

NORTH YORKSHIRE CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD MEETING

16 NOVEMBER 2009

OFSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN 2009

1.0 KEY POINTS

The Children's Trust is asked to consider

- the inspection report narrative and recommendations (Areas for Action)
- the proposed Action Plan, and whether it provides a sufficient response to the matters raised in the report
- whether the Children and Young People's Plan currently covers matters raised in the inspection sufficiently, or requires amendment
- monitoring arrangements for the Action Plan

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 OfSTED introduced new arrangements for inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services earlier this year. There are two parts.

- Unannounced inspections focus on Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements for Safeguarding. Theoretically they could include coverage of partners' work at the "front end", but in practice thus far the inspections have looked only at the work of Children's Services, especially Children's Social Care. As the Trust knows, the Unannounced Inspection in North Yorkshire took place on 30 June and 1 July this year.
- Announced Inspections look at Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services as they are provided by all partners. Inspections last for two weeks, for which there is a maximum of two weeks' notice. The North Yorkshire inspection took place between 14 September and 25 September. It was the third inspection to take place under these arrangements nationally, and the first to have the two week inspection after the unannounced inspection.

2.2 Unannounced inspections had been the subject of a brief pilot exercise before going live. The two week inspections had not been piloted.

2.3 At the time of writing, inspection reports have been published arising from five of the "full" inspections. In addition to North Yorkshire, the areas covered are Devon, Staffordshire, Cambridgeshire and Cornwall. It is understood that a report on Warrington is to be published shortly.

3.0 FINDINGS AND STANDARDS

3.1 The inspection report is attached in full as Appendix A. It included 33 separate grades (see pages 20, 21), each of which is important in its own right. Though the grades allocated to North Yorkshire compare favourably with those in the other published reports, this is a small sample and they undoubtedly represent a significant challenge here.

3.2 The recommendations relate principally to County Council accountabilities, and there is one concerned specifically with NHS services. Members of the Trust will see that the matters raised reflect issues which have been incorporated in the CYPP already as priorities for improvement. In some cases, there have already been detailed

reports on these matters to previous meetings of the Trust Board, and the Board has already agreed that it would want to monitor progress (e.g. in relation to the Integrated Children's System and the impact of increased referrals arising from the Baby Peter case).

- 3.3 The proposed Action Plan is enclosed as Appendix B. Most of the Recommendations in the inspection report are for action immediately or within three months, with just one for six months. Necessarily, therefore, the Action Plan is detailed, though it is still supported by more detailed plans, which is inevitable given the nature of some of the issues raised. As the Trust knows, some of the Key Issues are very widespread nationally and have been driven by external demands, though that does not diminish the importance of finding local solutions. The Board is asked to consider whether the Action Plan provides a sufficient and clear response to the Areas for Action.
- 3.4 Theoretically, the inspection was conducted jointly by OfSTED and the Care Quality Commission. The findings of the latter in relation to NHS services, however, form the subject of a separate report or letter which is provided to the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Unlike the OfSTED report, however, the CQC document is not published. At the time of writing this report it is not clear whether the PCT has received its letter or report. The Trust would no doubt wish to see that for completeness. In the meantime, the Trust has already identified significant priorities for improving NHS services to children and young people in the County as part of its CYPP, and those locally identified priorities remain valid.

4.0 MONITORING

- 4.1 As the Action Plan shows, several bodies should take an interest in monitoring progress and impact, including the Trust. As most of the recommendations relate to priorities already in the CYPP, tracking progress with the Action Plan will also do the monitoring job for those parts of the overall plan.
- 4.2 The detailed, and in some cases technical, nature of the improvement work may not lend itself to action-by-action reporting to the Trust. It is suggested, therefore, that it may be more helpful to the Trust to receive evidenced overview reports on progress against the Action Plan as a whole, with more detailed reports on the Integrated Children's System, Assessment Timeliness, Social Care capacity, LDD Transitions and Health strategy and services for Looked After Children. Each of these is a CYPP priority in its own right.
- 4.3 The Trust is considering setting up a Performance and Commissioning Sub-Group as part of its scheduled review of its own arrangements for prioritising work whilst getting everything in the CYPP delivered monitored effectively. It is recommended, however, that monitoring reports arising from the inspection Action Plan should continue to come to the Trust Board, at least until it is satisfied that significant progress is being made.
- 4.4 The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) will also have a close interest in monitoring progress, so appropriately detailed reports will also need to be prepared for them. In the interests of transparency, any monitoring report produced for either Board would be made available to members of both.
- 4.5 It is important that efficient arrangements are achieved for reporting. No additional resources are available for this, so we need to agree as far as possible that work can be done once to meet our multiple accountabilities. Without that, the likelihood is that multiple, different reports on the same issues will end up being diluted in quality, and

the effort of key people responsible for delivering improvement would be diverted. The issues raised are too important, and the timescales too tight, for us to allow that to happen.

4.6 An overview report would be provided to each meeting of the Trust Board, together with scheduled, detailed reports on the key issues at agreed points.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 That the Trust considers the inspection report and considers whether amendments to the CYPP are required.

5.2 That the Trust determines whether the Action Plan provides a sufficient response to the matters raised.

5.3 That the Trust agrees the approach to monitoring set out in the report.

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