a framework for annually reporting to relevant committees and boards on representations and complaints by looked after children and young people to include issues of service quality and practice

Key Action – to be completed within 3 months

- Develop an action plan to ensure that complaints from looked after children are going to senior managers in social care and relevant committees and boards

9.22 Recommendations 11 and 12

Council to develop and implement an explicit permanency policy to secure long term, stable and legally protected placements for looked after children

Council to ensure longer-term looked after children are provided with permanent and legally secure placements

Key Actions – to be completed within 6 months

- Develop a permanency policy which clearly outlines the use of permanent and legally secure placements.
- Review all longer term looked after children to ensure that they are being provided with the most permanent and legally secure placement possible.

Future Action

- Embed the permanency policy into practice and monitor its effectiveness

9.23 The Ofsted report included some recommendations for health agencies, as listed below. The CQC will also be publishing a report with key findings for Health. When the report is published colleagues at NCL NHS Barnet will put in place actions to address recommendations arising from the CQC report.

9.24 Recommendation 13 – Health agencies

Ensure there is sufficient capacity to support planned changes to inter-agency strategic and commissioning work (to be completed within 6 months).

Key Action – to be completed within 6 months

- Job descriptions and Service Level Agreements for safeguarding staff within health to be reviewed to ensure sufficient capacity to support changes

9.25 Recommendation 14 – NHS Barnet and NHS providers

Ensure that front line health staff can access Level 3 of the multiagency safeguarding training (to be completed within 6 months).

Key Action – to be completed within 6 months

- Programme of Interagency level 3 2012 training to be sent out to all health staff to ensure access to training

9.26 Recommendation 15 – NHS Barnet and NHS providers

NHS Barnet and NHS providers to appoint a designated doctor for looked after children to strengthen the capacity of health staff to support the work of the designated nurse for looked after children (to be completed within 6 months) .

Key Actions – to be completed within 6 months

- Two GP surgeries provide support to designated nurse for looked after children, while arrangements are reviewed
- Review of current arrangements to be carried out

10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Final Report January 2012 - Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services London Borough of Barnet <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/barnet>

CFO: JH/MC

LS: HP

Appendix 1

Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Action Plan 2012

 Local Authority & partners

 Health & partners

Ofsted recommendations	Ofsted timeframe	Key actions	Lead officer	Completion date	Reporting mechanism/ oversight
1 The Domestic Violence Strategic Board to review the services provided through housing for victims of domestic abuse	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out a review of services provided through housing for victims of domestic abuse *Subsequently review and refresh Domestic Violence strategy and action plan, to include a focus on housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stav Yiannou 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 May 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DVSB Safer Communities Board
2 The council to review its current processes for initiating child protection enquiries and the use of strategy discussions and follow up meetings in order to be fully compliant with Working Together 2010 and local safeguarding procedures	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current process in relation to recording section 47 enquiries and the use of strategy discussions *Produce guidance and monitor compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jo Pymont Erica Ferrari Disabled Children's Team – Sue Reeve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 May 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding and social care management meeting
3 Strategy discussions and meetings should be chaired as a matter of routine by team managers including those undertaken through the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) service	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team Managers to chair meetings *Subsequently monitor to ensure compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Care lead – Jo Pymont & Erica Ferrari Disabled Children's Lead Safeguarding lead - Bridget Griffin & Liz Shaw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 May 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding and social care management meeting
4 LADO arrangements to be	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission and undertake an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding 		

reviewed to ensure the procedures, especially in relation to advice given, strategy discussions and meetings are compliant with Working Together 2010 and local safeguarding procedures		independent review of protocols around child protection decision making and the role of the LADO	lead - Bridget Griffin		
5 The BSCB to ensure that all schools adopt the correct safeguarding procedures by referring appropriate safeguarding concerns to either the LADO or children's social care before interviewing children in detail or undertaking any further investigative actions before a strategy discussion or meeting has been held	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reissue guidance to schools • Highlight at primary and secondary heads meetings • Further safeguarding training to be considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Beach • Bridget Griffin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 May 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnet Safeguarding Children Board
6 Review child protection and children in need plans to ensure actions are specific and timescales are identified	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a dip audit of Children in Need Plans and Child Protection Plans and formulate an action plan based on findings. • Review Children in Need Plans and Child Protection Plans and formulate an action plan. • Issue guidance/training to support smarter plan writing <p>*A subsequent audit (after implementation) will be undertaken to review progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding lead - Bridget Griffin • Social Care lead – Jo Pymont • Disabled Children's Team Lead – Sue Reeve • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 May 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding and social care management meeting
7 Ensure that supervision records are suitably detailed and contain actions that are clear and measurable	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue SMART for recording supervision to team managers, social workers and IROs • Consider commissioning training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Care lead – Jo Pymont • Disabled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 May 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding and social care management meeting

		<p>from an external agency with a specialism in supervision</p> <p>*Subsequently undertake dip audits of supervision records</p>	<p>Children's Team Lead – Sue Reeve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding lead - Bridget Griffin 		
<p>8 Council to ensure looked after children and young people are made aware of the existence of the Pledge and how they can use this to monitor the commitment of partners to providing good quality care and support</p>	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Role Model Army and focus groups of children in and leaving care to begin design of a Barnet-specific Pledge. Develop an action and/or monitoring plan for the Pledge to review commitment/progress of council and partners <p>*Subsequently publicise the Pledge to all children in care and leaving care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Manager Specialist Resources Service Manager Children in Care and Leaving Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 May 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel
<p>9 Council to ensure that robust case audit systems and reporting mechanisms in both looked after children and safeguarding services are sufficiently challenging, particularly in relation to the quality of practice and direct work. Ensure that audit findings are routinely shared with the senior management team to drive improvement</p>	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen and clearly outline reporting mechanisms for case audits to ensure findings report up from the front line to management and senior management and vice versa Safeguarding and social care management to develop an audit forward plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jay Mercer Ann Graham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 May 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding and social care management meeting Subsequent reporting of findings to the Senior Leadership Team and Barnet Safeguarding Children Board
<p>10 Develop the existing mechanism to support complaints to ensure that there is a framework for annually reporting to relevant committees and boards on representations and complaints by looked after children and</p>	3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an action plan to ensure that complaints from looked after children are going to senior managers in social care and relevant committees and boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Val White/Rachel Williams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 May 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding and social care management meeting Subsequent reporting of findings to the

young people to include issues of service quality and practice					Senior Leadership Team and Barnet Safeguarding Children Board
11 Council to develop and implement an explicit permanency policy to secure long term, stable and legally protected placements for looked after children	6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a permanency policy which clearly outlines the use of permanent and legally secure placements. Review all longer term looked after children to ensure that they are being provided with the most permanent and legally secure placement possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Care lead – Jo Pymont 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 August 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding and social care management meeting
12 Council to ensure longer-term looked after children are provided with permanent and legally secure placements	6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Subsequently embed the policy into practice and monitor its effectiveness 			
Ensure there is sufficient capacity to support planned changes to inter-agency strategic and commissioning work	6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job descriptions and Service Level Agreements for safeguarding staff within health to be reviewed to ensure sufficient capacity to support changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistant Director joint commissioning and planning Designated Nurse Safeguarding children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 August 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical Executive committee Barnet Safeguarding Children Board
Ensure that front line health staff can access Level 3 of the multiagency safeguarding training	6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme of Interagency level 3 2012 training to be sent out to all health staff to ensure access to training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated Nurse Safeguarding children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 August 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barnet Safeguarding Children Board
Health to appoint a designated doctor for looked after children to strengthen the capacity of health staff to support the work of the designated nurse for looked after children	6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two GP surgeries provide support to designated nurse for looked after children, while arrangements are reviewed Review of current arrangements to be carried out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated Nurse children in Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24 August 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barnet Safeguarding Children Board