

Report of the Interim Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of the Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 23rd January 2019

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 published OFSTED ILACS judgement.

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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 Bradford's Children's Services from Monday 17 September 2018 until Friday 28 September 2018. In the ILACS inspection, Ofsted make three judgements

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

Bradford shares Ofsted's ambition that "only good is good enough for Bradford's children" and therefore the judgement is extremely disappointing. The focus is now on improving at pace the areas identified by Ofsted with the ambition of achieving good or better services for children.

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.
- 2.3 In November 2018, 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 Bradford's approach to addressing the key areas for improvement identified by OFSTED and the necessary supporting arrangements as follows:

- **Establishment of the Improvement Board.** An interim Improvement Board has been in place since the end of the inspection chaired by the Chief Executive. An Improvement Advisor will be appointed by DfE and will start to chair the Improvement Board in February 2019. The Chair of Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed to join the Improvement Board. The work of the Board to secure the improvement of Children's Services identified by OFSTED is being supported by a staff and a children's reference group. An internal and partner officer improvement task group will be established which will be Chaired by the Chief Executive. The Corporate Services Director will chair this group in the interim until the Improvement Advisor is in place to Chair the Improvement Board.

The Board's Terms of Reference and the Improvement Plan (Statement of Action) will need to be approved by DfE/OFSTED.

- **Development of the 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 with Ofsted took place on 10th December 2018 to help inform the Improvement Plan. The Children's Services Improvement Plan will form the basis of the Statement of Action which must be submitted to Ofsted by 4th February 2019.
- **Peer review of the Front Door.** At Bradford's invitation in late December, Doncaster Children's Trust, in their role as an improvement partner for DfE, undertook a peer review of the Front Door and MASH arrangements. This followed a number of actions taken by the service in response to the Ofsted findings. The peer review identified that there is further work to be done to ensure that the application of consent and decision making in the MASH are robust. Once the report from the review is received this will be reported to the Improvement Board and to Overview and Scrutiny. Actions arising from the review will be included within the Improvement Plan.
- **Immediate actions taken.** There have been a number of service level actions taken in advance of the publication of the Improvement Plan. These include:

- Auditing 1700 cases for children who are Child Protection and Child in Need and undertaking corrective actions where required
- Putting in place an additional Head of Service for the Front Door and MASH to strengthen leadership capacity
- Strengthening Quality Assurance and employing three temporary experienced auditors to review specific areas and cases
- Undertaking on-going recruitment to vacancies resulting in a very small number of unfilled posts
- Working closely with the Teaching Partnership to put in place additional training for social workers and managers starting in January 2019
- Putting in place additional social work oversight in the homelessness team and in the contact centre.
- Putting in place a plan to move the early help gateway into the MASH in early January, facilitating the move to having one integrated front door
- Undertaking a review of social work salaries and retention.
- Starting to review the use of the information management system Liquid Logic to ensure the most efficient and effective use of system capability
- Reviewing the performance information requirement and putting in place an enhanced suite of reports to drive and facilitate the required improvements.

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:

- Confirmation of arrangements for the Children's Services Improvement Board once membership and Terms of Reference are approved by both DfE/OFSTED and Executive.
- Submission of a full Improvement Action Plan (Deadline for submission: 4 February 2019).
- Undertaking the actions set out in the improvement plan and putting in place performance indicators to monitor progress
- Supporting on going monitoring visits every three months, the first of which is expected to take place in March 2019
- 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 WARD IMPLICATIONS

Report is for information only. No specific issues.

7.8 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.

7.9 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

10.1 That the Committee notes the Draft Improvement Plan and provides comment.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Improvement Plan

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.