

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy
and Performance Board
DATE: 6th September 2010
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children & Young People
SUBJECT: Ofsted's Unannounced Inspection of Children's
Social Care Contact, Referral and Assessment
Services
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Policy and Procedure Board of the outcome of Ofsted's first unannounced inspection of Children's Social Care Contact, Referral and Assessment Services, which took place on the 5th and 6th May 2010.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Policy and Performance Board:

- i) **Notes the result of Ofsted's inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Services (see Appendix 1); and**
- ii) **Notes the areas of strengths and satisfactory practice;**
- iii) **Notes the Action Plan to address the areas for development arising from the inspection;**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Ofsted inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Services gave Halton's Children & Young People's Services a positive assessment of practice. Ofsted Inspectors came without notice on the 5th May 2010.

3.2 The purpose of the annual unannounced inspection by Ofsted of Contact, Referral and Assessment arrangements is to assess the effectiveness of frontline social work practice in managing potential risk to children, and minimising the incidence of abuse and neglect of children. The focus is primarily on the Local Authority as lead agency for child protection.

3.3 The inspection will inform the content of future inspections, in particular the 10 day announced Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children.

3.4 The unannounced inspection of Contact, referral and Assessment does not identify grades, but aspects of satisfactory practice, strengths and areas for development. Where necessary areas for 'priority action' are recorded and reported to the Local Authority. No

areas for priority action were identified during Ofsted's inspection. Priority actions cover areas where children may be left at risk of significant harm.

- 3.5 The final letter from Ofsted confirming their judgement is included as Appendix 1.
- 3.6 There were a number of strengths identified by the inspectors, these include: the quality of supervision staff receive; the Council's enthusiastic and dedicated staff; good support from managers; the quality of training provided; recruitment of social workers; newly qualified social workers are well supported; and there are strong quality assurance processes that support the development of practice.
- 3.7 Satisfactory areas (ie we are doing what we statutorily have to do in an effective manner) include: all cases are allocated; assessments are carried out by suitably qualified staff; duty team managers are visible, supportive and provide effective guidance; child protection issues are identified and responded to; case loads are manageable; completion of Initial and Core assessments; increasing use of the Common Assessment Framework; children are routinely seen and spoken to; the ethnicity and diversity of families is well considered.
- 3.8 Areas for development included: timely completion of Initial Assessments; ICT Recording Systems; Emergency Duty Team support to day time services; recording of contact with the police and initial screening. An action plan is attached that addresses these areas (Appendix 2).

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct policy implications arising from the inspection.

5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The development of new ICT based Recording Systems (Carefirst 6; Integrated Children's System and Electronic Social Care Records) have been considered as part of the ICT Workstream of the Business Efficiency Programme. Given the critical importance of these systems in the protection of children, they have been prioritised for development and implementation over the next 12 months. The resourcing to do this has been prioritised and identified.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

It is critical that children, young people and their families receive the

highest standards of practice in child protection and safeguarding.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None directly.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The health of children and young people is an important factor in the initial screening of contacts.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Children's Social Care carries a primary responsibility for the safety and welfare of children and young people in our Borough.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None directly

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The inspection by Ofsted of Contact, Referral and Assessment Services is critical to both the wellbeing of children and the reputation of the Council and its statutory partners.

8.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.