

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

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| 1. | Meeting: | Improving Lives Select Commission |
| 2. | Date: | 24th October 2012 |
| 3. | Title: | OFSTED Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children |
| 4. | Directorate: | Resources Directorate and Children and Young People's Services |

5. Summary

Between the 2nd and 11th July 2012 OFSTED carried out an unannounced inspection of the arrangements within Rotherham for the protection of children. This inspection was carried out under the new framework and the Authority was only the second in the country to have such inspection at that time. The report was published on the 10th August 2012 and overall the arrangements were found to be adequate.

6. Recommendations

- (i) That Improving Lives Select Commission accept the report.**

7. Proposals and Details

OFSTED carried out an unannounced inspection of the arrangements for the protection of children in Rotherham from the 2nd to the 11th July 2012, the report was formally published on the 10th August. Rotherham was only the second Local Authority in the country to receive such an inspection under the new, much tougher framework.

During the 8 day inspection there were 5 inspectors on-site carrying out intensive work during their visit which included:

- Tracking of 73 case files
- 11 practice observations
- 20 interviews with staff - individually and in groups
- Inspection of supervision files
- Reading of a large range of documents and submissions

Within the first 24 hours the inspectors expected to receive the contents of "Annex A" which includes:

- details of children within the Child Protection system
- organisational structures and workforce profile of social workers
- evidence of Quality Assurance Activity
- LSCB meetings and work priorities
- Strategic Needs Assessments
- Details of multi-agency activity (case conferences, core groups) during the fieldwork period

The new framework now covers 4 judgements, a rating is given to each judgement (including the overall effectiveness judgement)

- Overall effectiveness - **Adequate**
- The effectiveness of the help and protection provided to children, young people, families and carers – **Adequate**
- The quality of practice – **Adequate**
- Leadership and governance – **Adequate.**

The inspectors recognised the series of improvements that have been made since 2009. In some areas the inspectors said that the services provided are good, while in other areas, changes that have been made were seen to be positive but it is still too early to judge their full impact - hence the overall grading. The key element of the judgements given was in relation to lack of consistency across the whole of the service.

Clearly there is more work to be done to continue to raise standards but what is clear from the report is the commitment of all staff to keeping children and young people safe and ensuring their well-being across all of the work.

The recommendations in the report broadly match the areas that have already been identified in the improvement work across all agencies. An action plan has been developed covering the 13 recommendations, some needing to be done immediately and others within either three or six months.

8. Finance

There were minimal financial implications from the inspection itself including officer time plus car parking costs and refreshments for the inspectors. However, it is critical to note that the potential broader impact of the welfare reform could have on our local communities and as a result of this child neglect cases may increase. This in itself would have a direct impact on the size of caseloads. We regularly review caseloads and are confident in our assessment of the need to realign resources to augment the social worker cohort.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The report has been shared with partners, a learning event was held on the 28th September 2012 where partners will challenge each other, case studies will be developed and the priorities for improvement will be confirmed. This will also begin the joint planning with partners for the emerging framework for the new joint inspection regime from 2013.

The new framework from 2013 will be even more rigorous and will hold to account partner agencies in relation to their contribution to the protection of children.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The new OFSTED framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children replaces the both the three yearly Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspection and the yearly Unannounced inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment. This new framework will only be in place for one year as this will also be replaced by a new multi-agency framework, similar to the previous Joint Area Review (JAR). Judgements from other Local Authorities are being monitored as part of a benchmarking exercise to establish how results compare and to learn from others experiences, particular those who are rated "good".

An action plan has been developed and will be monitored by the Improvement Panel which has recently been strengthened to ensure that senior staff from partner agencies are accountable for their contribution to the improvements required.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- OFSTED report "Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children – Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham" – published 10th August 2012

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