

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services**

Date: **19 September 2007**

Title of report: **Safeguarding Children – Member and Senior Management Oversight of Services**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of report: **To advise the Scrutiny Committee of the findings of the monitoring systems in place for senior managers and Members to ensure that services to safeguard children are properly co-ordinated and managed effectively.**

RECOMMENDATION

The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the outcomes of the monitoring visits and file audits undertaken by the Lead Member for Children and Families and senior managers

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no financial implications. The report describes services that are already provided from within Children's Services budgets.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 In February 2005 local social care services for children were inspected by inspectors from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). It was part of a national programme of inspections using agreed standards and criteria. An area for improvement identified by the inspectors was the arrangements for oversight of intake teams by Lead Members and, in response to this recommendation, arrangements were made for the Lead Member for Children and Families to visit the duty teams in the county (these reduced from four to three in September 2006). Between August 2006 and July 2007 9 visits were completed to the three duty teams in Eastbourne, Battle, and the Disability team at Sorrel Drive, Eastbourne. Regular reports were completed recording the findings of these visits and on all visits the manager was seen along with other members of staff.

2.2 Issues discussed during Lead Member visits included:

- The re-organisation of the duty services;
- Preparation for the JAR inspection;
- The links with the SEN service and the increasing demand for provision for autistic children.

Issues raised by the Lead Member with senior managers as a result of the visits included:

- the need for improved services for children with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD);
- the need for teams to keep records of achievements in order to act as incentives to good practice;
- concerns regarding whether the development of the 11+ service would reduce the work of the DAT proportionately to the reduction in size of the DAT team.

The Lead Member's comments on the teams visited included:

- '.. a well organised and supportive team' ;
- 'A calm, well managed team. Well prepared for the JAR inspection.' ;
- 'efficient and controlled service delivery tailored to staff team'.

2.3 In addition to the Lead Member's visits to the duty teams the Deputy Director, Children and Families, also visits each duty team at approximately six-monthly intervals, meeting with staff in order to discuss any concerns they have and to ensure they are fully aware of any service developments.

2.4 Senior managers have been conducting quarterly file audits since 2003. Files are chosen at random from teams ensuring that at least one file from each worker in the team is reviewed. Managers then audit the files against a set of professional standards. The file audits are organised to ensure that one of the duty teams is audited each quarter. Findings from the file audits are reported to the Children's Social Care Management team and action plans are developed in response to the development areas identified by the audits. Reports now include historical data and identify areas of improvement over the last four years as well as remaining areas of development.

2.5 Areas of improvement within the file audits included:

- evidence of the views and wishes of children;
- improved recording of ethnicity, religion and language;
- up-to-date chronologies on files.

Areas that continue to be strong are:

- compliance with child protection procedures and effective child protection conferences;
- effective inter-agency work to safeguard children;
- good working in partnership with parents.

Remaining areas for development include:

- concerns about feedback given to referrers and other agencies;
- evidence on files of management oversight and supervision (this may in part be a result of moving to electronic files that make counter-signatures more difficult to evidence).

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 The monitoring arrangements in place provide effective mechanisms to ensure that Members and senior managers are informed about the quality of services being delivered by their front-line staff, and are able to take appropriate action to remedy deficiencies as they are revealed.

MATT DUNKLEY
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Fiona Johnson, Head of Children's Safeguards and Quality Assurance
Tel: 01273 481289

Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
None