

Report of the Interim Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 12th December 2018

Subject:

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Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

Summary statement:

This report provides updated information about the Council's response to the OFSTED ILACS judgement published.

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Children's Services

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Portfolio:

Children & Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the steps the Council is taking in response to OFSTED's inspection of Bradford's Children's Services.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 OFSTED carried out an inspection of our Children's Services from Monday 17 September 2018 until Friday 28 September 2018 Ofsted make three judgements

- Impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families requires improvement to be good.
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection is inadequate
- Experience and progress of children in care and care leaders requires improvement to be good.

Because the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection is classed as a limiting judgement, the overall judgement is inadequate.

The report is attached in Appendix 1, which includes the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted as well as the service strengths

Bradford shares Ofsted's ambition that "only good is good enough for Bradford's children" and therefore the judgement is extremely disappointing and is now focussing on improving at pace the areas identified by Ofsted so we can get to good.

The findings were reported to Executive on 6 November and Executive resolved:

- (1) To note the outcome of the OFSTED inspection.
- (2) To note the plans to deliver rapid improvement and to offer support.
- (3) To refer the report to the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- (4) To request that the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services work with Officers to prepare a robust Improvement Plan with the voice of the child at its heart for the next meeting of the Executive in December 2018.
- (5) To invite the Chair of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to join the formal Improvement Board.
- (6) To request that the Chief Executive identify an appropriate Improvement Advisor to work with the Council and to act as independent chair of the Improvement Board.

- (7) To refer the report to the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- 2.2 The Department for Education (DfE) has written formally to serve the Council with an Improvement Notice (Appendix 2).
- 2.3 In November, Gladys Rhodes White joined the service as Interim Strategic Director of Children's Services to help drive the improvement journey.
- 2.4 Under the leadership of the Portfolio Holder for Children & Families, and in consultation with other councillors, DfE, OFSTED and the Local Government Association (LGA), there has been progress in establishing our approach to addressing the key areas for improvement identified by OFSTED and the necessary supporting arrangements as follows:
- **Establishment of the Improvement Board.** An Improvement Advisor should be imminently identified by DfE and will be invited to chair our Improvement Board. Draft Terms of Reference and proposed membership of the Board are attached at Appendix 3. The Chair of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been asked to consider joining the Improvement Board. The work of the Board to secure the improvement of Children's Services identified by OFSTED will be supported by a staff and a children's reference groups, as well as established internal and partner officer working groups. The Board's Terms of Reference will also need to be approved by DfE/OFSTED.
 - **Development of our Improvement Plan.** With the voice of the child at its heart, improvement planning has been a key focus of activity, involving staff at all levels in Children's Services, with the support of corporate resources (Finance, HR, Legal and Performance) and in consultation with partners. A Planning workshop is scheduled with Ofsted on 10th December 2018 to help inform our Improvement Plan. A Statement of Action must be submitted to Ofsted by 4th February 2019.

Next Steps

- 2.5 As set out in the Improvement Notice, the Council is now subject to intervention by the Department for Education (DfE) until services improve. OFSTED will monitor our progress regularly and we will be subject to a full re-inspection within two years. Key actions and milestones include:
- Establishment of the Children's Social Care Improvement Board once membership and Terms of Reference are approved by both DfE/OFSTED and Executive.
 - Produce a draft Statement of Action for discussion at the OFSTED planning meeting.
 - Submit a full Statement of Action (Deadline for submission: 4 February 2019).

- Support a monitoring visit (which will take place 3 months after our publication of inspection i.e. January)
 - Quarterly monitoring will continue until we have an inspection and move into a different pathway (i.e. are requires improvement to be good or above)
- 2.6 Councillors and senior officers collectively are committed to making sure that we work rapidly and effectively to improve our services to meet our ambitions for Bradford's children.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

None.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

The financial implications of the improvement plan are set out in the Budget proposals to be considered by Executive.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

This report is for information only.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 The recent inspection was undertaken under the new Framework, Evaluation Criteria and Inspector Guidance for the Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). This contains provisions regarding actions to be taken after an inadequate inspection report. These include monitoring by Ofsted including an action planning visit, quarterly monitoring visits and a re-inspection, and also an action plan prepared by the local authority within 70 days of receiving the report.

The Secretary of State has a wide range of powers available following an inadequate judgment, including statutory and non-statutory interventions. The type of intervention is dependent on the severity of the situation, how long the authority has been underperforming, and the perceived capacity for improvement.

S497A Education Act 1996 gives the Secretary of State a wide range of statutory powers if satisfied the local authority is failing to perform its social care functions. These include statutory directions to the local authority aimed at securing adequate performance and also statutory directions requiring the functions to be taken over by others including the Secretary of State or those nominated by him.

In Bradford's case, the Secretary of State intends to take a non-statutory approach, appointing an improvement adviser and issuing a formal improvement notice. The Department for Education 'Putting Children First – Delivering Our Vision for Excellent Children's Social Care (July 2016) indicates that the Secretary of State will only take the non-statutory route if the evidence does not indicate persistent or systemic failure. The local authority will be involved in discussions regarding the content of the notice and it will clearly specify the issues of concern, the

improvement required, how this will be assessed and subsequent steps that may be taken if improvement is not achieved.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Report is for information only. No specific issues.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Report is for information only. No specific issues.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

Report is for information only. No specific issues.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

Report is for information only. No specific issues.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Report is for information only. No specific issues.

7.6 TRADE UNION

Report is for information only. No specific issues.

7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

The ILACS inspection provides a comprehensive external assessment of outcomes for Looked After Children. An action plan will be produced to address areas for improvement identified by Ofsted and progress will additionally be reported to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

7.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

There are no specific data protection implications.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

N/A

9. OPTIONS

N/A

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the actions taken in response to OFSTED inspection findings be noted.
2. That the plans to establish the Improvement Board be noted and comments be provided.
3. That the Committee monitors the Improvement Plan at regular intervals.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Ofsted ILACS report

Appendix 2 - Improvement Notice

Appendix 3 - Draft Improvement Board Terms of Reference

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.