

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 13th March 2012
Report of: Lorraine Butcher Strategic Director Children, Families and Adults
Subject/Title: **Summary of actions resulting from the Announced Inspection of Children & Family Services**
Portfolio Holder : Cllr Hilda Gaddum

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress which has taken place across a range of service areas as a result of the Announced Inspection of Children & Family Services in June/July 2012. This inspection specifically evaluated how services ensure young people are properly safeguarded and determine the quality of service provision for Cared for Children. The published report outlined a series of areas for improvement within specified timescales and this paper outlines the progress to date on these action areas.
- 1.2 It was agreed at C&F senior leadership team to generate a specific action plan which would be updated on a regular basis by key managers who are responsible for implementing the required changes to service procedures. Appendix A shows the detailed information included in the action plan and the overall progress up to the end of January 2012.
- 1.3 Prior to the full inspection, there had been a two unannounced inspections which also identified a series of recommendations. The overall action plan as presented in Appendix A also includes these recommendations to ensure that there is evidence of progress on all identified areas within a single plan.
- 1.4 It was agreed at the Children and Families Senior Leadership Meeting on the 8th February that a detailed evidence folder would be established which would provide the detailed reports and documentation to substantiate the progress made. This process is currently being undertaken and Appendix 2 shows the template which has been agreed for undertaking this process.
- 1.5 Detailed monitoring of the Announced Inspection Action Plan is undertaken through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) Performance Management sub group as chaired by the Head Service: Strategy Planning and Performance.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 That this report relating to the Announced Inspection Action Plan be received and noted.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The reason for presenting this information is to outline the priority areas identified within the Announced Inspection Report and how they have been have been actioned and the progress made to date.

Wards Affected

- 4.1 All.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 The improvements being undertaken resulting from the Announced Inspection will require policy changes within specified areas of Children & Family services. The most significant of these relates to the possible changes to the electronic system for recording and reporting contacts and referrals into Children's Social Care. The existing PARIS infrastructure continues not to deliver the quality of information which is needed particularly around the complexities of how social care staff record client information in a structured and coherent manner. Ongoing work is taking place to consider alternatives to the PARIS system as well as looking at changes to policies in the shorter term to make the best use of PARIS whilst it remains the Integrated Children's System (ICS).

7.0 Financial Implications (Director of Finance and Business Services)

- 7.1 Any planned changes to the ICS system will clearly involve significant costs and the options relating to this are currently being considered through the ICT Strategy Group working across Children Services and Adults.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 None

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 The key risk relates to a failure to implement the required improvements prior to any re-inspection which would then have an impact on the overall grade received. A new inspection framework will come into place as from May 2012 and Appendix C gives a summary of this new framework.
- 9..2 There is a risk to the service if the ICS system, which acts as the electronic warehouse for recording social care activity, is not fit for purpose. The ongoing work to fully evaluate the current PARIS system will clearly undertake a detailed risk assessment in order to make recommendations on any future procurement of an alternative system.

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 The Announced Inspection Action Plan was put together at the beginning of September in response to the priority areas identified in the Inspection report. The vast majority of the identified priorities should have been now completed as the main timescales related to the initial 3 month period. The end of January is therefore seen as crucial to review progress. Key managers have recently provided the most up to date position statements within the plan.

10.2 **Key issues which arise from the updated Action Plan :**

- a. Where priorities have been identified as being fully implemented or fully achieved, there is now a real need to test such statements through a series of detailed reviews. It is suggested that the Quality Assurance (QA) manager establishes a series of 'child's journey' to measure if practices have changed and are now embedding into day to day practice.
- b. Policy into practice - Whilst there is recorded evidence that policies and procedures have improved e.g. children seen alone, there remains the issue of ensuring, where possible that recording mechanisms are very clear to ensure actual practices are embedded.
- c. Consistency of practice – some of the summaries provided identify inconsistent practices across teams – i.e. sharing of assessment reports with parents.
- d. There needs now to be an agreement as to how the evidence for each priority is recorded/stored – reference to themed audits, meetings, training etc needs to be available so that there is a quick and easy reference point for future inspections to show progress.
- e. PARIS remains an issue and is a significant barrier to making progress in some areas – i.e. too many templates which do not allow for ease of recording. Serious decisions need to be taken in terms of what refinements are needed in PARIS systems to allow for greater clarity and ability of a PARIS reader to quickly and efficiently find essential information.
- f. There are a series of planned reports due to come to Children & Families Senior Leadership Team over the coming months (mainly around Cared for Children) which will provide more detailed evidence of progress in specific priority areas.

10.3 **Next Steps**

1. To undertake 2 in depth reviews before the end of July 2012 to test the level of confidence that priorities are now being embedded into daily practice.
2. To generate detailed evidence of impact which is then stored, updated and quickly available for any future inspections.
3. To ensure that within new service planning arrangements, the identified priority areas are built into the ongoing service reviews.
4. To return to Children & Families Senior Leadership Team in May to feedback on evidential reviews and agree any next steps.

11.0 **Access to Information**

11.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Mark Bayley
Designation: Quality Assurance Manager
Tel No: 07770 322965
Email: Mark.bayley@cheshireeast.co.uk