

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 4
26 SEPTEMBER 2011	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Scott, Cabinet Member for Children's Services Councillor Holdich, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University	
Contact Officer(s):	Adrian Loades: Director of Children's Services	Tel: 01733 863606

OFSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM : Director of Children's Services	Deadline date : N/A
1. That Cabinet notes the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding carried out in August 2011 and agrees the planned improvement activity.	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

This report is submitted to Cabinet following a referral from Corporate Management Team on 6th September and the publication of the report of the Ofsted inspection of safeguarding carried out in August 2011.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with details of the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding carried out in August 2011 and the agreed improvement activity.
- 2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.10, To determine responses to (and/or make recommendation to the Council, as appropriate) reports from the Monitoring Officer, external inspections and the Local Government Ombudsman.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO
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4. The Ofsted Inspection

- 4.1 In March 2010, an inspection of the Council's arrangements for safeguarding and looked after children was carried out by Ofsted. The inspection determined that safeguarding arrangements were inadequate. A subsequent unannounced Ofsted inspection of safeguarding in February 2011 identified a number of areas for development. In August 2011, Ofsted undertook a follow up inspection of safeguarding arrangements to evaluate the progress made since previous inspections to ensure that children and young people are properly safeguarded.

- 4.2 The inspection process was a thorough one and involved the review of case files as well as discussions with children and young people, officers and elected members.
- 4.3 The Ofsted report that followed the inspection has been circulated with this report. Overall, Ofsted determined that safeguarding arrangements were inadequate and did not meet minimum requirements. Capacity for improvement was also assessed as inadequate, as were five of the seven judgement areas that contributed to the overall assessment. The inspectors found that insufficient improvement progress had been made since previous inspection visits and that the quality of assessment, management oversight and the response to risk was too variable. Inspectors also found that leadership and management arrangements, performance management and quality assurance were not sufficiently focused to sustain improvement.
- 4.4 The inspectors did note examples of good practice in relation to schools and partners, noted the improvement of the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board and “the consistent and sustained commitment of elected members to strengthening safeguarding arrangements”.
- 4.5 The inspection findings are clearly serious and of significant concern. The inspection focused on the Council’s arrangements for dealing with contacts, referrals and assessments within children’s social care. This is the “front door” of the Council’s social care arrangements and it is imperative that these functions have the capacity and capability to identify and assess risk in order to ensure that children receive the support and protection that they require.
- 4.6 Post Inspection Arrangements:**
- 4.7 The inspection report sets out a number of areas of improvement identified by Ofsted for immediate to long term action. The inspection findings represent a major challenge to the Council and whilst activity will be focused on Children’s social care, there will be a need for all Council Directorates and partner agencies to support improvement.
- 4.8 Improvement support is being provided through a sector led improvement and support model. The model involves drawing support directly from other local authorities or commissioning support from individuals with considerable local authority experience. The model has the agreement and support of the Department for Education who have a keen interest in the Council making sustainable improvement in children’s social care.
- 4.9 The previous Executive Director of Children Services resigned following the Ofsted inspection and the Director of Children and Young People’s Services at Cambridgeshire County Council has been appointed to the post through the sector led support model for a three month period.
- 4.10 An improvement team to provide the necessary support to the Council has been assembled and tasks have been agreed. One of the principal outputs of the initial stage of improvement activity will be a diagnostic report to support the preparation of a long term improvement plan. The team will also support the implementation of immediate improvements to safeguarding arrangements. The improvement activity will cover the Council’s entire safeguarding arrangements rather than just the contact, referral and assessment arrangements that were inspected by Ofsted.
- 4.11 Key improvement activities include:
- Quality assurance reviews of cases subject to contact, referral and assessment arrangements over the last six months

- An operational review of contact and referral arrangements with a view to identify and implement immediate improvements
 - A review of performance management arrangements, including audit and quality assurance arrangements to identify improvements
 - A review of the arrangements for notification, referral and response to Domestic Violence
 - The appointment of an Associate for Safeguarding to add overall capacity for delivery of the Improvement Plan, to review the capacity of the social care workforce and develop a programme of support for practice improvement
 - A review of early intervention and prevention activity to support the development of a new long term prevention strategy
- 4.12 The approach to improvement will be flexible in order to follow up issues identified by the review activity. It is emphasised that the focus will be on improvement, it is not intended to repeat the Ofsted inspection in full or part. The inspection has informed the improvement activities that will be undertaken. Steps will be undertaken to ensure the involvement and engagement of the social care workforce within this work, as the improvement activities must be both deliverable and sustainable.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Partner agencies, parents and children will be involved fully in the improvement activity.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- 6.1 The improvement activity has been planned to secure the following outcomes:
- The implementation of robust arrangements for contact, referral and assessment in response to the immediate issues for action identified in the inspection report
 - Improvements in the capacity and capability of leadership and management arrangements
 - The development of a longer term improvement plan with a particular focus on developing the capacity required for sustainable improvement
- 6.2 The Ofsted inspection methodology will change from 1 April 2012. The current consultation on inspection arrangements envisages longer unannounced inspections with a focus on the inspection being on the child's "journey" from needing help to receiving help. This includes the review of preventative services and will focus on practice in children's social care. Under the arrangements being consulted on, the Council will receive a monitoring inspection to evaluate progress in addressing the areas for development identified in the report within the next year and a further full inspection within the next eighteen months. The improvement activity is intended to ensure that the Council receives a successful inspection outcome.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 A core element of the Council's arrangements for safeguarding children has been identified as being inadequate by Ofsted. This finding requires a response that will secure immediate improvement in the areas identified as failing and a longer term response to secure sustained improvement in the overall arrangements for safeguarding children in Peterborough. The findings of the Ofsted report and the themes identified through previous inspections necessitate the use of external capacity through the sector led model to support improvement activity.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The sector led approach is the primary means through which the Department for Education expects local authorities to be supported following adverse Ofsted inspections. It is unlikely that an alternative approach would receive support from the Department and would trigger more direct intervention. The scope of the improvement work reflects findings of the Ofsted inspection and an immediate analysis of the challenges facing the Council. The programme of work is sufficiently flexible to follow up additional issues as they are identified.

9. IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The sector led support is provided on the basis of a mix of charged for and free support. The cost can be met from within existing budgets. Resources are available to secure improvement in the immediate and longer term.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

- Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding: Peterborough 6th September 2011;
- Ofsted Unannounced Inspection of contact referral and assessment arrangements 3rd March 2011; and
- Ofsted Safeguarding and Looked after Children Inspection: Peterborough 21st May 2010.