

Item No. 10.	Classification: Open	Date: 18 July 2012	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Safeguarding & Looked After Children Inspection Outcomes	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee are asked to note the Inspection Report and the priorities identified for improvement.
2. That the Deputy Director Specialist Children's Services brings a detailed action plan to the next Corporate Parenting Committee on how the improvements will be implemented.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. An inspection was carried out by Ofsted Inspectors between 21 May and 1 June 2012. 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.
4. The inspection report, attached as Appendix 1, identified areas of strength and areas of practice that met requirements, with some areas for improvement. The report was published on the Ofsted website on 10 July 2012.
5. An Action Plan will be developed to address the areas for development identified within the inspection report and will be tabled at a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The outcomes of the inspection are as follows:

Safeguarding services

Overall effectiveness	Good
Capacity for improvement	Outstanding
Children and young people are safe and feel safe	Good
Quality of provision	Good
The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	Good
Ambition and prioritisation	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Performance management and quality assurance	Good
Partnership working	Good
Equality and diversity	Good

Services for looked after children

Overall effectiveness	Good
Capacity for improvement	Good
Being healthy	Good
Staying safe	Good
Enjoying and achieving	Good
Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	Outstanding
Economic well-being	Adequate
Quality of provision	Good
Ambition and prioritisation	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Performance management and quality assurance	Good
Equality and diversity	Good

7. The key areas for improvement in relation to looked after children and care leaver services were identified as:

- Ensure that clearly recorded care plans are in place for looked after children and care leavers containing clear, specific outcomes sought as well as realistic contingency plans.
- Ensure that assessments are comprehensive and up to date and that they take account of the full circumstances of the child in need plans and interventions.
- Ensure that transition to independence is effectively planned, commencing at an appropriate stage for young people, leading to the development of and support for independence skills
- Develop a systemic evaluation of services for children and young people and their families on the edge of care to assess their effectiveness and ensure a robust monitoring of these children leading to timely decision making should they need to become looked after
- Ensure an effective dialogue with the family courts aimed at establishing a mutual clear understanding of thresholds, quality of plans and proposals, and timescales for completion within a timeframe suitable for each child
- Ensure capacity of the independent visiting service is sufficient to meet need.
- Southwark NHS Primary Care Trust and the local authority to ensure that young people's health needs are fully addressed in preparation for leaving care, including the consistent provision of summary health plans
- Ensure that themes identified within case audits are collated, leading to clear action plans and that consequent outcomes are systematically and consistently evaluated to achieve a full understanding of their service impact.

Key themes

8. The following key themes are noted:

- Overall effectiveness of services for looked after children is good, with the Local Authority and its partners presenting as effective corporate parents. The needs of looked after children are established as clear priorities for members of the children's trust, and there is a well-embedded and improving commissioning culture in place which is contributing to improved outcomes.
- Ambition and prioritisation for looked after children and young people are outstanding. The corporate parenting arrangements are mature, exhibiting a very strong commitment to the needs of looked after children, and are fully

integrated into the children's partnership. This ensures effective prioritising of children in care and care leavers, who receive a very high profile within the partnership.

- The capacity of services to improve is good, with strong current performance across a wide range of outcomes.
- The contribution of Speakerbox was highlighted as excellent, with a well-embedded commitment by services to engage the views of looked after children.
- Good arrangements are in place to assess and maintain the health of looked after children and young people. There are very good and highly effective arrangements to meet the emotional health needs of most looked after children and young people through the looked after CAMHS provision (child and adolescent mental health services).
- Safeguarding arrangements for looked after children are good. Pre-birth work is of a high quality, with risk well recognised, leading to appropriate and timely action.
- The vast majority of children who responded to the inspection service user survey or who were met by inspectors stated that their placement was good or very good and that they felt safe or very safe.
- Outcomes for looked after children and young people to enjoy and achieve are good, and arrangements for looked after children and young people to make a positive contribution are outstanding. Consultation and engagement with children and young people looked after is extensive and of a very high quality, actively contributing to a number of improvements in how care is experienced.
- Looked after children and young people's economic well-being outcomes are adequate. Of the care leavers surveyed, less than half felt they had enough help to prepare for leaving care.
- Overall the quality of direct work with children is good and child centred, there is evidence of very sensitive and considered interventions with children.

Future work programme implications

9. Potential areas for future scrutiny include:

- Consistency of practice in delivery of health review assessments
- Development of health needs summary in preparation for leaving care
- Supporting and preparing children in care and care leavers for adulthood
- Development of systems to track educational attainment and progress
- Development of evaluation and monitoring framework for children and young people and their families on the edge of care.

Policy implications

10. The areas for development identified in the inspection are consistent with local strategic frameworks including the Children and Young People's Plan and Council Plan.

Community impact statement

11. This report aims to communicate the strengths and areas for improvement assessed through inspection, thus, impact on the community is minimal. However, the corresponding action to be developed will contain activities which will seek to make Southwark safer and improve outcomes for looked after

children and care leavers. The action plan will be monitored to ensure these activities do not have adverse community impacts going forward.

Resource implications

12. It is anticipated that the actions to take forward the inspection areas of development will be achieved within existing resources.

Legal and financial implications

13. There are no legal and financial implications arising from this report.

REASON FOR URGENCY

14. The Corporate Parenting Committee is scheduled to determine their annual work plan on 18 July 2012. This report on the outcomes of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection will support members in determining the work plan and prioritising issues for consideration. Following the publication of the Inspection Outcomes on the 10 July 2012 it is important that committee is made aware of this information as a matter of urgency to enable the committee to consider priorities for improvements on its looked after children role. This will provide sufficient time for officers to produce a detailed action plan for the next committee.

REASON FOR LATENESS

15. It was not possible to circulate the report on the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection Outcomes five clear working days before the Corporate Parenting Committee meeting as the final inspection report was published by Ofsted on 10 July 2012.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Deputy Director, Children’s Specialist Services & Safeguarding		
Report Author	Sadie Dann, Policy Officer		
Version	Final		
Dated	10 July 2012		
Key Decision?	No		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services		No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services		No	No
Cabinet Member		No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			10 July 2012