

Agenda Item 7

**Report to CYP Select
Committee 18th September 2013**

**Report of Corporate Director,
CESC**

**OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION
OF CHILDREN – ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

Summary

This report provides an update on progress made in implementing the action plan that was drawn up following Ofsted's inspection, in January 2013, of local authority arrangements for the protection of children.

Recommendation

That the report be received.

Background

1. As reported to Cabinet on 13th June 2013, Ofsted undertook an unannounced child protection inspection between 7th and 16th January 2013. This was the first inspection in the North East region under a new framework, which was generally acknowledged to be a harder test.
2. Of the 45 inspections carried out by Ofsted under this framework (based on data from Ofsted for inspections between 1st June 2012 and 30th May 2013, and published by 30th June 2013), outcomes were as follows for the 'Overall Effectiveness' judgement made by Ofsted:

Outstanding	0	(0%)
Good	4	(9%)
Adequate	26	(58%)
Inadequate	15	(33%)
Total	45	

3. In the course of their Stockton-on-Tees inspection, inspectors looked at over 100 cases and were satisfied that appropriate action had been taken to protect all children at risk of immediate harm. There were a number of areas for further development identified, particularly in relation to the Referral and Assessment Team (RAT), which reflected our self assessment of the service at the time. The overall judgement was adequate.
4. The report, which was published by Ofsted on 15th February 2013, contained a number of recommendations, some to be completed immediately, some within 3 months and others within 6 months. The Council's Children Education and Social Care (CESC) services, in conjunction with partner agencies via Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children Board (SLSCB), developed an Action Plan in response to Ofsted's recommendations. A copy of the Action Plan, updated as at September 13th 2013, is attached to this report.

5. The inspection framework used for this child protection inspection was implemented by Ofsted from 1st June 2012 and is now ceasing, to be replaced by a new single inspection for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. It is expected that this new single inspection will be implemented from November 2013.

Action Plan

6. The attached action plan was developed following publication of Ofsted's inspection report, with actions set out for each of the 14 recommendations and an identified Lead Officer to oversee progress.
7. The plan has been monitored by the CESC Children & Young People's Management Team (CYPMT) and the majority of actions are now complete. Timescales for some of the actions have needed to be adjusted to take account of more recent regional or national developments that have impacted on proposed actions.
8. The updated action plan at **Appendix 1** is presented to the Committee for information and discussion.

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CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES – PERFORMANCE UPDATE Q1 2013~14

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - PROGRESS

- 1. Percentage of young people in years 12 – Y 14 who are NEET.** Performance at Q1 shows a NEET rate for Stockton of 8.4% with 84.2% of the cohort in learning and 1.5% not known. This performance continues to be better than the Tees Valley average of 9.4% NEET with 79.7% in learning and 4.7% not known.
- 2. Percentage of pupils attending good or better schools.** Latest published comparative data available is as at 31st March and is inclusive of Academies. 84% of primary school pupils attending good or better schools is higher than the national average of 78% and in line with the regional average. However, 56% of secondary school pupils attending good or better schools is below both the national average of 76% and regional average of 70%. The Education Improvement Service are continuing to monitor schools closely and target support according to assessed risk; local information (subsequent to the published Ofsted data at end of March) indicates some positive progress in secondary schools requiring improvement.
- 3. Percentage of schools judged to be good or outstanding.** Based on latest published comparative data at 31st March 2013, 86% of primary schools were judged good or outstanding at their last inspection, compared to an England average of 79% and regional average of 85%. For secondary schools, 42% were good or outstanding, compared to national and regional averages of 73% and 67% respectively. The Education Improvement Service are continuing to monitor schools closely and target support according to assessed risk; local information (subsequent to the published Ofsted data at end of March) indicates some positive progress in secondary schools requiring improvement.
- 4. Proportion of children becoming the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time, within two years.** Performance at quarter 1 of 2.7% equates to just 2 children from a cohort of 75 who were the subject of a subsequent child protection plan within 24 months. This compares to 12/13 Q1 performance of 8.3% and is in line with target expectations.
- 5. Proportion of child protection plans lasting two years or more.** Of the 89 children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan during the Q1 period, none had been the subject of a plan lasting 2 years or more. This compares to 12/13 Q1 performance of 3.6% (3 children from a cohort of 83).
- 6. Long term placement stability for looked after children – proportion of current placement for 2 years.** Performance at Q1 of 56.7% equates to 55 children and young people from a cohort of 97 who had been in their current placement for 2 years or more. Although lower than for 12/13 Q1 performance of 60.5%, current trajectory is in line with target expectations. Cases where children have moved placement within the two years are monitored closely through the Children's Social Care Performance Clinic - analysis continues to show that many of the placement moves are in fact planned moves to appropriate forms of permanency, as opposed to unplanned moves that might risk stability of the child's support.
- 7. Timeliness of initial assessments.** Q1 performance of 41.8% equates to 267 initial assessments completed within 10 days, from a total of 638 completed initial assessments. This continues to be below target, and slightly down from the previous year. A significant

increase in referrals to social care during the latter part of May appears to be reflected in a particular dip in timeliness during June. Overall high levels of activity continue to impact on assessment timescales and actions.

8. **Timeliness of core assessments.** Q1 performance of 56.0% equates 224 core assessments completed from a total of 400 completed core assessments. Although below target, this represents a slight improvement on the previous year's outturn of 54.2%. Overall high levels of activity continue to impact on assessment timescales and actions.
9. Weekly detailed case level reports on active assessments are provided to support close monitoring of performance, and further scrutiny takes place at the monthly Children's Social Care Performance Clinic. Overall these arrangements are having some positive impact - analysis indicates that, since these revised monitoring arrangements were introduced, the average time an assessment is open has been decreasing (see graph at Appendix 1). The assessment process is being reviewed currently in line with the Single Assessment Process set out in the new 'Working Together To Safeguard Children' national guidance.

GENERAL THEMATIC PERFORMANCE ISSUES

10. **Ofsted inspections of school and settings** – key points from Ofsted published data regarding inspection outcomes are as follows:
 - Children's homes – only 1 published full inspection report since October 2012 (rated good overall).
 - Childminders and Childcare – proportion overall good / outstanding in line with or better than regional / national averages, in inspections since September 2012.
 - Children's Centres - proportion overall good / outstanding below regional / national averages.
 - Schools – see paras 2 and 3 above.
11. **CAF (Common Assessment Framework)** – year to date activity has continued the position at the end of 2012~13, with no significant change in the overall level of CAFs being undertaken across agencies. Concerns regarding the current position have been raised with partner agencies at both Stockton-on-Tees Local Safeguarding Children's Board, and the Children & Young People's Health & Wellbeing Commissioning Group.
12. **Looked After Children placement stability and permanence** – despite the demands of the high levels of children in care, the following indicators reflect sound performance:
 - Shorter term placement stability (i.e. 3 or more placements during the year) has remained within target range. The rolling year performance at the end of June was 7.6% (29 children who had three or more placements, from a total of 380), well inside the rate of 10.8% for the previous year.
 - Effective use continues to be made of other routes to permanency. During Q1, of the 42 children who ceased to be in care:
 - 22 (52.4%) returned home in line with previous years performance
 - 10 (24%) were the subject of a Special Guardianship Order compared to 16.3% the previous year
 - Residence Orders reduced to 12.0% compared to 22.0% the previous year

- 5 (12%) were adopted in line with the previous year.

13. With regard to timeliness of the adoption process, the Q1 position in 2013~14 shows positive performance, improving on the previous year. More detail is provided in **Appendix 2**.

14. Care Leavers:

- Of 34 eligible care leavers aged 16 – 21 yrs during the period, all but 2 (both 21 yr olds) were in suitable accommodation; this is a good outcome.
- Of these 34, 59% (20) were in EET, with a pattern of reducing engagement in EET for the older group; 9 of the 14 NEET young people were aged 20 or 21 yrs.

ADOPTION PERFORMANCE UPDATE

ADOPTION POSITION STATEMENT (AS OF 31 MARCH 2013)

1. Children waiting to be matched for adoption = 40

Age range	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 10	11+
	17	17	6	0

Gender	Male	Female
	19	21

Ethnicity	White British	Black African	White/Asian	Other Mixed
	38	0	0	2

Sibling group	Single child	2 children	3 children	4 children
	17	7	3	0

Time waiting	Under 6 months	6 -12 months	1 - 2 years	Over 2 years
	17	13	10*	0

*Longest wait 15 months (at 31.03.13)

2. Children matched for adoption = 26

- 14 children placed with our own approved prospective adopters including 4 sibling groups of 2 children
- 9 children placed with other local authority approved prospective adopters including 2 sibling groups of 2 children
- 3 children placed with prospective adopters approved by a voluntary adoption agency
- 3 children from 2 different local authorities with 2 of our approved prospective adopters

3. Prospective Adopters

- 10 Prospective adopters approved

Of these:

- 5 were approved within 6 months of their application
- 5 were approved within 9 months of their application

- 70 adoption enquiries received

- 19 of these had requested a visit
Of these:
 - 5 do not wish to proceed
 - 2 application not accepted/counselled out
 - 4 have submitted applications and are in preparation/training
 - 1 interested in inter country adoption
 - 4 currently being assessed
 - 1 approved and matched with a child
 - 2 applications awaited
- 4 prospective adopters in assessment
- 5 prospective adopters approved currently waiting for a match with a child
- Prospective adopters wishing to be assessed by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council are not 'turned away' by the Child Placement Team unless they are deemed to be unsuitable. If the prospective adopters' characteristics do not coincide with those of the children currently waiting, the prospective adopters would be advised of this and the likely period of time they may wait before a child is matched with them. Clearly this may result in the prospective adopters pursuing an application with another adoption agency, but if they still wished to proceed with an assessment we would assess them, on the basis that even if we do not use them for one of our children we can sell them on to another agency.

ADOPTION SCORECARD PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW (1 APRIL 2009 – 31 MARCH 2012)

4. **National Indicator A1** – this measures the average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted during the period. The last published national data, based on an average over a rolling three year period indicates:
 - Stockton 3 year average (2009 -12) – 674
 - Stockton 3 year average (2008 -11) - 643
 - (Average increase of 31 days).
 - National 3 year average (2009 -12) – 636
 - National 3 year average (2008 -11) – 625
 - (Average increase of 11 days).
5. **Updates on A1 indicator:**
 - For the 2012-13 period, the average for Stockton-on-Tees was 707 days.
 - At the end of Q1 2013~14, the average was 467 days, a significant improvement on the previous year, and better than the national threshold of 639 days.

6. **National Indicator A2** – this measures the average time (in days) between a Local Authority receiving Court Authority to place a child and the Local Authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family.

- Stockton 3 year average (2009-12) – 269
- Stockton 3 year average (2008-11) - 258

- Average increase of 11 days.

- National 3 year average (2009 -12) – 195
- National 3 year average (2008 -11) – 171

- Average increase of 24 days.

7. **Updates on A2 indicator:**

- For the 2012-13 period, the average for Stockton-on-Tees was 363 days.

- At the end of Q1 2013~14, the average has shown significant improvement, with an average of 103 days, better than the national average of 213 days.

8. **National Indicator A3** – this measures children who wait less than 21 months between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family

- Stockton 3 year average (2009-12) - 50 (56%)
- Stockton 3 year average (2008-11) - 45 (55%)

- National 3 year average (2009 -12) – 10,180 (56%)
- National 3 year average (2008 -11) – 9440 (58%)

- Whilst the national average decreased (ie performance declined), Stockton's performance improved slightly to match the national average.

ADOPTION SCORECARD PERFORMANCE BREAKDOWN (1 APRIL 2009 – 31 MARCH 2012)

9. The indicators of performance based on timeliness measures do not always reflect the complexities of individual cases or the quality of the placement decisions made for the children involved. The following section provides some background to illustrate some of the reasons for delay.

10. **Children above Threshold on A2 Indicator (213 days)**

- Equates to 21 children in Stockton-on-Tees

- 16 cases – 12 children placed separately, 1 x sibling group of 3 and 3 x sibling group of 2

- 2 children from dual ethnicity backgrounds

- 20 of 21 children referred to national adoption register and information circulated to all national local authority and voluntary adoption agencies

- All 21 children currently happy and settled with their adoptive family to the best of our knowledge

11. Primary Reason for Delay

- 9 children had either or a combination of the following factors:
 - moderate to severe developmental delay
 - born severely drug addicted
 - born to parent who used alcohol during pregnancy
 - possible signs of foetal alcohol syndrome
 - attachment difficulties resulting in challenging behaviour
 - significant medical conditions (in one case this was life limiting)
- 2 cases involving complex legal issues/orders
- 1 sibling group of 3 and 3 sibling groups of 2 children (sibling groups are harder to place)
- 1 sibling group (3 children) where the decision to separate them delayed family finding activity
- 5 children were in the 4 - 5 year and older age range (this age range is harder to place)
- 2 cases involved suitability to adopt assessment of either a foster carer or person known to the child

12. Individual Case Summaries

- 1 child (861 days) had a serious health condition that deterred prospective adopters from pursuing a match. We went on to identify a professional working with the child as a potential adopter - we had to assess her and husband as suitable to adopt before the child could be placed.
- 1 child (797 days) was in permanent placement throughout so there was no negative impact caused by the delay. The delay in being able to formalise the adoption placement was the result of birth parent challenging the Placement Order therefore plans had to be placed on hold until decision made by Court.
- 3 children (719 days, 546 days, third child not in cohort) who were siblings were eventually placed separately. Family finding activity initially focused on seeking a placement for the three together but decision eventually made to separate them which contributed to delay.
- 2 children (534 days) who were siblings proved difficult to place because one child was White British and the other child was of dual heritage. The older sibling was nearly five years old.
- 1 child (513 days) had significant health and development issues having been born to a parent using drugs and alcohol during pregnancy.
- 1 child (419 days) had a parent with severe learning disability and prospective adopters withdrew interest as it was unclear what the implications were for the child's future development. As time progressed, the child made developmental progress and

interest from prospective adopters increased.

- 2 children (389 days) who were siblings had witnessed domestic abuse and this had a significant impact upon their behaviour. Initially there was no response to family finding activity. The children's behaviour settled due to the work of the foster carer over time which contributed greatly to the eventual success in finding an adoptive placement.
- 1 child (353 days) was aged 5 years when family finding commenced, was of dual heritage and did not want to be adopted. Individual work was undertaken with her to get her into a position of being able to accept adoption. In addition to this it was essential to identify adopters who could undertake direct contact with birth family.
- 1 child (343 days) had a life limiting health condition and the foster carer asked to be considered as an adopter and had to be assessed which caused delay, although the child remained in the same placement throughout and throughout.
- 1 child (340) days had a contact order in force to siblings still in contact with birth parent and therefore it was a challenge to identify adopters who could accept contact into the birth family.
- 2 children (287 days) who were siblings had a lack of initial response to the family finding activity.
- 3 children (254 days) who were siblings were aged between 1 – 5 years. Two have a learning disability and developmental delay. Contact with a sibling still in care was also initially required.
- 1 child (250 days) was born with some signs of developmental delay and potential learning disability and a number of prospective adopters withdrew interest due to the uncertainty.
- 1 child (230 days) was aged 6 years old which made the child harder to place.
- 1 child (224 days) had attachment difficulties and associated anxious behaviours which deterred prospective adopters from coming forward.