

Inspections of Children's Services

Recommendations:

The Partnership Council:

1. notes the future arrangements for inspection and consider the implications for the partners of the Children's Trust;
2. supports the draft terms of reference for the Children's Trust Preparation for Inspection and Continuous Improvement Working Party and agrees representation;
3. considers how key messages about our joint responsibilities for safeguarding and children in care are understood within all partner organisations.

Background

Information has been published about the inspections of services for children, young people and their families and how this will happen in the future. This will involve us all one way or another. There is no longer a Joint Area Review (JAR) or an Annual Performance Assessment (APA). Future inspections involve all partners.

The focus is on the outcomes for children and young people not services. Broadly there are three basic elements to the new framework:

1. The Comprehensive Area Assessment
2. Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services
3. Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment

1. The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

This asks how well the needs of the people who live in Devon are met; this is across all partners and all ages. This is a process, not an event, led by the Audit Commission, Martin Green is their lead for Devon. There are two structural aspects:

- The organisational assessment (based on the individual organisations) considers how well we use our resources and how well we manage our performance.
- The area assessment which considers:
 - How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
 - How well are the outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
 - What are the prospects for future improvement?

Further information can be found at

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/audit/caa/pages/whatiscaa.aspx>

2. Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

This will take place once every three years. There will be one report with separate judgements on the two areas. It will be a very intense process and the notice will be short. For example, we could receive a notification at any time from now and documentation is required the next day.

We are using preparation as a way of improving our practice. There are, for example, descriptors which describe what excellent, good, adequate and inadequate practice looks like. We will use this as a check against our work as an improvement tool.

This may happen any time in the next three years. We must be *inspection ready at all times*. This includes:

- engaging with the quality assurance processes and constantly finding ways to improve our practice;
- keeping all relevant information up to date and accessible;
- responding to the need, if requested, to be available for inspectors;
- ensuring your organisation understands how its work contributes to improving outcomes for children and young people.

3. Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment

This is an annual event that is, literally, unannounced and last a maximum of two days. It is not a full inspection of safeguarding but a detailed inspection of front-line practice in relation to contact, referral and assessment processes for:

- children in need;
- children who may be in need of protection

and an assessment of how well practice helps to minimise and manage risks of harm to children and young people. Detailed information will be provided to those most closely involved.

Further information can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance>

Our preparation

CYPS strategic leadership group (SLG) with health representation are meeting on a weekly basis to ensure that we are well prepared. Task and finish groups have been set up to take forward some of the detail. In addition a Children's Trust working party is to be established to ensure joined up preparation.

Children's Trust Preparation for Inspection and Continuous Improvement Working Party: draft terms of reference

Purposes:

- To use the inspection frameworks to improve outcomes for children and young people
- to ensure that the Children's Trust Partnership is prepared in a practical way for inspection

Definition: inspection in this context refers to three key elements:

- The Comprehensive Area Assessment
- Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services
- Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment

It is recognised that other inspections feed into these aspects and may be relevant at different times.

Context

A new national inspection framework is starting. This recognises that partnership working is essential to positive transformational change. Judgements are to be made on the basis of the outcomes for and the needs of people rather than what institutions provide.

This will provide an extra spur to the partnership of the Children's Trust for holistic working.

Responsibilities

The group will individually and jointly:

- have a good understanding of the inspection frameworks and attend preparatory meetings;
- act as the lynch pin for their home organisation for all work relating to the inspections;
- assist in the analysis of Devon's performance against inspection judgements, undertake a risk assessment and agree further action;
- ensure appropriate levels and timeliness of communications throughout the Children's Trust. This will include key messages for all staff, briefings for those most closely involved and updates to senior management groups;
- facilitate data and information being provided as and when required;
- identify appropriate people to meet inspectors or to attend any sub-group and to ensure that they are available and briefed;
- ensure appropriate membership and contribution to supporting task and finish groups.

Timescales

- The CAA is an annual process running throughout the year with the final judgement being made in November.
- The Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services will happen every three years with ten days notice (documentation required day after notification).
- There will an annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment.

Further inspections may occur as a result of outcomes from these or other inspections.

The working party will have an immediate preparation task and then ongoing monitoring. There will be periods of intense work with short timescales when inspections are announced.

Membership

Devon County Council CYPS	Debbie Pritchard
Devon PCT	Sara Gibbs
Devon and Cornwall Police	Nigel Boulton
Voluntary sector	tbc
Schools	tbc
Devon County Council corporate	Simon Kitchen
Devon Safeguarding Children Board	tbc

In support:

Julie Mitchell, Richard Belcher, Geoff Evans and Sarah Skinner

Debbie Pritchard
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