

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Children & Families Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 19 October 2010

Report of: Lorraine Butcher, Director of Children's Services

Subject/Title: Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements within Local Authority Children's Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Hilda Gaddum

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 Cheshire East Council Children's Services were inspected on the 20 and 21 July 2010 by OFSTED under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This report conveys the outcome of that inspection. The findings of the report were published on the 18 August 2010. An action plan detailing actions to address the areas for development identified from the inspection is currently being compiled.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and at a future date receive regular updates on progress being made to address the areas for development identified.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure effective scrutiny of the ongoing improvement in the arrangements for effectively safeguarding children and young people in Cheshire East.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 Effective safeguarding of children and young people contributes to their emotional health and well-being.

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

7.1 Not applicable

8.0 Financial Implications 2010/11 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

8.1 Actions being taken to address improvements in safeguarding arrangements particularly in the assessment, contact and referral procedures are being contained within the budget agreed for the Service by the Council.

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

9.1 None

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 Establishing effective arrangements for contact, referral and assessment is at the heart of steps taken to safeguard children and mitigate risks.

11.0 Background and Options

11.1 In July 2010 the Local Authority was inspected by OFSTED under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, of its contact, referral and assessment arrangements.

11.2 The purpose of the annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within local authorities is to assess the effectiveness of front-line practice in managing potential risks to children and young people and to minimise the incidence of abuse and neglect.

11.3 The outcomes of the inspection can inform the scheduling of future inspections, in particular the full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children.

11.4 Attached as Appendix 1 is the letter confirming the findings of the inspection conducted in July 2010. Critically no Priority Actions were identified. These are areas where there are significant concerns identified by the inspectors that children and young people are not being kept safe.

11.5 Detailed in the letter are areas identified as satisfactory practice and areas for development. Attached as Appendix 2 is an Action Plan to address the areas for development identified. The Head of Service for Safeguarding and Specialist Services will have responsibility for implementing the Action Plan and driving forward the required areas for improvement. It is proposed that quarterly reports on progress are reported to the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee.

12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

- 12.1 Shortcomings in safeguarding arrangements were identified by Cheshire East Council shortly after becoming a new unitary council in April 2009. The Unannounced Inspection while identifying areas for development has provided a useful external perspective on progress to date and areas for further improvement. The Service is keen to maintain its momentum for securing further improvements.

13.0 Access to Information

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

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