

Briefing Note for Children’s Trust Board - 23 Nov 2009

The Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children’s Services

1. As part of the introduction of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), from 1st April 2009, Ofsted have introduced a triennial review of safeguarding and looked after children’s services. This is in addition to the yearly unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements. Inspections will be graded against published criteria on a four point scale (outstanding, good, adequate or inadequate) in both Safeguarding and Looked After Children’s services with sub-categories for each.

Frequency and notice

2. Timing of the full inspections will be influenced by evidence from other inspection and regulation, including the annual unannounced inspection. The maximum notice period for the full inspection is 10 days but where serious concerns about safeguarding have been raised, a full inspection of safeguarding may be carried out with less notice.
3. From the inspections that have taken place so far the fieldwork of the full inspection has followed the unannounced inspection within 4 -12 weeks. For Nottinghamshire this would mean an inspection before February 2010 and possibly as soon as 30 November 2009.

Scope – Safeguarding

4. Inspections will take a broad view of the following.
 - How well agencies and professionals work together to identify, safeguard and promote the welfare of potentially vulnerable groups.
 - How well practice is supported and underpinned by policymaking.
5. To do this, inspectors will evaluate the impact of systems and frameworks **across local public services** on safeguarding and protecting children including:
 - outcomes for children and young people
 - how well safeguarding is prioritised
 - how well agencies identify and respond to child welfare concerns

Scope – Looked After

6. The looked after element of the inspection will focus on:
 - outcomes achieved and impact of services
 - quality of risk management and decision-making
 - quality of planning, review and support for children in care/ care leavers

- placement stability
- safeguarding of looked after children
- access to, and attendance at, suitable schools
- support for families and carers
- the effectiveness of corporate parenting approaches
- preparation for leaving care and adult life and the subsequent support.

Inspection Activity

7. Four or more inspectors including one from the care quality commission will undertake activities which fall broadly into the following areas:
 - Review of key documents, e.g. minutes of Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board and Children's Trust Board meetings, the Children and Young People Plan, Independent Reviewing Officer overview reports, findings of relevant reports from other inspections
 - Review of key data, e.g. CAF, workforce data, management information.
 - Review of survey responses from all (aged 8+) CYP who are looked after or have left care in the previous 12 months, social workers and VCS
 - Interviews with key individuals, e.g. the DCS, Lead member and other councillors, the chair of the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board, managers from partner agencies including managers of A&E departments
 - Focus groups of relevant staff, e.g. designated people in schools, social workers, service users, independent reviewing officers
 - Case file audit. Up to 100 case files in total may be reviewed.
 - Site visits to gather further information on the cases selected

Experience of other areas

8. Feedback from those already inspected suggests that the process is a triangulation of evidence, testing policies against observed practice. Initial lines of enquiry are developed from previous inspections and serious case reviews and the relationships between the Children's Trust Board and the Safeguarding Children's Board is scrutinised.
9. There is a considerable logistical exercise with very short notice to enable inspectors to undertake around 80-100 activities (interviews, which will allow them to make judgements against all the areas of the inspection criteria.

Next Steps

10. Running alongside the Safeguarding Improvement Programme will be an action plan to focus work in preparation for the inspection. It is proposed that self-evaluations, mock interviews and briefing meetings are undertaken from 23 November to ensure that preparations can meet the earliest possible timescale of inspection.