

Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of the Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 20th March 2019

AD

Subject:

Progress Update following the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authorities Children's Services (ILAC)

Summary statement:

To provide the panel with a progress update in respect of improvements identified within the Improvement Plan following the recent OFSTED inspection September 2018 and subsequent DFE notice to improve issued on the 4 December 2018.

More specifically the report will focus on changes and improvements within Workstream 2 of the Improvement Plan – Partnerships namely:

- The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- Front Door Service

In addition, the report will provide panel with a general update relating to:

- The structure and governance around the Improvement Board including Improvement Plan, and
- OFSTED's first monitoring visit.

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Portfolio:

Children and Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children Services

1. SUMMARY

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- OFSTED's first monitoring visit.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 An Improvement Notice was issued to Bradford Council on the 4 December 2018, following the judgement that children's social care services were inadequate, as identified in the OFSTED inspection report published on the 29 October 2018.

2.2 As a consequence the Secretary of State chose to appoint an advisor to provide advice to the Department and/or the council, with the expectations that the Council will work with the advisor until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required.

2.3 The Independent Chair of the Improvement Board appointed to Bradford by the DfE is Mr Stuart Smith, who was a former Director of Children's Services for Calderdale Council.

2.4 Mr Smith will oversee implementation of the improvement plan and report on progress against the objectives in the plan, to a timetable agreed with the Department.

2.5 Following the Inspection and subsequent notice to improve a number of actions have been identified to support and enable the Council to deliver safer and effective services to children/young people and their families.

2.6 Overall General Improvement:

1. The establishment of an Integrated Improvement board with Partner's to drive the recommendations of OFSTED and from the DfE. Of note there are two boards comprising of a Strategic Improvement Board, chaired by Stuart Smith that includes external members from the DfE and LGA, together with Senior Leaders from the Council and partner agencies. The second board is an Operational Board, made up of senior manager's from across Children's Services and Corporate Resources, together with key partner agencies and the board manager from the children's safeguarding board.

2. The development of an integrated improvement plan.
3. Additional capacity to support the improvement journey, including external programme management support, commissioned by the Strategic Director of Resources to further develop the programme management of the improvement plan, governance and functionality of the two respective boards.
4. A Back to Basic's programme for all children's social care staff, is being developed focusing on what good looks like in terms of case recording, voice of the child, analysis of risk within assessments; undertaking home visits and use of supervision.
5. Review and refresh of the social work job role, with a view to achieving an increase in grade to support retention of staff in a competitive market.
6. Reducing social work caseloads to a more appropriate level of 20 for experienced social workers and 17 for newly qualified. It is important to note that in order to achieve this target, there will be a redistribution of work across the services, together with a target recruitment programme to achieve a permanent albeit mixed level of skill workforce.

The table below outline current caseloads:

| | ASYE (54 staff) | Experienced (181 staff Inc. SW Agency, SW) |
|----------------------------|----------------------|---|
| No. of cases | 1,050 | 3,496 |
| Average Case load (FTE) | 19.4 | 19.3 |
| | Agency (33 staff) | Permanent (148 staff) |
| No. of cases | 744 | 2,752 |
| Average Case load (FTE) | 22.5 | 18.6 |

The following case holders have not been included in the figures above:

| Worker Type | No. of staff | Total cases (FTE) |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| CRW Level 2 | 1 | 6 |
| CRW Level 3 | 34 | 410 |
| Student Social Worker | 13 | 78 |
| Team Manager Agency | 1 | 1 |
| Team Manager | 7 | 36 |
| Practice Supervisor | 2 | 15 |
| Total | 58 | 546 |

During 2018, there were 51 staff left the Council and 63 staff who started with "Social Worker" in their post title.

7. Quality Assurance through audits is beginning to show some green shoots of

improvement in casework, albeit there are still challenges around consistency and quality of practice for too many teams still.

8. Development of a robust data set that supports services in understanding performance and evidences the improvement journey.
9. A Social Work Health Check has been completed with some positive results including social workers stating they find their teams to be supportive, they liked the flexible working arrangements that Bradford offer and they had easy access to training and development. Whilst areas they would like to see improve centered around reduction in case loads, stability with the teams, retention of experienced staff and more opportunities to spend face to face time with children and young people.
10. OFSTED are scheduled to complete their first monitoring visit on the 6 – 7 March, where they will specifically focus on the front door and MASH.

2.7 **Workstream 2 – Partnerships progress/improvement update:**

In addition to the above there have been a number of specific improvements in respect of the MASH and front door services including:

- Multi agency review of the consent policy and thresholds. OFSTED identified that sometimes we were not compliant with national guidance when sharing information and acting on referrals. The safeguarding sub group has worked with the improvement consultant to go back to basics and develop a revised consent policy and redraft of the thresholds document.
- In order to test out the new draft policies a series of multi agency workshops have been arranged commencing on Tuesday 26 February. The workshops will allow practitioners from partner agencies to test out the new documents using case studies with a view to achieving a greater consensus and understanding across the partnership.
- There have been some internal changes to the front door and MASH, including a social worker now being based at the Contact centre that screens all calls coming in. In order to achieve this, a decision was made to redirect the current five email boxes where contact and referrals come into and four telephone lines into two each respectively. This allows and assists the social worker in monitoring just two email boxes.
- All information and advice sought is now recorded on a case file. Families are informed/advised where consent has not been sought that Children's Social Care holds case records in respect of their children.
- Section 47 safeguarding strategy meetings have now moved to the locality teams, this is where there are concerns/risk about a child and agencies through the MASH share key information in order to assess risk and consider whether a child should be made subject to a child protection plan. By moving the S47's to locality provides greater continuity in the case management, through timely allocation of a social worker, thereby reducing the 'handoffs' across service areas.

- Regular supervision is now in place with processes for tracking to ensure supervision remains a priority to support staff.
- A multi-agency mock inspection was carried out on 21 February by Alisa Newman from WY Police, Janice Hawkes from Barnardos, Vicky Cotter from Health, Tracy Taylor, Principal Social Worker and Anne Chester-Walsh, Interim AD Children's.

The inspection was held to test out improvements, including assurance that the service is safe, in addition to supporting staff in their confidence when faced with an external inspection. Inspectors spent time with staff in the Contact Centre, the Early Help Gateway and the Front Desk.

It was clear that overall staff were able to evidence understanding and grip across the service. The addition of a social worker in the Contact Centre was seen as positive and of added value, the live Dashboard evidenced increased timeliness in dealing with enquiries. Thresholds were understood and applied much more consistently, there was a good example of a strategy discussion observed and management oversight was evident. Staff were positive and understood the urgency required to make changes to ensure the system was safe. Partners within the front door were clear about their role and engaged with the changes.

It was evident that whilst positive changes were being made, the restructure of the system was still in its infancy and there remain challenges about managing the level of contacts/referrals coming through. The quality of some information from partner agencies needs to improve. Thresholds and consent need to be understood and embedded into practice and changes need to be undertaken in consultation with our partner. The integration of the Early Help Gateway and the Front Desk has begun but is not yet completed, however this was already showing signs of being a positive change that staff recognised and could articulate. Whilst the mock Ofsted was positive, it was acknowledged that whilst the changes were beginning to evidence better management grip and decision making, there remains much to do to ensure that we offer consistency of practice and safe decision making across the service.

- A peer review was completed in December 2018 undertaken by Doncaster Council; this review identified further recommendations all of which have been put into a priority action plan for the interim HOS and Service Manager to focus on.
- Following the peer review, Doncaster has continued to support Bradford, through a secondment opportunity of a highly experienced Assistant Director of Social Care - Anne Chester-Walsh.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The central theme of the Improvement Plan is the Voice of the Child, in order to achieve this, it is important to engage with some of our existing young people groups such as the Children in Care Council and Youth Voice. It is anticipated that over the next month arrangements will be made for the Strategic Director of Children's Services and members of her leadership team to meet with Youth Voice

and also the Children in Care Council, to share and gain feedback around the OFSTED findings, the improvement plan and what they believe needs to happen.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

4.1 As previously indicated additional resources have been secured to support the improvement journey, including additional Social Workers to help reduce the demand and manage down the caseloads.

4.2 A business paper from the service has been submitted to Council for a permanent increase in Social Workers, enabling the current structure of the service to expand from 3 locality areas to four. For example, current structure comprises of 3 Locality teams namely, Bradford East, Bradford South and Shipley and Keighley and West. The Business Paper proposed the new structure will comprise of 4 Locality Teams, namely; Bradford East, Bradford South, Bradford West, Keighley and Shipley. Each Locality team will have a Service Manager who will oversee the Assessment Teams and Children & Family Teams within their area.

4.3 Interim Programme management support has been commissioned by the Strategic Director of resources, together with an improvement consultant, Cath Knowles, and seconded senior leader from Doncaster, Anne Chester-Walsh.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

5.1 None.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

6.1 None.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

None.

7.2. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

None.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

None.

7.6 TRADE UNION

Ongoing consultation with the trade unions around social work grade uplift and case loads continue between senior leaders within the service and trade union representatives.

7.7 WARD IMPLICATION

The Improvement Notice and Improvement Plan affect all Wards, due to the Inadequate Judgement.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

In addition to the above improvements around the front door, further areas of improvement are also necessary, including services to children in care, subject to permanency plans, our fostering and residential services and children leaving care all of which sits under Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

None; both the Notice to improve and OFSTED report have been published on their respective websites and are therefore in the public domain.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

8.1 None.

9. OPTIONS

9.1 Not applicable.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1: Feedback from the Monitoring Visit. (This will be made available as soon as it is available).

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

12.1 OFSTED Inspection report.

12.2 DfE Statutory Notice to Improve.