

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 12 September 2012	Meeting Name: Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Report title:		Learning and improvement in children's safeguarding – outcome of Ofsted inspection	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Deputy Director, Specialist Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the positive outcome from the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children and actions to address priorities identified for improvement.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Ofsted undertook an inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services between 21 May and 1 June 2012, as part of a national programme. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the contribution made by 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. The inspection found that overall effectiveness of safeguarding services was good with capacity for improvement as outstanding. Services for looked after children were judged overall as good, with good capacity for improvement.
3. The report was published on the Ofsted website on 10 July 2012 and is included as appendix 1. Actions to address all areas identified for improvement are being implemented and progress is being monitored by the SSCB.
4. This report is set in the context of partnership working between children's social care, the Southwark Safeguarding Children's Board (SSCB), the Southwark Children's and Families Trust (SCFT) and the shadow Health and Wellbeing Board.
5. It is also set in the context of the draft SSCB annual report, which was presented to the scrutiny sub-committee on 23 April 2012 for comment. As a result of this consultation with key partners, a final draft is being compiled for presentation to the SSCB executive board on 25 September. The actions identified through this report will be taken forward alongside the inspection outcomes by the SSCB over the coming year.

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

Overview of key themes

7. The inspectors highlighted the solid and continuous progress of the council and its partners in identifying, driving and monitoring key improvements in targeted services for children and young people. The SCFT and SSCB were praised for their effective, well-articulated vision and ambition for supporting vulnerable children, as was the scrutiny sub-committee. The council and partners' ambitious and effective leadership, including strong support and challenge from members and the cabinet member for children's services as well as the corporate parenting committee, were also singled out as strong.
8. The inspection found strong capacity to improve, with the council maintaining the necessary capacity and investment in its corporate parenting responsibilities, which has led to sustained performance in outcomes for children. There was praise for the drive to extend and enhance prevention and early intervention services, and to the range of services on offer to children and young people on the edge of care. The inspectors also found effective arrangements for commissioning and procuring services based on a good analysis of current and forthcoming need; as well as for performance management, quality assurance and partnership working. The inspectors highlighted in particular the strong partnerships with schools and the voluntary sector, although they noted the reduced levels of participation from academies.

9. The inspectors highlighted the contribution of Speakerbox (the Children in Care Council) noting it is excellent, with a well-embedded commitment by services to engage the views of looked after children. The inspector also found good arrangements are in place to promote the outcomes of looked after children, noting that those to enable them to make a positive contribution are outstanding. Overall the quality of direct work with children was found to be good and child centred, and the inspectors found evidence of very sensitive and considered interventions with children and young people.

Future work programme implications

10. Progress in implementing actions in the areas identified for improvement in both the inspection and through the SSCB annual report are overseen by the SSCB executive board. The action, for example, to promote engagement of faith and minority ethnic groups is being taken forward through a 'strategic breakfast' planned for this autumn, at which key stakeholders from faith and ethnic minority communities will come together to plan a way forward for meaningful engagement.
11. The SSCB's highly valued training programme is being reviewed and refreshed to ensure it continues to provide quality learning opportunities that meet the multi-agency needs of partners across the borough. Work is underway to develop packages that respond to new issues such as honour-based violence and child trafficking, to ensure that practitioners are supported and able to respond to developing issues. Other potential areas for future scrutiny include the changing relationship between academies and the council.

Policy implications

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

Community impact statement

13. This report seeks 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 vulnerable children, looked after children and care leavers. The actions going forward to address areas for improvement will be monitored to ensure these activities do not have adverse community impacts going forward.
14. It is anticipated that the actions to take forward the inspection areas of development will be achieved within existing resources.

Legal and Financial implications

15. There are no legal or financial implications arising from this report.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Ofsted Southwark Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Report

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Rory Patterson, Deputy Director, Specialist Children's Services	
Report Author	Ann Flynn, Development Manager Safeguarding Board	
Version	Final	
Dated	31 August 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 Scrutiny Team	4 September 2012	