

Report of the Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 26th July 2017.

Subject:

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A report on the outcomes of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Bradford Metropolitan District.

Summary statement:

Between 27 February and 3 March 2017, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), HMI Constabulary (HMIC) and HMI Probation (HMI Prob) undertook a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Bradford. This inspection included a specific ("Deep Dive") focus on our response to children living with domestic abuse.

This report summarises the outcome of the inspection and its implications for the district. The report outlines the strengths which the inspectors noted across the partnership and in relation to social care, and describes the partnerships plans to address the areas for development which were identified.

Michael Jameson
Strategic Director – Children's Services

Portfolio:
Education, Employment and Skills
Health and Wellbeing

Report Contact: Nick Simpson;
Executive Support Manager, Childrens
Services

Phone: (01274) 439360

E-mail: nick.simpson@bradford.gov.uk

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

Joint Targeted Area Inspection is an inspection of an area by four inspectorates, Ofsted (who led the inspection) the Care Quality Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. Together they look at the arrangements to safeguard children and undertake a "deep dive" into a specific area, which, for this inspection, was children living with domestic abuse. The inspection is not 'graded' in any way, but its outcomes are published nationally in the form of a letter.

It is clear from the feedback received (The letter is attached at Appendix 1) that the inspectorates took a positive view of Bradford's work in relation to both individual agencies including children's social care, and across the children's partnership and identified many areas of strength. The report noted that:

"Leaders and partners have high aspirations for all children in Bradford. Across partners, there is commitment to continuous improvement to offer a wide range of high quality services to meet the diverse needs of children and families in the Bradford district. The determination of the partnership to tackle domestic abuse is evident in the level of resources that are committed to this end."

It also noted that *"The partnership in Bradford is well established and committed to driving improvement across services in responses to domestic abuse. There are many clear examples where joint working at a strategic and operational level is resulting in timely and effective responses to tackle domestic abuse. This provision of timely and good quality support to children and their families is reducing the risk of harm to many children."*

Crucially the inspectors concluded that *"families were receiving help that was making a real and positive difference to their lives"*.

Key Strengths identified in the report.

The "Front Door" to services for children across all agencies.

This element of the inspection looked at how children are dealt with at the first point of contact with all agencies across the system. Many strengths were identified including *"Very effective multi agency arrangements within the MASH"*. (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub). This is the large team sited in Sir Henry Mitchell House consisting of social care, police and health staff who review and assess all reporting safeguarding concerns relation to children. The reports says that *"Thresholds of need and intervention are well understood and applied by professionals in the MASH, & managers provide effective oversight of referrals"*. It concludes that *"Timely strategy discussions, and daily risk assessment discussions demonstrate a clear understanding of risk and produce agreed decisions"*. It also noted that *"police officers within the MASH & Domestic Abuse team recognise risk effectively & give good consideration to the needs of children"*

Leadership within Children's Services

The report praised leadership across the partnership in relation to domestic abuse. It looked at the Safeguarding Board arrangements and notes that *"Bradford Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) is well-sighted on domestic abuse"*

The inspectors also noted strong leadership directly with the council, saying specifically in the report, *“Leadership within children’s social care is effective, and senior managers are creating a healthy environment in Bradford for effective social work to flourish. The Strategic Director Children’s Services (DCS) is focused on ‘getting the basics right’ in social work practice but also in innovating and using external sources of funding and expertise to drive new developments and approaches to providing effective support for children and young people.”*

The multi-agency work with children living with Domestic Abuse.

The report notes that *“Children who have witnessed domestic abuse are promptly referred for the help and support they need”* and that *“There are a range of effective and sensitive responses to those needs”* and that *“Children, young people and families have access to a wide range of services”*. The inspectors praised the notification system put in place in Bradford (which provides a notification to schools before 8am the next day of any domestic abuse call outs to families who have children in the school) , also noting the review of all cases by a social worker and police officer working together in the MASH.

Areas for Improvement identified in the report :

As expected, some areas of our work were identified which would benefit from further improvement. These include having a dedicated health professional in the MASH; designing a better multi agency safety plan for children who are in the period between referral/initial assessment and case conferences and addressing the impact of cumulative risk in situations where there are a number of repeated referrals with apparently low level risk. There were also some agency specific actions identified such as the need for the Community Rehabilitation Company to be more proactive in contacting Children’s Social Care. The report also highlighted the need to have stronger relationships between the BSCB, the Adult Safeguarding Board and the Community Safety Partnership to drive forward shared agendas such as domestic abuse, which cut across all three areas.

Moving forward

These identified “Areas for Improvement” are collated into a JTAI Action Plan. That plan is locally developed but then submitted formally to the four inspectorates. The action plan is currently being updated and will be circulated before the Committee meeting..

The on-going work and the action plan are monitored by the JTAI Readiness Board, chaired by Jenny Cryer, Assistant Director Performance, Commissioning and Partnerships, Children’s Services which meets every other month. This group reports to the Partnership Inspection Readiness Board which is chaired by Michael Jameson, Strategic Director. The plan is also subject to scrutiny via the Bradford Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) “Performance Management, Audit and Evaluation Sub-Group”

2. BACKGROUND

Joint Targeted Area Inspection (“JTAI”) enhances but does not replace the routine inspection of the work of the local authority, health, the police and probation by their own inspecting bodies.

The “Joint Targeted Area Inspection” process was implemented in January 2016 in

response to the need to better assess the quality of the multi-agency work with children and families across the whole of a districts partnership.

Its identified focus is upon “arrangements and services for children in need of help and protection in local authority areas in England”.

Each inspection has two related aspects:

1. The quality of multi-agency work within the “Front Door” to children’s services.
2. The quality of multi-agency work in relation to a specific “Deep Dive” theme which changes each six months.

Over the 2 year period from January 2016, those specific themes were set out as:

- *Children at risk of CSE and / or Missing from Care, Home or School*
- *Children Living with Domestic Abuse*
- *Children subject to Neglect*
- *Children subject to sexual abuse in the family*

The JTAI in Bradford in February 2016 focussed upon the districts multi-agency work within our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (The “MASH”, or “Front Door”) and multi agency work with children living with Domestic Abuse.

The scope of inspection is wide: Interviews with Elected Members and Senior Officers; Attendance at and observation of multi-agency meetings; close scrutiny of individual cases undertaken with the workers involved and, importantly, feedback from a selection of children, young people and parents / carers who are the recipients of the services we provide.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The JTAI framework will continue to be used by the partnership as an improvement tool the partnership is currently working on neglect which is the current JTAI deep dive theme.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

There are no financial issues arising.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The positive outcome of the inspection ensures that the risks associated with external inspection have been mitigated. The governance for monitoring the outcomes is clear.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

None

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

No options are presented

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the Committee notes the outcome of the inspection

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 Letter: *“Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in Bradford Metropolitan District Council”*; Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HMI Constabulary and HMI Probation - 21st April 2017

This is the letter received by the district following the JTAI inspection.

11.2 Appendix 2 (to follow) *“JTAI Action Plan”* - This is the Action Plan which was developed locally to address the identified areas for improvement. It was subsequently shared with the inspectorates. It, too, is referred to in Para 1 (Above). A meeting to be held on 13th July is expected to produce an updated version of the plan and this will be circulated by e-mail as soon as possible afterward.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None