

Rotherham Borough Council Children and Young People's Services

Local Government Group Peer Challenge 3rd to 7th October

Improving safeguarding of children in Rotherham Borough Council

Lord Laming's report "The Protection of Children in England" has re-emphasised that safeguarding is a critical priority for local authorities and their partners who deliver services for children. Following the removal of the Notice to Improve in January we agreed with the DfE that we would explore the opportunity of such a review. To this end the council and its partners have invited a visit from a Local Government Group (Peer Support Team) who are the peer delivery arm of the Local Government Group.

Council Safeguarding Children Peer Challenge

The peer team has been invited by Children's and Young People's Services to conduct a challenge of local safeguarding children services. The challenge is not an inspection-rather it is a supportive but challenging 'critical friend' approach to assist councils and their partners in celebrating their strengths and identifying their own areas for improvement. The key purpose of the challenge is to stimulate local discussion about how the council and its partners can become more effective in delivering improved safe outcomes for children and young people. All members of the team are knowledgeable about, and experienced in, children's services and/or local government. However, in order for the team to be able to effectively evaluate our strength and areas for development they will need our full co-operation.

The Peer Challenge Team

The team will be senior staff and a councillor from other authorities and are:-

- Team Leader
- Member Peer
- Officer Peer
- Health Peer
- Off-site Peer
- Challenge Manager

The Approach

The peer challenge is based on a framework which focuses attention on five themes:

- Outcomes
- Vision, Strategy and Leadership
- Working Together and Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)
- Service Delivery and Effective Practice
- Managing Resources

Whilst on site the team will also be looking at:

- The effectiveness of the delivery and commissioning of early intervention services and the use of CAF , thresholds and effectiveness
- How the council and its partners can learn from and improve the service user experience
- An independent perspective on our approach to improving Key Stage 2 results.
- Review the effectiveness of the multi-agency resource panel in relation to Out of Authority Placements and value for money.

The work

Some work will be undertaken prior to the team's visit. The peer challenge team will study documents, policies and performance information. This will include questionnaires completed by staff, partners etc. A case mapping exercise will be undertaken challenging the success and challenges of inter-agency collaborative work in safeguarding cases.

The team will then come to Rotherham for the week in October. The process begins with a meeting of senior managers from partner agencies, the challenge team will talk to a cross-section of senior officers, elected members, partners and front line staff. This on-site work is a key aspect of the peer challenge process and those interviewed are encouraged to be as open and honest as possible. All information provided will be treated by the challenge team as non attributable.

The team will feed back their observations and recommendations/findings from all the elements of the peer challenge at the end of the site visit and facilitate a workshop around its findings. This will be followed a few weeks later by written feedback that the council will have the opportunity to consider.

When

The challenge team will come to Rotherham on the 3rd to 7th October with a lead in of 8 weeks commencing the 8th August to enable a case audit and a questionnaire to be completed and to develop the timetable for the on-site visit.

Relationship with Ofsted Inspection

The Local Government Group (Head of Safeguarding Programme) notifies Ofsted of the planned challenge in order that Ofsted inspection does not coincide with the peer challenge.

Role of Partner Agencies

The challenge is a real opportunity for candid feedback on how we work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It is important that staff are able to speak freely about their experience of their own agency areas of strength and those in need of development as well as to comment on the effectiveness of interagency working. Operational and senior staff will be invited to take part and it is vital that they are enabled to do so.

If you would like more information about the review, please contact Sue Wilson, Performance and Quality Manager on 01709 822511 or email s.wilson@rotherham.gov.uk