

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 March 2010

POST-INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

Purpose of Report

1. The attached report presents an update of progress in implementing the Post-Inspection Action Plan.

Introduction

2. In September 2009 Ofsted carried out an inspection of safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children in North Yorkshire. The inspection report was published by Ofsted on 23 October. North Yorkshire was rated as 'adequate' for safeguarding arrangements and as 'good' for services for looked after children.
3. The inspection report included eight recommendations which the Children and Young People Service and its partners are required to implement either immediately, within three months or within six months. The Post-Inspection Action Plan, approved by the County Council, contains a programme of detailed actions required to implement these eight recommendations. The report attached as Appendix A presents an update on progress in implementing the Post-Inspection Action Plan

Recommendations

4. Members note the progress on the implementation of the Post-Inspection Action Plan

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Report to be presented by CYNTHIA WELBOURN, Corporate Director, Children and Young People Service

Background Documents:

**Ofsted Inspection Report
Post-Inspection Action Plan**

NORTH YORKSHIRE CHILDREN'S TRUST

Agenda Item Cover Sheet

TITLE OF PAPER: POST-INSPECTION ACTION PLAN: MONITORING

DATE OF MEETING: 22 March 2010

ORGANISATION/SUB GROUP:

**RELATED CYPP IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY: WT4 Performance
Management**

**RELATED PERFORMANCE INDICATOR(S): NIs 59-68
especially NI 59, NI 60**

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF PAPER:

- **Progress on the implementation of the Post-Inspection Action Plan be noted**

IMPACT ON RESOURCES:

Recommendation	Resource Type	Cost	Benefit

AUTHOUR:

David O'Brien

NORTH YORKSHIRE CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD

22 March 2010

POST-INSPECTION ACTION PLAN: MONITORING

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This paper presents an update on the implementation of the Post-Inspection Action Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That progress on the implementation of the Post-Inspection Action Plan is noted.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 In September 2009 Ofsted carried out an inspection of safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children in North Yorkshire. The inspection report was published by Ofsted on 23 October. North Yorkshire was rated as 'adequate' for safeguarding arrangements and as 'good' for services for looked after children.

3.2 The inspection report included eight recommendations which the Children and Young People Service and its partners are required to implement either immediately, within three months or within six months. These recommendations are:

Immediately

1. Produce an action plan from this inspection, to ensure service specific, detailed actions are incorporated relating to the areas for development and priority action arising from the unannounced inspection to enable monitoring by elected members, the Children's Trust and Local Safeguarding Children Board.
2. Utilise the combined resources and expertise of the council and its contractors to prioritise and address the difficulties associated with the Integrated Children's System (ICS).

Within Three Months

3. Undertake a full evaluation of current children's services actual spending to reconcile the need for increased safeguarding services against the current overspend and to ensure strong financial planning that sustains the service operation over the medium and long term.
4. Improve consistency in the quality and timeliness of assessments and child protection investigations.
5. Develop policy, procedure and practice to ensure effective arrangements are in place to support the transition to adult services for looked after children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

6. Improve the effectiveness of elected members in their role as corporate parents to support the improvement of outcomes for looked after children.
7. Develop a joint strategy between the county council and the PCT for the delivery of physical, general and mental health services for looked after children.

Within Six Months

8. Conduct further analysis of the increased number of children subject to a child protection plan for more than two years and the increased percentage of children subject to a child protection plan for a second time to inform future service planning and delivery.
- 3.3 At its November meeting the Children's Trust Board approved the Post-Inspection Action Plan which contains a programme of detailed actions required to implement these eight recommendations. This action plan was subsequently submitted to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber.

4.0 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE POST-INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

- 4.1 The Children and Young People's Service has established a monitoring structure and process for the Post-Inspection Action Plan.
- 4.2 A monitoring Core Team has been established to monitor progress against the whole action plan on a monthly basis. Each recommendation has been assigned to an Assistant Director, or other appropriate senior manager, to provide leadership and oversight. Monitoring comprises an overview of each of the 162 individual actions, and high level monitoring of each recommendation and sub-section to identify any risks to delivery, to resolve delivery problems, to and monitor the evidence of impact from the actions. A reconstituted ICS Project Board will provide additional detailed monitoring of actions pertaining to Recommendations 1 and 2.
- 4.3 The Core Team and ICS Project Board both meet monthly, but these meetings are scheduled at fortnightly intervals. This means that every two weeks there will be senior level monitoring and challenge of action plan implementation.

5.0 CURRENT PROGRESS: RECOMMENDATION 1

- 5.1 Recommendation 1 requires the authority to produce an action plan from this inspection, to ensure service specific, detailed actions are incorporated relating to the areas for development and priority action arising from the unannounced inspection to enable monitoring by elected members, the Children's Trust and Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- 5.2 The Post-Inspection Action has been developed and agreed by Executive Members, the County Council, the Children's Trust Board and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. A monitoring structure and reporting process for the Post-Inspection Action Plan has been developed. A monitoring Core Team has been established to monitor progress against the whole action plan on a monthly basis. Each recommendation has been assigned to an Assistant Director, or other appropriate senior manager, to provide leadership and oversight.

5.3 Monitoring comprises

- an overview of each of the 162 individual actions
- high level monitoring and highlights reporting of each recommendation and sub-section
- identification of risks to delivery
- resolution of delivery problems
- monitoring evidence of impact from the actions.

5.4 A reconstituted ICS Project Board provides additional detailed monitoring of those actions which include an ICS component.

5.5 Progress on the implementation of the Action Plan is reported to Executive Members, the Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Children's Trust Board, and the Safeguarding Children Board.

5.6 The substantive actions concerning Recommendation 1 are sub-divided into several headings covering ICT Infrastructure and Resilience, the ICS Programme and Functionality, Improvements in Timeliness of Assessments, Workforce Capacity Building, and recording of Customer Contacts. The following paragraphs report the main developments under each of these headings in turn.

5.7 ICT Infrastructure and Resilience

5.7.1 Corporate ICT has conducted a full review of resilience arrangements across all CYPS systems and the recommendations have been accepted by the directorate. The main proposal is to put in place an additional server for each system, including ICS, which will provide back-up when the primary server does not function properly. Funding for the package of infrastructure improvements is to be provided partly through the Directorate and partly through corporate funds (Pending Issues Provision – PIP).

5.7.2 Additional measures to improve the ICT infrastructure and resilience are underway. Load balancing arrangements are in place and the Polyserve facility in which the ICS system sits has been migrated to a more resilient environment.

5.7.3 Anecdotal evidence received from practitioners suggests that the speed and resilience of the ICS system has improved in most parts of the county, although there are reports of some slow performance in the Hambleton and Richmondshire areas. Statistics collated by Corporate ICT demonstrate improvements in the speed and resilience of ICS. For instance, the numbers of Protocol performance incidents logged by the ICS Helpdesk fell from peak levels of 34 in October and 28 in October to just 2 in January and 3 in February. Corporate ICT will also undertake a further round of visits to all of the Children's Social Care teams and sites using ICS to review progress with practitioners and target any further actions required.

5.8 ICS Programme and Functionality

5.8.1 The ICS Board has been reconstituted and now includes representation from Corporate ICT and from Liquid Logic, the suppliers of the Protocol ICS product. It is chaired by the Director.

5.8.2 The ICS and Performance Recovery Programme is beginning to help in reclaiming social work practice time by making the ICS system more effective and user-friendly. Extensive support has been provided to practitioners in the form of temporary

additional administrative, IT and training staff since January 2009. That level of help is not sustainable financially, nor should it be required as the system and practice improve. The current temporary additional level of help, therefore, is due to be replaced by May with a reduced but permanent group of systems support and training support with a network of ICS experts embedded in the frontline social work support teams.

- 5.8.3 Business process maps for all social care processes have been completed. These will help to streamline social care processes and improve consistency of practice across all teams. A Protocol reconfiguration exercise has been completed, the purpose of which was to align the Protocol ICS system with the new social care business processes.
- 5.8.4 New ICS practice guidance for social workers has been produced. A programme of ICS refresher training commenced on 22 February. Arrangements for future provision of ICS trainers and systems support have been agreed. Again this should make the system easier to use and at the same time establish common standards across the County.
- 5.8.5 One outstanding piece of work is to incorporate into the ICS system a set of bespoke case management templates. These templates are intended to make the ICS system more user-friendly for practitioners and to improve the quality of reports produced for service users. Our objective is to have embedded in the system assessment summary reports which are as close as possible to those developed in the County prior to ICS, which users found helpful. The templates in ICS are a national issue. Our position in North Yorkshire is as follows:
- for Initial Assessments, use the ICS template
 - for Core Assessments, Initial Child Protection Conferences and Reviews of Child Protection Conferences, use North Yorkshire's original templates. (The Core Assessment has already been reintroduced as an electronic attachment, but needs embedding, and we will need to continue to use the current Protocol templates for ICPC and RCPC until they can be customised for us, because the risks of fragmenting records of these vital assessments is too great under any other approach.)
 - for Core Pathway Plans, it is thought that a regionally developed model to which we have contributed should be used. Ultimately it will need embedding in Protocol, but we are also assessing whether, in the interim, we can incorporate the required documents as an electronic attachment (as with the Core Assessment) without undue duplication for practitioners.

Discussions are ongoing with Liquid Logic in order to determine how this can be achieved within a suitable timescale and at acceptable cost.

5.9 Improvements in Timeliness of Assessments

- 5.9.1 The Action Plan sets timeliness targets for initial and core assessment for the remainder of 2009/10. These are 90% for initial assessments and 100% for core assessments each month. Deliberately aspirational targets were set for this period in order to be clear about the scale of improvement which would be needed in order to achieve outturn figures which were reasonably close to previous improvements.. Performance data for the timeliness of initial and core assessments is reported monthly through a fast-track monitoring system introduced as part of the Action Plan arrangements. The availability and quality of performance data within the ICS system is greatly improved though not yet ready to replace the parallel recording system

based on spreadsheets. The timeliness data reported for each month from October to January is shown in the table below:

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	2008/09
Timeliness of Initial Assessments (%)	49.1	62.3	63.9	77.7	55.2
Timeliness of Core Assessments (%)	51.7	87.3	85.0	58.3	69.7

5.9.2 The performance data for initial assessments indicates that timeliness has improved each month, but remains well short of the 90% target. The performance data for core assessments indicates good improvement during November and December followed by a substantial dip during January. For Initial Assessments improvement has been slower but more sustained.

5.9.3 The performance in January is being examined in more detail within the Directorate, and the Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee are also seeking the information. Numbers and percentages of Initial and Core Assessments are vital performance information, but they do not provide a complete picture of what is happening in workload, risk management and prioritisation. The Directorate has introduced a combined analysis of workload, staffing and performance to enable it to track underlying issues as well as headline performance.

5.10 Workforce Capacity Building

5.10.1 Staff development and support arrangements for ICS are referred to under 5.8 above.

5.10.2 Section 7 below reports on the provision of new assessment and safeguarding social worker posts. A recruitment strategy has been developed and is underway.

5.10.3 The new post of Head of Safeguarding, which was established in 2009, has been out to national advertisement without success and a second recruitment process is underway.

5.10.4 In line with many other Authorities, we are continuing to use Agency staff to ensure that the Assessment and Safeguarding teams are as close to fully staffed as possible under the 2009/10 establishment. It is a concern locally and nationally that Assessment and Safeguarding posts have the highest vacancy rates to fill amongst Social Care social workers. We are examining what other options are available to us to reduce the reliance on Agency workers and will not increase our use of them to fill the newly created 12 additional posts pending permanent appointments.

5.11 Customer Centre Recording

The Action Plan contains two actions in respect of contacts made through the customer service centre. The first concerned the recording of ethnicity, and the second concerned the recording of contacts referred to integrated services as well as those referred to social care. Both actions have been completed, and arrangements are being developed to monitor compliance.

6.0 **CURRENT PROGRESS: RECOMMENDATION 2**

Recommendation 2 requires the authority to utilise the combined resources and expertise of the council and its contractors (Liquid Logic) to prioritise and address the

difficulties associated with the Integrated Children's System (ICS). These are reported in sections 5.4 and 5.5 above

7.0 CURRENT PROGRESS: RECOMMENDATION 3

- 7.1 Recommendation 3 requires the authority to undertake a full evaluation of current children's services actual spending to reconcile the need for increased safeguarding services against the current overspend and to ensure strong financial planning that sustains the service operation over the medium and long term.
- 7.2 This recommendation has been taken forward as part of the County Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budget process for 2010/11. This includes analysis of cost drivers for child placements, workloads, staffing levels and vacancies for Assessment and Safeguarding.
- 7.3 The County Council's budget for 2010/11, agreed on 17 February, includes additional resources approaching £2m to take account of increased costs in CYPS. This includes a forecast placement model arising from increased numbers of looked after children and provides the 12 additional Assessment and Safeguarding social workers required to strengthen capacity during a period of sustained referral pressures. Combined with the 9 additional posts for Assessment and Safeguarding social workers funded by the Directorate in 2009/10, the total increase is 21 social workers. However, there is a national shortage of social workers and it will be challenging to recruit permanent staff to the increased establishment. The Authority is adopting a multi-stranded and continuous recruitment and capacity building campaign. Once they are filled, these additional posts will have increased capacity for assessment and safeguarding social work by 33% over a 15 month period.
- 7.4 Careful management of looked after children placements continues, in terms of both appropriateness of placement and cost-effectiveness. The number of looked after children has increased in-year on average 12-15% across the year (total numbers vary on a monthly basis). The associated increase in expenditure has been lower than that. This reflects the fact that despite pressures we have retained a balanced and cost-effective placement mix. Note that the increase in numbers of looked after children is being experienced nationally and not just in this county. North Yorkshire's increased expenditure is significantly lower in absolute and relative terms than in many other Authorities. This reflects a good underpinning strategy for LAC. It also reflects the extent to which the Directorate as a whole has used savings and reallocated resources to help absorb the cost drivers of ICS and Baby P.
- 7.5 It is recognised corporately that despite the Directorate's active management of Placements and overall resources, placement demand may exceed the additional resources allocated to the Service for 2010/11. A corporate resource of a further £0.5M has also been established, therefore, with LAC placements recognised as the first priority for further financial support from this source.

8.0 CURRENT PROGRESS: RECOMMENDATION 4

- 8.1 Recommendation 4 requires the authority to improve consistency in the quality and timeliness of assessments and child protection procedures. Progress on the timeliness of initial and core assessments is reported in section 5.6 above.
- 8.2 In respect of improving the quality and consistency of child protection procedures, a revised set of child protection procedures has been developed. A series of multi-agency briefings has been held to launch the new procedures.

- 8.3 Within Children's Social Care, all service managers and deputy service managers are required to cover the new procedures in supervision meetings during March and April to reinforce implementation of the new procedures.
- 8.4 Six months after the launch of the new procedures an audit will be carried out to run a Countywide check for consistency in applying the new procedures.

9.0 CURRENT PROGRESS: RECOMMENDATION 5

- 9.1 Recommendation 5 requires the authority to develop policy, procedure and practice to ensure effective arrangements are in place to support the transition to adult services for looked after children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).
- 9.2 The 'Joint Transitions Steering Group' comprising senior managers from Adult and Children's Services has been established to review the pathway and procedures for transitions. The existing policies have been revised and a new joint policy and procedure has been developed for transitions, emphasising the priority of Looked After Children with LDD. The consultation on the draft procedure will finish on 15th March 2010. A workshop with senior managers is planned for the end March to launch the procedure. A key element of the procedure is improved information sharing between services. CYPS and ACS have developed and agreed a joint dataset, to be extended with the Primary Care Trust, to enable early identification of cases and to inform case planning. This dataset will also be used to monitor longer-term trends and inform commissioning decisions on local provision.
- 9.3 The new policy and procedure will be supported by a programme of training for key staff during the spring.
- 9.4 In addition to the revised policy and procedure, the Transitions Action Plan has been revised to focus on
- improved information to young people and their families about the process of transitions
 - increased personalisation, through increased participation
 - a programme of training on person-centred approaches to planning and
 - review across special schools and children's social care. A key focus will be reviewing the impact of the revised protocol and action plan for young people and their families.

10.0 CURRENT PROGRESS: RECOMMENDATION 6

- 10.1 Recommendation 6 requires the authority to improve the effectiveness of elected Members in their role as corporate parents to support the improvement of outcomes for looked after children.
- 10.2 The County Council's constitution is being revised to give a higher profile to the role of elected Members as corporate parents. Work is ongoing to develop a formal policy on Corporate Parenting to ensure that there are clearly defined objectives, accountabilities and performance priorities. A programme of training and support to assist elected Members in their corporate parenting role is in development and will be delivered during 2010.

11.0 CURRENT PROGRESS: RECOMMENDATION 7

- 11.1 Recommendation 7 requires the authority to develop a joint strategy between the County Council and the PCT for the delivery of physical, general and mental health services for looked after children.
- 11.2 A draft of the strategy was due to be presented at the Children's Trust Board in January, but the PCT judged that further work was required at that stage and the report was not presented. An initial draft strategy has now been circulated and this will be considered by the Children's Trust Board at its meeting on 22 March.

12.0 CURRENT PROGRESS: RECOMMENDATION 8

- 12.1 Recommendation 8 requires the Authority to conduct further analysis of the increased number of children subject to a child protection plan for more than two years and the increased percentage of children subject to a child protection plan for a second time to inform future service planning and delivery.
- 12.2 The work for this recommendation is being led by the Safeguarding Children Board manager. The fieldwork for the audit was scheduled for completion by the end of February and this work has been completed. Analysis of the fieldwork data will take place during the first two weeks of March, with a report on the findings to follow soon thereafter.

13.0 NEXT STEPS

- 13.1 The next meeting of the Post-Inspection Action Plan Core Group is scheduled for 6 April. A further update report will be produced following this meeting.
- 13.2 For more detailed information about the implementation of any aspect of the action plan please contact David O'Brien, CYPS Performance and Outcomes Manager, david.f.o'brien@northyorks.gov.uk

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