

**Meeting:** CHILDREN'S TRUST

**Date:**

**Report Title:** Ofsted Progress Review January 2010

**Report of:** Director of The Children & Young People's Service

**Purpose:** To confirm for the Children's Trust Board the outcome of the Ofsted Review of Progress that took place between 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

**Summary:** Ofsted undertook a thorough review of the progress being made by children's services in Haringey since the Joint Area Review of November 2008 and the Progress Review of June 2009. Their conclusion is that Haringey has made 'Good Progress' and has 'Good Capacity to Improve'. Within the scoring mechanism for the review, this represents the best outcome we could achieve.

**Recommendations:**

That the Children's Trust Board welcomes the Review and acknowledges the positive judgements it contains.

That the Children's Trust Board confirms that this does not represent the completion of our task, but marks this point on our journey towards excellence and confirms that our efforts will not only maintain the pace of improvement but increase it wherever we can.

**Financial/Legal Comments**

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## **Background**

Following the Joint Area Review in November 2008 and intervention by the Secretary of State, Ofsted undertook a progress review in June 2009. Whilst the team found good and satisfactory improvement in several areas, the overall judgement was of 'limited progress'. The Secretary of State then directed that Ofsted should follow up on the June review with a further review in January 2010.

The Joint Area Review Action Plan, now called the Safeguarding Plan', has been the basis of work across the partnership to improve safeguarding work. It has been an extensive and detailed plan with a large number of actions for improvement. As each of those actions has been followed through and completed, evidence of completion and its impact has been recorded so that we can demonstrate to anyone requiring proof of improvement that the work has been done.

## **The Progress Review Process**

In the lead up to the Review visit, the partnership wrote a 'self assessment' that described the progress we thought had been made and pointed to the evidence of that improvement. All of the evidence was presented to the Ofsted team whilst on site.

The review took place between 25<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> January 2010. A team of 9 inspectors drawn from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies undertook interviews with more than 120 staff and stakeholders, either individually or in focus groups. A number of visits were made to observe safeguarding work in a range of settings; this also included observation of the social work 'duty room' such as will be the case for an 'unannounced visit'.

Inspectors also looked in detail at 10 cases, selected at random by the inspectors themselves and drawing on evidence from all services engaged with that child or family.

The terms of reference for the review required the inspectors to look at four key areas:

- The effectiveness of arrangements for the referral, assessment, protection and planning for children in need.
- The development of preventative strategies.
- Support, supervision and performance management of social workers and other front line personnel.
- The effectiveness of partnership working and the capacity of the partnership for further improvement.

Against each of the areas the inspectors could pass one of three judgements, measuring progress to be 'limited', 'satisfactory' or 'good'. The overall judgement for the review would focus on two measures; how good is the progress made and what is the capacity of the partnership for further improvement.

## **Overall judgement on progress since the inspections of November 2008 and June 2009**

Paragraph 7 of the Ofsted Report refers to the extensive and consistent evidence of good progress overall and good capacity to improve. The report details evidence of significant and positive changes in leadership and management, good performance management systems, improvements in partnership working and a realism amongst all partners that evidences the realistic understanding of what has been achieved and that much more needs to be done. The Report is available at

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare\\_providers/la\\_download/\(id\)/5205/\(as\)/IOP/iop\\_2010\\_309.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/(id)/5205/(as)/IOP/iop_2010_309.pdf)

The following summary of key findings is taken directly from the report.

9. The council and its partners have made good progress in improving the effectiveness of arrangements for the referral, assessment, protection and planning for children in need. Effective screening has resulted in better managed and reduced caseloads. Improved assessments, case recording and more effective child protection planning, including better multi-agency working, are improving the capacity of the council to safeguard and protect children. The introduction of the police's child risk assessment matrix has improved information sharing across agencies and the recording, management oversight and review of individual cases. However, medical practitioners are underrepresented at child protection conferences. Improved management arrangements across the partnership are identifying shortfalls in practice and there is good understanding of what needs to be done to improve.

10. The council and its partners have made good progress in developing a range of preventative services underpinned by a comprehensive strategy. The Children's Trust area partnerships and local children's networks provide planning and delivery mechanisms to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children are identified and met. Work is underway to strengthen the engagement of the voluntary sector in this process. However, recent Ofsted inspections have found safeguarding knowledge and practice in a number of early years and childcare providers to be weak. The recent formalisation of thresholds for access to social care services and the revision and implementation of the common assessment framework are providing further support to those providing early intervention and preventative services. However, partners recognise that the revised framework is at an early stage of implementation and more work is required to ensure that it becomes consistently used in accordance with the policy.

11. The council has made satisfactory progress in strengthening the support, supervision and performance management arrangements in front line social care services. Individual supervision sessions between managers and practitioners are established and have been further strengthened by the requirements of the recently implemented supervision policy, although annual performance appraisal arrangements are yet to be implemented consistently across the service. Management development, the replacement of weaker

managers and accessibility of line and senior managers have increased social workers', managers' and councillors' confidence in the service. Case decisions are now recorded on children's files although the quality of the entries is not consistent and too often lacks clarity in describing the action that is required. Similar progress has been seen in health trusts where there are clear policies in place for supervision of health visitors and school nurses. Performance management is now increasingly well established across the partnership. Council members are actively engaged in performance management and have also been closely involved in supporting service improvements across the partnership. Improvements have been made to Frameworki, the computer based recording and information system, which are significantly improving the efficiency and effectiveness of key elements of child protection practice.

12. Progress in developing effective partnership working and the capacity of the partnership for further improvement is good. Improved workforce planning coupled with a much greater confidence across the partnership has reduced turnover and increased the rate of recruitment of competent staff in social care and health and there have been further increases in police front line and support service staffing. There is greater stability within management grades and there are good development opportunities. Multi-disciplinary working, including that of the increasingly effective Haringey Safeguarding Children Board and the Children's Trust, is firmly established on the basis of increasingly mutual trust and shared objectives and plans. There is clear evidence of problems being tackled to good effect across the partnership. Better analysis of need and increased ability to plan services to meet priorities and improved services and outcomes for children are demonstrating the emergence of good capacity for further improvement. The disaffection among staff evident at the time of the June 2009 inspection has largely dissipated. It has been replaced by a workforce that is looking forward with confidence and a clearer sense of professional accountability. There is recognition across the partnership that much remains to be done, for example the continued roll out of learning from the serious case reviews, the involvement of children and young people in the Haringey Safeguarding Children Board and the further development of commissioning arrangements.

### **Areas for Further Improvement**

The Ofsted report also details some areas for further and more concentrated work as we move into the next phase of improvement. These are:

- Secure further and consistent improvements in the timeliness of initial and core assessments.
- Ensure children and young people's case records contain chronologies and details of analysis of need.
- Ensure that all initial child protection conferences are held within 15 working days.
- Improve the involvement of children and young people in both initial and review child protection conferences.
- Improve medical attendance at case conferences.
- Ensure that the inadequacies identified by Ofsted inspections of childminders and childcare provision are addressed.

- Develop performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the common assessment framework.
- Ensure the implementation of annual performance appraisal arrangements for all social work staff.
- Ensure management decisions on case files are documented to enable the impact of the resulting action to be measured.
- Disseminate the learning from serious case reviews to childminders and all childcare providers.

These issues, together with others we recorded at the oral feedback session, have been captured in a revision to the Safeguarding Plan which will be presented to the June meeting of the Children's Trust. Many have already been actioned and are not waiting for sign off in June; for example, dissemination of learning to childminders and all childcare providers is already underway.

## **Conclusion**

The Review of Progress in January 2010 has reported favourably on the progress made this far and on our capacity to improve. However, it is by no means an opportunity to 'relax' our efforts in the belief that we are 'doing a good job'. Quite the reverse is true and we must increase our efforts to ensure that not only is good progress continuous and secure, but that we achieve the standard of excellence that we have set for ourselves.