

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

Date: **9 September 2008**

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

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

Purpose of report: **To advise 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.**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:**

- 1. Consider and comment on the outcomes of the monitoring visits and file audits undertaken by the Lead Member and senior managers.**
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### **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. This arrangement has continued and between August 2007 and July 2008 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.

2.5 Issues discussed during Lead Member visits included:

- Staff concerns about service provision for children with non-severe disability and the difficulties the team had in providing support for these families;
- The move to St Mark's House and the social workers positive impressions of the new office;
- Staff difficulties about becoming used to the new data base, 'Care Assess' and the changes from 'Care First'.

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

- The possibility of 2 lap tops for long distance rural visits and possible home working;
- concerns regarding work pressures within the Eastbourne DAT and the management span of the practice manager;
- provision for young people with ADHD and Aspergers.

Lead Member's comments on the teams visited included:

- '..a well organised and competent team' ;
- 'Team works well together and is focussed and professional';
- 'a good team who work together in a positive environment'.

2.6 In addition to the Lead Member's visits to the duty teams the Deputy Director for Children & Families has continued to visit 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.

2.7 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 five years as well as remaining areas of development.

2.8 Areas that continue to be strong are:

- up-to-date chronologies on files.
- recording of ethnicity and language;
- effective inter agency work to safeguard children;
- good working in partnership with parents

Areas of improvement within the file audits included:

- recording of supervision on the file (an area identified for development last year);
- some improvement in feedback given to referrers and other agencies(also an area identified for development last year);
- Increased direct contact with children.

Remaining areas for development include:

- concerns about the quality of recording of the views of children;
- evidence on files of management oversight;
- difficulties associated with the implementation of Care Assess which resulted in reduced recording of assessment work.

### **3. Conclusion**

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 offered by their front-line staff, and are able to take appropriate action to remedy deficiencies as they are revealed.

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Background documents: None

Local Members: All