

Inspection Update



Safeguarding is everyone's business

By now many of you will have seen my letter dated 5th November sent to colleagues and partner agencies across Nottinghamshire. This advised you of the outcomes of the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children and young people.

The findings of the unannounced inspection are likely to lead to a full inspection of our safeguarding and looked after children services. The inspection will include not only the County Council but its key partners, such as the primary care trusts and the police.

We know that the inspectors will want to talk to staff at all levels from a wide range of agencies. In some ways this is similar to what happened during our Joint Area Review (JAR) in May 2008. Feedback about the way we communicated during the JAR identified the JAR newsletter as being a very effective tool for keeping people informed.

Details of the framework for such inspections are given in this newsletter and more information can be found on the Children's Trust web site which can be accessed through: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/nottscyppartnership.htm

The outcome of the inspection will help us to improve services and further strengthen our partnership. We will also have the opportunity to showcase some of the excellent work that we are doing in Nottinghamshire.

I hope that this newsletter helps you to understand the inspection process and the way in which you may be asked to contribute to it. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact a member of the inspection team whose details are listed at the end of this newsletter.



Best wishes.
Anthony May

Preparing for the inspection

A project team has been assembled to coordinate preparation for the inspection. Amongst other things the team will coordinate:

- The production of the documentation required by the inspectors
- The scheduling of meetings with the Ofsted inspection team and managing the onsite inspection arrangements
- Our communication arrangements with staff, partners and stakeholders.





The Safeguarding and Looked After Inspection process

Ofsted will undertake at least one inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services in the three-year period following 1 April 2009, across all local authority areas. The inspection will look at the two separate elements: safeguarding services, and services for looked after children.

The inspection will explore whether service users are receiving appropriate services from the County Council and its partners, if front-line staff have appropriate support and resources, and whether children in local authority care (looked after children) receive the support they are entitled to from the County Council, its councillors and partner agencies.

When Ofsted make a decision on the timing of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection the **maximum** notice they usually give is 10 working days **however** in some circumstances an inspection may be carried out without giving this period of notice.

Documentation

Documentation will be required from the County Council and its partners in advance of the fieldwork element of the inspection and inspectors will hold meetings and discussions with service users, managers, health professionals and agencies, police, other staff and stakeholders across the Children's Trust .

This will require a considerable logistical exercise with short notice to enable inspectors to undertake around 80-100 activities, for example, visits, interviews and focus groups, which will allow them to make judgements against all the areas of the inspection criteria.

Inspectors will have read a wide range of information about Nottinghamshire before they arrive so will undoubtedly have some idea of the things that they want to explore in more detail. We will not find out

exactly what they want to do until before they arrive and as soon as we know more we will let you know.

How might it affect you?

Some staff, such as those employed in children's social care, have a more significant role to play in work to safeguard children, and with looked after children. However, the inspection is much wider than an inspection of those areas led by social care. Inspectors will want to know how staff work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and ensure that looked after children receive appropriate support and priority. They will want to talk to staff from many agencies, which may include for example:

- meeting with a focus group of staff from schools, or visiting one or more schools
- meeting with a focus group of staff from children's centres or again visiting one or more centres
- interviewing members of the Children's Trust and/or the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board.

and could also include, for example:

- visiting an A&E department
- visiting a custody suite.

The inspection is likely to cover areas such as:

- The effectiveness of our early intervention processes and whether staff from all agencies understand their responsibilities in relation to the Common Assessment Framework.
- How effective our recruitment processes are in preventing unsuitable people from working with children.
- The extent to which we listen to children, young people and families when planning services, either for them as individuals or more widely.

The Safeguarding Children and Looked After Services Improvement Programme

The volume of referrals to children's social care services in Nottinghamshire has increased by 43% (in the year between October 2008 and October 2009). In addition the number of children in care has increased by approximately 20% over the past eighteen months. Both of these are significant increases in activity and we have initiated an improvement programme to support the management of this additional activity.

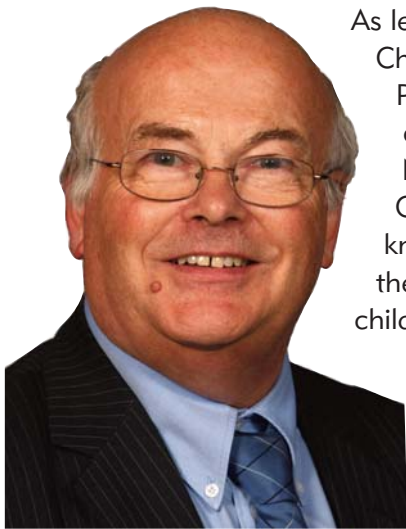
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This programme is called The Safeguarding Improvement Programme and has been developed to address the additional work required to manage the increases over the past year in referral rates and children in care. These increases have placed significant strain on the system, in particular, social workers caseloads, placement capacity and placement costs. It is not only the volume of work that impacts on performance but the increasing complexity of case work which often includes domestic and other forms of violence, drug and /or alcohol abuse, mental health issues and poverty.

The programme, comprising of 18 individual projects, will enable sustained improvement in our arrangements for safeguarding and looked after children and will encompass activity across Children and Young People's services, the wider County Council and Nottinghamshire Children's Trust.

A message from the Chair of the Nottinghamshire Children's Trust Board



As lead member for Children and Young People's Services and chair of the Nottinghamshire Children's Trust Board I know that we are giving the highest priority to child protection and safeguarding the children and young people of Nottinghamshire.

It is important for us all to prepare

for Ofsted's three yearly inspection of our services so that we can highlight the good work that we do. The inspectors will be talking to a range of people who

work hard every day to provide the best services we can for our children and young people. I will also be interviewed by the inspectors and will tell them about how the services you provide have a positive impact on how we safeguard children and support looked after children.

The County Council is committed to building on existing good practice and improving services. I fully support the measures that have been introduced to make improvements following the recent unannounced inspection and believe that they will lead to real and significant improvements in the services we provide to vulnerable children and young people in our community.

Councillor Philip Owen

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services

Further Information

We have established a dedicated webpage which contains information we think will be useful in connection with the inspection. This includes the letters from Anthony May referred to earlier in the newsletter, more information about safeguarding and looked after services inspections and a copy of the Safeguarding and Looked After Services Improvement

Programme Initiation Document. The webpage is at:

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/inspectionofsafeguardingandlookedafterchildrenservices.htm.

If you have any questions or comments please email them to emma.jenkinson@nottscc.gov.uk

The project team

Clive Chambers (Project Manager) - Sarah Craven (Project Officer) - Nick McMullen (Social Care Lead)
Lucy Peel (C&YP Participation) - Michele McIntosh (Communications) - Emma Jenkinson (Project Administrator)