

Subject:	Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within local authority children's services		
Date of Meeting:	1 st November 2010		
Report of:	Strategic Director- People		
Contact Officer:	Name: James Dougan	Tel: 295511	
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Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report is to inform the Children & Young People's Trust Board of the outcome of the annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within Brighton & Hove City Council's Children's Services
- 1.2 Following the death of Baby Peter in Haringey and the subsequent Laming report, recommendations were made for the review of local authorities children's safeguarding services. As a result, from April 2009, the Joint Area Review inspections of children's services ceased and were replaced by a new programme of inspection. The two new inspection processes in relation to safeguarding children and young people are an annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment of children in need and children who may be in need of protection, and an announced inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services to take place every three years.
- 1.3 The unannounced inspection lasts for two days with no prior warning of the visit being given. There is no grade awarded for the inspection, however it will contribute to the annual review of performance of the local authority children's services for which Ofsted will award a rating later in the year. The inspection details its findings under the following headings:
 - Strengths
 - Satisfactory practice
 - Areas for development
 - Priority actions

If local authorities are given priority actions, this is a limiting judgement that affects the overall rating for children's services.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 The Board is asked to note the findings of the annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The inspection was carried out on 7th and 8th July 2010 and is part of the new arrangements Ofsted introduced in 2009/10. This is the first time this type of inspection has been carried out in Brighton & Hove. It involved three on-site inspectors undertaking case auditing and interviewing of social workers and managers. The inspectors examined a number of children's cases in detail and their conclusions reflect this investigation.
- 3.2 The conclusions are contained in the attached Ofsted letter that details in Brighton & Hove the areas of strength, satisfactory practice and areas of development.
- 3.3 In Brighton & Hove we did not receive any area of priority action.
- 3.4 At the time of the inspection, 16 of the 19 local authorities had been inspected in the South East region. A GOSE analysis of the findings of the unannounced inspections found that 8 local authorities were identified as having priority actions. The most common underlying factors identified in the priority actions were:
- staff shortages/ high staff turnover/ lack of capacity and the impact on timely assessments or timely provision of services
 - lack of evidence of management oversight/decision making/quality assurance arrangements.
- 3.5 The Ofsted unannounced inspection of Brighton & Hove's contact, referral and assessment whilst not revealing any areas which required a priority action, did indicate a number of areas for development. One of these was the speed at which children in need are seen. Clearly this presents us with significant additional resource pressure on top of the increase in activity seen within the service.
- 3.6 There continues to be significant pressures in terms of the Area Teams, particularly the impact of dealing with increased numbers of children the subject of Child Protection Plans. Over the last year there has been a significant increase from 328 in August 2009, to 414 in July 2010. It remains a challenge to ensure not only that all cases are allocated, but that there are robust interventions designed to effect change, or in the absence of change or risks increasing, alternative plans. There have also been increases in terms of the number of children in care. The numbers rose from 448 in August 2009 to 472 in July 2010. Again, the challenge has been to ensure all children in care are allocated and time given to ensure Care Plans are effectively delivered.

Whilst there has been an increase in statutory activity over the past year (i.e. August 09 to August 10), this is on top of increases between August 08 to August 09. The cumulative figures accordingly are:-

	<u>Children the subject of CP Plans</u>	<u>CiC</u>
July 2008	245	386
July 2009	314	444
July 2010	414	472

Clearly there has been significant increase in statutory social work activity, which has had significant impacts on the capacity of the service.

Between January and July of this year (2010) the Area Social Work Teams had between them 1690 contact/referrals, of these an average of 72% resulted in Initial Assessments. During the same timescale, 155 Core Assessments were completed.

- 3.7 The next step is the development of an Areas for Development Plan which will address all of the areas highlighted in the Ofsted letter for development. This plan is in an advanced stage of development and will be brought to the next Board meeting.

4. **CONSULTATION**

None

5. **FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 When the Areas for Development Plan is produced there will need to be an analysis of the additional costs and a strategy explaining how these will be funded.

Finance Officer Consulted: Louise Hoten Date: 20th October 2010

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The legal context of the inspection is contained within the body of the report. Consideration of the outcome of the inspection will assist the Board in monitoring the effective delivery of the services referred to.

Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson Date: 20th October 2010

Equalities Implications:

5.3 None

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 None

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 None

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 None

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7 None

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

6.1 None

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The Board is asked to note the findings of the annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Ofsted letter dated 5th August outlining outcomes of inspection

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None