

Ofsted Safeguarding and Children in Care Inspection Plan –update on progress for CYP Scrutiny 05/11/12

The Ofsted Report was published on 10/08/12. Ofsted recommendations were of 3 kinds (council only, health and LSCB, joint council and health) to be addressed immediately, within 3 months, or within 6 months. This report describes progress for those actions to be delivered immediately (ie by 10/08/12) or within 3 months (by 10/11/12). In addition to the progress described below a new post of Service Delivery Manager Children Services Improvement is being recruited to. This post will report directly to the DCFS and will support senior managers in driving forward improvement in council children's services with an initial focus on children's social care.

Recommendations for immediate action:Safeguarding

Recommendation 1: Ensure that the outcomes of child protection enquiries are recorded promptly

Progress: Weekly meetings are held between relevant Service Delivery Manager and individual team managers (Child Protection team, Assessment and Case Management teams, Disabled Children teams) to review the completion of current S47 investigations focusing on accurate recording and evidence that the child has been seen by a qualified social worker and are safe.

Impact: Children are known to be safe. Timeliness of recording has improved (see attached)

Recommendation 2: End the unsafe practice of holding cases as contacts and referrals for prolonged periods while information gathering

Recommendation 3: Ensure the prompt identification of referrals at Family Connect and Safeguarding Advisor Team

Progress: The Safeguarding Family Connect Safeguarding Advisors Team has been redesigned to ensure that it is only qualified social workers that process contacts and referrals and that information is taken and decisions are made in a timely manner. This includes increasing SSW capacity to 1FTE which will also provide more support to the team managers. Reciprocal cover arrangements between the team managers of the Child Protection Team and the Safeguarding Advisors team have been reviewed to spread the load amongst more team managers.

Impact: Swifter decisions are being made about how to respond to concerns about children's welfare (see attached)

Recommendations for immediate action: Children in Care

Recommendation: Ensure that all parents receive regular communication and are involved in reviews as appropriate.

Progress: Social Work report for child in care reviews has been developed. An Audit is being undertaken to ensure appropriate parental involvement in reviews and establish and establish a benchmark for the ways parents are consulted / involved with Child in Care Reviews. The SW conference on 8th November includes a workshop on Parental involvement

Impact: too early to tell

Recommendations for action within 3 Months: Safeguarding

Recommendation: Accelerate plans to provide edge of care service out of hours

Progress: Meetings are progressing with the Emergency Duty Team to identify out of hours support for parents and young people.

Recommendation: clarify the legal position of charging for services provided following assessment under the Children Act 1989

The charges were introduced following a suggestion from a group which represents parents. The charges subsidise high cost activities, in order to maintain equipment and provide a level of sustainability. The charges only apply to children/young people who have been assessed under the Children Act 1989 if access to the activity is over and above the assessed need, for those children where it is an assessed need the charge is waived. Parents were asked to pay in advance for blocks in error, this has now been rectified.

Recommendation: Provide partner agencies with a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the community social work team

Progress: There have been discussions with key managers and staff about potential options and exploration of models used elsewhere. Formal paper to be presented for consultation by the end of October

Recommendation: Facilitate the consistent delivery of planned interventions by minimising changes of social worker (*this is repeated in CIC recommendations to facilitate positive and productive relationships between children and social workers*)

Progress: An internal review of recruitment arrangements has been completed within the council. Modelling of reduction in use of agency staff over the next 12 months has been used to set targets. Analysis of changes of social workers (number and reasons) is being repeated. Progress will be monitored monthly from November. The SW conference on 8th November includes a workshop on "The child's journey" which will feed into the strategic project plan to remodel children's social work services.

Impact: Fewer social work vacancies

Recommendations for action within 3 Months: Children in Care

Recommendation: Review the capacity and functioning of the IRO team to ensure robust challenge where needed and the prompt circulation of a good quality review records

Progress: A review of the Safeguarding Advisory Service has commenced. There are a number of considerations including how the Service has embraced the Care Planning Regulations 2010 and the IRO Handbook. In addition the current activity of the unit will be considered including its Quality Assurance role. This will also be an opportunity to reflect on both Local and National data in terms of children included on Child Protection Plans

and Children in Care and the impact upon the Service in terms of fulfilling its core functions. Report to be available by 10th November.

Recommendation: Ensure that all looked after children have a qualified social worker and that minimum statutory visiting requirements are complied with

This recommendation mainly refers to the Children In Care team. An analysis is being completed of respective tasks completed by the SWs and unqualified staff, and options for redesigning the team are being drawn up. It will not be possible to achieve the recommendation by the middle of November given the extent of the changes required and the need to link them to whole system change across the Safeguarding Service. Careful planning will also be required to minimise a short term adverse impact on children through disrupting relationships with their existing caseworkers.

Recommendation: Facilitate the timely completion of life story work

Progress: Recognition of the need to clarify and agree who is responsible for life story book work, and link discussions into those about the emotional wellbeing of CIC

Recommendation: Ensure that cultural and equality and diversity issues are assessed and recorded during assessments. NHS Telford and Wrekin Council must ensure that this includes health assessments

Progress; The SW conference on 8th November includes a workshop on diversity. Meeting diverse needs is built into quality assurance audit tools. Paper to be delivered to children's social care managers early December on performance improvement for SWs

Recommendation: End the reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation to meet the accommodation needs of care leavers

Progress: Up to date lists of care leavers being obtained for monitoring.

Conclusion

Good progress is being made in addressing the Ofsted recommendations and there is some evidence of a positive impact on children.

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