

**Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services and
Department for Education Adoption Scorecard**

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children services and Department for Education Scorecard.

Background

Inspection

2. Ofsted is currently completing a 3 year programme of inspections of safeguarding and looked after children services. The multiagency inspection of Wiltshire took place 5-16 March this year and involved case audits, interviews with staff and managers, focus groups with a range of stakeholders including children and families.
3. The inspection looked at the contribution made by all agencies to ensure that children and young people are properly safeguarded and the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers.
4. The report was published on 24 April 2012 and is attached to this report as appendix 1. The assessed grades are on the last page of the report in the Record of Main Findings table.
5. There are 4 possible outcomes for each grade given: inadequate, adequate, good or outstanding.

Adoption Scorecard

6. The Government has introduced [adoption scorecards](#) for all local authority areas based on figures from 2008/9 to 2010/11. The scorecards are a key part of the Government's tougher approach to addressing under performance in the adoption system – set out in the Action Plan for Adoption published in March. A new assessment process will reduce bureaucracy and the delays which put off potential adopters and slow down the finding of homes for children. Timescales will be challenged through the setting of thresholds of the maximum time these processes should take.

Main Considerations for the Council

Inspection

Overall Outcomes:

7. The safeguarding services overall effectiveness has been graded as Inadequate. Capacity for improvement has been graded as adequate.
8. The overall effectiveness of the services for looked after children has been graded as adequate. Capacity for improvement has been graded as good.

Safeguarding:

9. The inspection found statutory requirements are not met consistently and that there are significant failings in the contribution made by Wiltshire Council and partner agencies to child protection work.
10. The inspectors state that the level of robustness of managerial oversight and decision-making needed to improve to ensure that the risk to a child or young person is minimised.
11. For some children and young people child protection procedures had not been followed in accordance with statutory guidance, resulting in them not being subject to a child protection plan when they should have been.
12. Within health agencies and adult services it is highlighted that there is a lack of appropriate levels of safeguarding supervision and training for a wide range of staff who have direct contact with children, young people and families.

Safeguarding Areas highlighted as positive:

13. The inspectors have reported that as soon as the issues were raised Wiltshire Council took immediate and appropriate action to ensure the children and young people identified were re-assessed and appropriately protected.
14. They also note that wider safeguarding provision is effective and in a number of instances there is evidence of good and outstanding practice. This includes the multi-agency work delivered through children's centres, the work in schools by the safeguarding in education lead officer, the transformation of the short breaks service for children with disabilities and the emotional and well-being support provided to service children by the army welfare service which is effective in helping to safeguard children and young people.
15. The inspectors state that the council is committed, within challenging budget reductions, to protecting its front line services.

16. There is evidence that interventions are child focused, and that the views of children and young people are listened to and acted upon. Front line workers are committed to doing the best they can for the child or young person they are working with and want to ensure children and young people are appropriately safeguarded.
17. The views of children and young people contribute significantly to the council's service development. The Wiltshire Assembly of Youth and the children and young people issues groups are very effective in influencing service planning and making a difference. An active Wiltshire parent carer council has been very successful in helping to change and develop service provision for children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or are disabled.
18. Children and young people who met with inspectors reported that they felt safe at school and in their localities describing Wiltshire as 'a safe place to live'. They know where to get help and advice and who they would choose to confide in if they have any safeguarding concerns. They reported that the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively in their school where pastoral care staff, school nurses and peer mentors had provided reliable sources of support.
19. The council has taken robust action to improve school attendance and to reduce school exclusions. Persistent absence rates have fallen to well below the national average for primary schools and are now in line with the national average for secondary schools. Good collaboration between the council and its schools has seen the overall number of days lost to exclusions in secondary schools drop significantly.

Looked After Children:

20. No looked after children or young people are placed in settings judged by Ofsted inspections to be unsafe. The most recent Ofsted inspections of private fostering in 2007 and fostering and adoption inspections in August 2010 judged services as good. At its latest inspection in August 2011 the single local authority residential care home, used to provide respite care for children with disabilities, was judged as outstanding in all aspects of its service provision.
21. For looked after children who are in care the outcomes are adequate or better. These children receive good support and economic well-being which helps them enjoy life and achieve better outcomes.
22. Strong collaborative working between the virtual school, social workers and teachers and a shared vision to give all looked after children and young people a positive and successful school experience were noted as common features of the work in Wiltshire. The virtual school has had a positive impact on the improving educational inclusion, attendance, progress and attainment.
23. The Corporate Parenting Board was judged to have a mature understanding of its responsibilities and a determination to make a difference for children and young people who are in care - "Recognising the importance of hearing directly from young people, the corporate parenting board has successfully

developed with young people a model of 'Shared Guardian' sessions, which enables members of the Children in Care Council to speak out and to play a meaningful part in the review and development of services at the highest level."

24. The engagement of looked after children, young people and care leavers in making a positive contribution is judged as outstanding.

Capacity for improvement:

25. The inspectors judged that there is adequate capacity to improve safeguarding services and for looked after children the capacity to improve is good. The political and managerial ambition and prioritisation across all partners is to improve and be better than adequate across all services. There is a strongly evidenced commitment from all partners to ensure that the well-being and safety of children and young people is central to all service planning and delivery.
26. There is a great deal of evidence that the council is able to learn from inspections or other sources and take positive action to improve.
27. During the inspection, the council produced a detailed improvement plan in recognition of the failures in child protection services. The council demonstrated that it accepted the findings of the inspection by taking immediate steps to commit both resources and take action to address the failings in child protection services.
28. The leader of the council committed resources immediately to support remedial action to ensure children and young people in Wiltshire are appropriately protected from significant harm or risk of harm.

Making Improvements:

29. Action has been taken on all the immediate items set out by Ofsted. A multi-agency Safeguarding Improvement Board with an independent chair will be responsible for monitoring progress and overseeing the delivery and evidence of improvement.
30. The improvement plan is prioritised and fully resourced and a summary of its content is included as Appendix 2.
31. A comprehensive audit of all children who are on the threshold of risk and/or subject to child protection is being undertaken to ensure that these children are being protected from serious harm. The council has commissioned independent (not employed by the council) senior social workers to review cases where children might be at risk. Over 500 cases have been reviewed and follow up action taken where needed. This includes increased visits to families, gathering more information, and meeting with other agencies.

32. Additional managers with experience of improving social work practice have been recruited and the council has also committed to ensure that it improves its management oversight of cases and that its assessments are updated to reflect and evaluate the impact of changing family circumstances and to ensure child protection plans and written agreements with parents clearly identify what needs to change with the timescale for action.
33. Work is underway with the police and health service to review and improve the way child protection cases are investigated and ensure that action is taken in a timely way.
34. The Terms of Reference of the Placements for Looked After Children Task Group have been extended to specifically focus on the improvements needed in safeguarding.

Adoption Scorecard

35. A briefing is attached as appendix 3.

Conclusions

36. The Committee is asked to note the content of the report and the actions that are being taken to improve.

Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director

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Date of report: 18 May 2012

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Ofsted Report 24 April 2012
Appendix 2 Improvement Plan Summary
Appendix 3 Adoption Scorecard briefing