

PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

26 June 2014

ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN REPORT

Report of the Strategic Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	Creating a Brighter Future for All
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This is the annual safeguarding children report that combines three reports:

1.1.1 The annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report (Appendix 1), including the officer response to this report (Appendix 2)

1.1.2 The annual Child Protection Conference report (Appendix 3)

1.1.3 The annual Local Authority Designated Officer report (Appendix 4)

1.2 The combined reports provide an analysis of work undertaken within children's services to safeguard children in Rutland. They highlight areas of good practice and areas for improvement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Scrutiny Panel discuss and note the contents of this report

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 IRO Report (appendix 1)

3.1.1 The IRO report is a legislative requirement and is provided by our Independent Reviewing Officer. The appointment of an independent reviewing officer (IRO) is a legal requirement under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The statutory duties of the IRO are to:

- monitor the local authority's performance of their functions in relation to the child's case
- participate in any review of the child's case
- ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority
- perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations.

This role is therefore important in ensuring that officers and Members fulfil their responsibilities in relation to corporate parenting.

The IRO report is structured in accordance with the headings prescribed in the statutory guidance and to a large extent provides information about the quantity and quality of the review process for looked after children. In summary:

- i. At the end of March 2014, there were 34 looked after children in Rutland
- ii. All the looked after children were in education and had personal education plans in place.
- iii. 20 looked after children were placed out of area, but all were placed within 30 miles from Oakham. 6 of these children lived with family and friends.
- iv. Social workers have achieved the 26-week timescale for the new Public Law Outline, thus ensuring that plans for children are concluded speedily.
- v. There are good relationships with the Children and Families Courts Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) to ensure good quality joint planning and representation during care proceedings reinforced by a protocol agreed with CAFCASS.
- vi. There are some excellent examples of children's participation in reviews and in developing information for children coming into care.
- vii. Feedback from carers, agencies and children and young people about the IRO and the review meetings is very positive.
- viii. The authority has continued to secure more local placements for teenagers. The new Youth Housing Project should also increase opportunities for this age group.
- ix. Contact arrangements between children and their parents have improved since last year

3.1.2 Most of the recommendations from 2012/13 have been implemented: there are more local placements for teenagers, contact arrangements have improved, the information provided to looked after children has improved and the service has acted upon the recommendation in the Ofsted thematic report of 2013 for the IRO to monitor the child's plan in between meetings.

3.1.3 However, there are still improvements to be made and these are addressed in the Head of Service response to the recommendations (Appendix 2). Of concern is the gap that the IRO has identified in meeting the health needs of looked after children this year: the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) needs to better meet the needs of children and initial health assessments need to be provided in a timely manner. Work is being undertaken to improve CAMHS services and the appointment of a replacement LAC nurse has speeded up the provision of initial health assessments. In addition, the timeliness of the social work reports needs to be improved. This was also an issue raised in last year's report and it is imperative that the required deadlines are met. New arrangements have been put into place to address and monitor this issue, which will

be an area of specific focus in 2014/15. New arrangements have also been put into place to ensure that children who no longer need to be subject to orders have these orders formally revoked by the Court.

3.1.4 A focus of this year's work has been to find provision to accommodate sibling groups. This has proved challenging but will continue in 2014/15.

3.2 Annual Child Protection Conference report (appendix 3)

3.2.1 Where agencies involved judge that a child may continue to, or be likely to, suffer significant harm, Local Authority Children's Social Care convene a child protection conference to enable professionals and families to assess all relevant information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. The Annual Child Protection Conference report is also provided by our Independent Reviewing Officer, who convenes and chairs the majority of the child protection conferences in Rutland. The report provides a summary of the Child Protection Conference Service.

3.2.2 In summary the IRO concludes that:

- i. 70 conferences have been held during the year, to discuss 61 children and young people
- ii. All conferences were held within the required timescales.
- iii. There were 32 children subject to a child protection plan at the end of March 2014.
- iv. The highest cause for concern was domestic violence, which was identified as a risk in 17 out of 28 families.
- v. The commonest categories of abuse for making children and young people subject to child protection plans were neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and emotional harm.
- vi. There is a good quality work being undertaken by professionals in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) including good use of the CSE risk assessment tool.
- vii. There is good representation of children and parents at conferences.

3.2.3 There are a number of improvements planned for 2014/15 that are outlined in the report. Of particular concern is the need to improve police Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CIAU) and GP attendance at conferences; this will be raised through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and the Children's Trust Board. There is further work taking place to improve quality assurance through the newly-launched quality assurance framework and to embed the revised Single Assessment Framework which was launched on 1st April 2014. This will be supported by staff training on the Signs of Safety model, a model recognised by Ofsted as good practice, to improve the quality of assessments and child protection plans. Staff will also be trained on assessments and interventions with non-abusing carers. There is a need to improve timeliness – both of social worker reports and the Safeguarding Unit's circulation of outline plans and minutes within the required timescales.

3.3 Local Authority Designated Office (LADO) report (Appendix 4)

3.3.1 This report is provided by the Head of Service for Vulnerable Children, who is responsible for the LADO arrangements. The LADO manages allegations against adults who work with children as set out in Working Together (2006), Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (2006) and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against Teachers and Other Staff (2011). The LADO follows the guidance set out in the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) procedures.

3.3.2 There were 17 referrals in 2013/14 compared with 15 in 2012/13. Two of the 17 referrals did not meet the LADO criteria (one was not working with children and one was a conduct issue) and one was investigated by a neighbouring local authority. Of the remaining 14 allegations, 7 were substantiated, 4 were unsubstantiated, 2 were unfounded and one is still to be resolved. The majority of referrals related to educational establishments, with a small number of referrals in relation to sports coaches. Surprisingly, there were no referrals relating to health professionals, and this issue will be raised at the Children's Trust Board and the LSCB. A new LADO protocol has been written to build on the LSCB procedures and set out clear guidance for all agencies involved in the LADO process.

3.4 In summary, the reports provide a positive account of the work taking place in Rutland to safeguard children. There are good processes in place for reviewing looked after children that help them to achieve good outcomes and strong arrangements for protecting children that need safeguarding and dealing with allegations against staff who work with children. The improvements required will be implemented as a matter of priority.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	L	Recommended improvements will be made as a matter of priority
Viability	L	The improvements can be made
Finance	L	There are no financial implications
Profile	M	The protection of children is high profile work.
Equality and Diversity	M	The services described protect the most vulnerable children in our society.

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