

Wiltshire Council

Children's Services Select Committee 23 September 2010

Ofsted Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Ofsted assessment of the performance of the children's social care contact, referral and assessment services within Wiltshire.

Background

2. In 2009, Ofsted introduced its current inspection framework for children's services which includes an annual inspection of contact, referral and assessment. The inspection samples the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on minimising any child abuse and neglect. It is considered to be the key measure to look at whether children are being kept safe.
3. The output of the inspection is a letter outlining strengths, areas for development and priority actions as appropriate. There is no grading given however one of three summary statements is used:

The inspection identified areas of strength and satisfactory practice, with some areas for development.

or

The inspection identified area(s) for priority action alongside areas of strength, satisfactory practice and areas for development.

or

The inspection identified area(s) for priority action alongside areas of satisfactory practice and areas for development.

4. Ofsted inspectors arrived with no notice to do a two day inspection on 28 July 2010. They visited out Referral Assessment Teams in Trowbridge and Devizes and our child disability teams.

Main consideration

5. Appendix 1 to this report is the Ofsted letter containing their findings which was published on 26 August 2010.
6. The summary statement for Wiltshire was "The inspection identified areas of strength and satisfactory practice, with some areas for

development". A number of strengths were highlighted. There were no priority actions.

7. Importantly, the findings state "The inspection did not identify any cases of children or young people at risk of harm not being appropriately safeguarded" and "Partnership working between statutory agencies on allocated cases contributes effectively to the safeguarding of children and young people."
8. Areas for development primarily relate to ensuring consistency and improving recording and case planning. An action plan to address these is near completion – draft attached at appendix 2. Immediate action has been taken to address two specific findings:
 - *Administrative processes within the referral and assessment team are well structured and support work within the service. However there is insufficient capacity to meet demand resulting, for example, in delayed case closures or letters not being sent out in a timely manner.*

An extra dedicated administrator has been added to each of the two teams.

- *There is insufficient level 3 child protection training available to social workers to meet demand. Not all social workers within the children with disability teams have been able to access the training, which presents a potential risk to the service.*

Additional level 3 child protection training has been commissioned which will be available in September and October. Further social care dedicated training is being commissioned commencing in October.

9. Ofsted will return to do another unannounced inspection within the next 12 months.

Environmental Impact

10. None.

Equalities Impact

11. The findings highlights some good practice, for example around services for child with disabilities, however it also criticises recording in some assessments as not evidencing consideration of cultural, ethnic or religious needs.

Risk Assessment

12. If a local authority has any priority actions this is automatically a limiting factor on the overall children's services annual rating and would result

in a rating of poor. Wiltshire has no priority actions so this will not be a limiting judgement on the 2010 children's services rating.

13. As the letter gives no priority actions the service could be viewed as providing a "safe" approach to social care contacts, referrals and assessments.

Financial Implications

14. The Department already has a financial recovery plan in place and further actions will be required in order to manage the additional cost pressures involved in addressing areas for improvement.

Legal Implications

15. None.

Conclusion

16. As the letter gives no priority actions the service could be deemed to be at least adequate with good prospects of being considered good once the action plan is implemented and the recent restructuring of the service beds in.

CAROLYN GODFREY
Corporate Director, Department for Children and Education

Report Author: Lynda Cox, Head of Performance & Information Management,
Department for Children and Education

Background Papers

Unpublished documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this Report: None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Ofsted inspection letter

Appendix 2 – Action Plan for addressing the areas for development (draft)