
Meeting	Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date	10 September 2012
Subject	Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children – Action Plan
Report of	Director of Adult Social Care and Health and Interim Director of Children’s Service
Summary	Barnet’s Safeguarding and outcomes for Children in Care 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 how the Council and partners have responded to the findings and recommendations of the inspection report.

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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 the Committee note the report and comment as appropriate on the actions taken by the council and its partners to address the recommendations set out by Ofsted in their Final Report.**

2. RELEVANT PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- 2.1 Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16th April 2012, Decision Item 8: 'Plan to address recommendations from the Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children'

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

- 4.1 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 have an adverse impact on future assessment of Barnet Children's Service. 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 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. The recommendations provide a focus on the journey of the child to receiving support which will promote their achievement of good outcomes. The implementation of SMART actions in assessments and care plans will support effective monitoring which will ultimately promote timely decision making and provision of support for children and young people.

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.
- 8.2 The terms of Reference of the Scrutiny Committees are in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the Constitution). The Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee has within its terms of reference the following responsibilities:
- To scrutinise the Council and its partners in the discharge of statutory duties in relation to safeguarding.
 - To scrutinise the provision of education (children and adults), special educational needs provision, and the protection and welfare of children.

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 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'.
- 9.3 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'.
- 9.4 In their final report Ofsted made 15 recommendations, with an additional to from the CQC 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.
- 9.5 An action plan was developed to enable Barnet Council and its delivery partners to take forward Ofsted's 15 recommendations. The majority of actions required to make the improvements were based on a need to ensure more consistent implementation of procedures and guidelines, SMART target setting and effective auditing. The action plan outlined the key actions and the named lead officer who has ensured that each of the recommendations has been implemented within timeframes specified by Ofsted.
- 9.6 The implementation of the Ofsted Action Plan has been overseen by an assurance framework, to monitor and challenge progress on implementing the Ofsted recommendations, and to improve practice in line with the Ofsted report. The key forums in which the Action Plan has been scrutinised are:
- Safeguarding and Social Care Managers Meeting
 - Children's Service Senior Leadership Team
 - Statutory Officers Group
 - Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Barnet Safeguarding Children Board
- 9.7 The actions to address the recommendations of the inspection have been implemented within the timeframes required by Ofsted. Below is an outline of the actions taken to implement each recommendation and the outcomes and supporting evidence of their completion.
- 9.8 Further work is being undertaken across the Children's Service and with partners to ensure that actions now become embedded into service delivery to improve outcomes for children and young people in need of safeguarding services and those looked after. Children's Service team managers have led discussions focused on the Ofsted report and other issues highlighted in the inspection, and have worked collaboratively to identify ways to improve service provision. Service developments are now being embedded into team plans and to ensure that improvements become business as usual and are sustained.

Recommendations and outcomes of implementation

9.9 Recommendation 1

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

Key Actions - completed by 24 May 2012

- Review services provided through housing for victims of domestic abuse

Outcomes

As result of the Ofsted recommendation, Barnet Homes, operating under the Barnet Group, are now a member of the Domestic Violence Strategy Board. The review of services provided through housing for victims of domestic abuse has been undertaken by Domestic Violence Operational Group and overseen by Domestic Violence Strategy Board. Distinct workstreams have resulted from the review of services provided and are now being embedded into practice. These include a referral mapping process, joined up communications, updates to housing policies and procedures and the development of an integrated domestic violence multi-agency training programme. There are ongoing meetings to finalise work on housing assessments and housing allocations for victims of domestic abuse.

9.10 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 Actions - completed by 24 May 2012

- Review current process in relation to recording child protection enquiries and the use of strategy discussions
- Develop and hold training sessions for Team Managers on processes for child protection enquiries and strategy discussions

Outcomes

A review of Barnet's processes for section 47 enquiries, strategy discussion and follow up meetings has been completed. As a result of the review, new guidance was produced to ensure compliance with Working Together 2010 and the latest version of the London Child Protection Procedures. This guidance has been disseminated to relevant staff and is now available via the Children's Social Care Manual. All managers who are responsible for child protection conferences, have now received further training to ensure that they fully understand the new procedures.

9.11 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 Actions - completed by 24 May 2012

- Liaise with all Team Managers and LADO to ensure that all strategy meetings are chaired by a Team Manager

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.

- All strategy meetings to be chaired by a Team Manager. Strategy discussions are to be chaired by a Team Manager, except in exceptional circumstances where a principal or senior social worker will chair strategy discussion, to be signed off by a Team Manager

Outcomes

Team Managers routinely chair strategy meetings. Strategy meetings undertaken through the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) are chaired by LADO Liz Shaw. Please see the outcomes of recommendation 4 for further information, including details of the LADO review findings.

The updated procedures for chairing strategy meetings and discussions have been disseminated, so all relevant staff are aware of the processes to follow when a Team Manager is unavailable.

9.12 Recommendation 4

LADO arrangements to be 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.

Key Action - completed by 24 May 2012

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

Outcomes

An independent review was undertaken in response to the Ofsted recommendation and the review has now been completed. The inspection had found that there have been occasions when a strategy discussion has been conducted by the Investigations Officer if the LADO or the Divisional Manager (who takes responsibility for LADO work in the LADO's absence) were unavailable. Since this issue was raised during the inspection, the service has undertaken to ensure that strategy discussions will be undertaken by the LADO or Divisional Manager only.

The review found that 'the systems for managing allegations against people who work with children, or LADO arrangements, in Barnet, are effective, well-managed, and child-centred. They are compliant with all aspects of procedures contained within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010.' The review also found that 'in other councils, the LADO role is often an isolated one, but strength in Barnet is the distribution of responsibilities between the Divisional Manager, LADO, and Investigations Officer.' Overall the review made some minor recommendations and highlighted that Barnet take a proactive approach to learning lessons from casework involvement.

9.13 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 - completed by 24 May 2012

- Reissue safeguarding guidance to schools.
- Highlight safeguarding guidance at primary and secondary heads meetings and Governors' meeting
- Safeguarding Division to establish a debrief/learning process pathway where processes are not followed

Outcomes

The independent LADO review also reviewed schools' adoption of safeguarding procedures. Discussion with the LADO found that a case reviewed by the inspectors gave rise to concern, as the school had not implemented procedures appropriately. However, in this case, the school was an independent school in East London, not a Barnet school. In the cases audited as part of the independent review, Barnet schools did respond appropriately, reporting issues directly to the LADO, and ensuring that those involved in the incidents, including witnesses, wrote first-hand accounts.

Nonetheless, concerns that in some cases schools are not applying the correct safeguarding procedures when referring safeguarding concerns were highlighted in the Director's briefing to Governors in Spring. All schools have been reminded of the requirement to follow safeguarding procedures. The challenge role of School Governors in relation to safeguarding is on the agenda to be discussed at the Chair and Vice Chairs of Governors meeting on 19 September.

Furthermore, Safeguarding Division has created a database which will now collate themes and identify trends where procedures are not being followed by schools, to inform further development with schools.

9.14 Recommendation 6

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

Key Actions - completed by 24 May 2012

- Children in Need Plans to be individually reviewed by allocated worker
- Issue guidance/training to support smarter plan writing.

Outcomes

Allocated workers have now reviewed all Children in Need Plans to ensure that actions are specific and timescales are identified. Written guidance on smarter plan writing has been disseminated to all relevant staff and additional training has been provided during the course of staff study days. Going forward, it has now been identified as a management task to ensure that Children In Need Plans are SMART.

9.15 Recommendation 7

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

Key Actions – completed by 24 May 2012

- Provide briefing on SMART target writing to all managers
- Ensure Performance Objectives include a target around ensuring supervision records are compliant with SMART guidance

Managers have been briefed on SMART recording of supervision and will now ensure that all actions included in supervision records are SMART, have allocated time scales and a named person to take the actions forward. Within 6 months managers will audit supervision records to measure their compliance against SMART guidance.

Appraisal meetings and Performance Objectives now include a target around ensuring supervision records are compliant with SMART guidance.

9.16 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 Action – completed by 24 May 2012

- Work with the Role Model Army and focus groups of children in and leaving care to begin design of a Barnet specific pledge

Outcomes

A survey has been distributed to all children and young people in care and leaving care to raise their awareness of the Pledge, to measure how young people feel that Barnet Council has progressed against the London Pledge and to help support the development of a new Barnet specific Pledge.

Consultation has begun with the Role Model Army to develop a Barnet specific Pledge and feedback from the Pledge survey and from young people taking part in 'Speak Out Day' (taking place on 10 August 2012) will feed into this work stream.

The newly developed Barnet specific Pledge, will form part of the Welcome Packs, currently being developed, which will be given to all young people entering the care system and will be reissued to all young people currently in care.

9.17 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 Action – completed by 24 May 2012

- Safeguarding and social care management group to develop an audit forward plan

Outcomes

Assuring the quality of work across Children's Service is integral to the day to day work across the service, to ensure high standards are maintained and to support services in pursuit of excellence. A Children's Service audit forward plan has been implemented, incorporating the considerable audit activity that is routinely completed within and across service areas, including safeguarding, social care and Barnet Safeguarding Children's Board audit activity. The Safeguarding and Social Care Managers Meeting and Barnet Safeguarding Children Board will provide oversight of audit activity, to ensure that quality assurance activity has an impact on service delivery and improves outcomes for children and young people.

9.18 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

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.

Key Action – completed by 24 May 2012

- 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

Outcomes

A reporting matrix has been developed for Children's Service complaints. This outlines the framework and frequency for reporting to relevant committees and boards, including Safeguarding Board (Performance & Quality Assurance sub-group) and Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel. A thematic review of complaints has drawn out key themes and implications for practice, and is informing the work of the closing the loop group. Complaints made by Children in Care come through the Children's Service complaints process. Quarterly meetings are now place with Social Care Managers to ensure that complaints made by children and young people are being well managed. The development of a children and young people's area of the website will provide more accessible information about the complaints process, but also more broadly about the rights of Children in Care and the Pledge to them.

9.19 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 – completed by 24 August 2012

- Develop and disseminate 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.

Outcomes

A Permanency Policy has been developed to support Children in Care to have secure long term, stable and legally protected placements. This policy clearly defines that if children cannot return to their families or be looked after in their wider kinship network, adoption will be the first consideration. The policy further outlines the need for Special Guardianship Orders to be considered as a route to provide Children in Care with secure long term placements. This policy is currently being disseminated to staff and will be embedded into practice.

Decision making for permanence will be reviewed and tracked by the Care Proceedings Panel and there will be ongoing consideration of options for a more legally secure permanent arrangement.

9.20 The Ofsted report included some recommendations for health partners, as outlined below.

9.21 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 – completed by 24 August 2012

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

Outcomes

Job Descriptions and Service Level Agreements have been reviewed to consider the capacity to support changes. There are ongoing discussions taking place with designated post holders to align roles and responsibilities.

9.22 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 Actions – completed by 24 August 2012

- Programme of multi-agency training 2012-2013 to be sent out to all providers including independent contractors.
- Managers to ensure staff are enabled to attend child protection training at the required level for their role

Outcomes

The programme of multi-agency training has been sent out across the provider organisations. Staff's safeguarding training needs and attendance at safeguarding training is being monitored and managers are ensuring staff are enabled to attend child protection training at the required level for their role. Records of attendance at safeguarding training by Independent Contractors is being monitored. Level 3 training provided in house for primary care practitioners in conjunction with Social Care and Police Child Protection team and eligible staff requiring and receiving multi-agency training at level 3 is being monitored by the North Central London compliance matrix. Barnet Hospital and Royal Free Hospital Trust are also providing level 3 training in-house for eligible staff.

9.23 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 – completed by 24 August 2012

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

Outcomes

The current arrangement is that each health assessment is checked by the designated nurse for looked after children in care prior to payment for the assessment being made to the medical practitioner. There is an expectation that the designated doctor for looked after children will input to the initial assessment process for identified children and young people. They will also provide quality assurance to assessments provided by the general practitioners involved. A proposal for recruitment to the post of Designated Doctor Looked after children has been submitted to the Professional Executive Committee in Barnet and has been approved.

9.24 Additional CQC recommendation

Review and provide assurances that safeguarding arrangements for children with disabilities, young people who self-harm and families where parents have mental health needs are sufficiently robust

Key Actions – completed by 24 May 2012

- Review of Supervision arrangements across health providers to ensure that the vulnerable groups highlighted in CQC/Ofsted report have robust and appropriate plans for care in place and that staff are adequately supported in this respect.
- Develop relationships between independent and NHS providers of care to promote a seamless safeguarding service.

Outcomes

Each Provider organisation has a supervision policy in place which ensures that safeguarding plans for vulnerable groups of children are regularly reviewed. Provider organisations are ensuring that supervision quality is included in audit programs, which will specifically include children and young people who fall into the vulnerable groups specified. Independent health care provision in Barnet have been invited to Safeguarding children's advisory group and attendance will be monitored and actively encouraged for meetings where relevant issues are to be discussed. General Practitioners have been reminded of the need to communicate Child Protection issues to independent contractors when referring families.

9.25 Additional CQC recommendation

Review capacity of health visitors and school nurses to ensure essential health promotion and early intervention work is appropriately covered

Key Actions – completed by 24 May 2012

- Central London Community Healthcare and NHS Barnet to define the essential health promotion plan to provide early intervention to vulnerable families.
- Public Health are reviewing school nursing to be completed June 2012.

Outcomes

Central London Community Healthcare report that they have robust plans in place regarding recruitment and retention of health visiting and school nursing staff. Health Visitor numbers are currently above the trajectory and a systematic approach is now in place to support areas where there are a number of vacancies. Although the actions to implement this recommendation are complete, there remains an ongoing need to closely monitor the capacity of health visitors. To support this, Head of Children's Commissioning is meeting 6 weekly with Central London Community Healthcare senior representatives regarding configuration of services for health visiting and school nursing.

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>
- 10.2 Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 16th April 2012, Decision Item 8: 'Plan to address recommendations from the Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children'
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s339/Safeguarding%20OSC%20report%20-%20Ofsted%20-%20final.pdf>

Cleared by Finance (Officer's initials)	JH/MC
Cleared by Legal (Officer's initials)	HP