

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

Date: **9 November 2010**

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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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the outcomes of the monitoring visits and 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 Following a Social Care Inspection recommendation for an area for improvement in 2005, a system was put in place for the Lead Member for Children and Families to visit the duty teams within the County. This arrangement has continued and between August 2009 and July 2010, 4 visits were completed to the duty team in Hastings; 4 visits to the duty team in Eastbourne; and 3 visits to 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:

- Workload- but they were confident they were coping despite the pressure
- Induction for newly qualified social work staff
- Office reorganisations
- Coping with the unexpected eg Police bringing children to the office

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

- Flexible working;
- Concerns regarding ongoing pressures on the teams
- Facilities for coping with the unexpected

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

- 'generally staff morale was good'
- 'good leadership from managers and good dialogue between all staff for support when necessary'
- 'well organised, calm and professional work'.

2.5 In addition to the Lead Member's visits to the duty teams, the Assistant 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.

2.6 Senior managers have been conducting quarterly file audits since 2003 and continued to do so during 2009/10. From October 2009 to June 2010 audits undertaken included 2 Duty and Assessment Teams, the Care Leavers Team, 3 Family Support Teams, 1 Looked After Child Team and the Family Plus Team (Private Fostering). Findings from the file audits are reported to the Children's Social Care Management Team and action plans are produced 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.

2.7 Areas that continue to be strong are:

- Good evidence of 24 hour screening and decision making following referral
- Effective inter agency work to safeguard children
- Good working in partnership with parents
- Good management oversight
- Good and up to date recording
- Good pre-birth planning and assessment
- Generally clear case planning was evidenced

2.8 Areas of improvement within the file audits included:

- Recording of supervision on the file
- Some improvement in feedback given to referrers and other agencies
- Increased direct contact with children.
- Quality of assessment needs to be evidenced on file
- Evidence of equality issues having been considered
- Recording of strategy discussions
- Assessment within timescales continues to need improvement

2.9 Remaining areas for development include:

- Concerns about the quality of recording of the views of children
- Continued difficulties associated with the implementation of careAssess and use of data and recording systems
- Continued improvement is needed in the use of geneograms (family trees) and chronologies

2.10 A decision was made by Children's Social Care Management Team (CSCMT) that the Assistant Director and the Head of Safeguarding would conduct unannounced inspections to the duty and assessment teams mirroring the Ofsted inspection procedure. This is planned for October 2010.

### **3. Conclusion and Recommendations**

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. It is therefore recommended that the existing arrangements continue.

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Local Members: All

Background Documents: None