

## **Report of the Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019**

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**Subject:**

**PROGRESS UPDATE FOLLOWING THE OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILACS) - IMPROVING MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**Summary statement:**

**To provide the Committee with a progress update in respect of improvements identified within the Ofsted Improvement Plan, namely:**

**Improving management oversight and quality assurance (Workstream 5)**

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**  
Children's Services

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with a progress update in respect of improvements identified within the Improvement Plan following the Ofsted inspection of September 2018 and the subsequent Department for Education (DfE) notice to improve issued in December 2018.
- 1.2 More specifically the report will focus on the actions underway in improving management oversight and quality assurance through this workstream of the Improvement Board.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An improvement notice was issued to Bradford Council on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018, following the Ofsted judgement, reported on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018, that Children's Social Care services were inadequate.
- 2.2 The Independent Chair of the Improvement Board, Mr Stuart Smith is tasked with reporting on progress against the objectives within the action plan within a timetable agreement with the Department.
- 2.3 The continued focus of attention for the department is in creating the optimum operating environment for social workers and their managers to deliver safe and high quality services. This is against the continued challenges of creating a stable and experienced permanent social care workforce.
- 2.5 Bradford's Children's Improvement Journey will be delivered through five key themes that relate to the Ofsted recommendations, and Bradford's vision in developing a 'Child Friendly City' - with the central Theme being the 'Lived Experiences and Voice of the Child'. This report focuses on the Quality Assurance Workstream.
- 2.6 **Quality Assurance and Oversight Work stream**

This workstream has developed a plan based on eight areas of action. These are:-

- 1. Clarity of Purpose
- 2. Clear Procedures
- 3. Standards
- 4. Data and performance information
- 5. Exemplars
- 6. Support for good performance
- 7. Expectations and consequences
- 8. Checking and assurance

Actions to date include a review of the quality assurance function which has been strengthened through a new post of Head of Service QA. There has been interim Head of Service in post since January 2019. Amandip Johal has been appointed as permanent manager and will take up her post in September 2019. Amandip joins for CAF/CASS. Amandip is an experienced manager who has been

responsible for the development and implementation of a quality assurance framework within CAFCASS. Amandip has evidenced an ability to build strong relationships with colleagues and partner agencies which is essential to ensure a successful outcome.

The role of this department has been reviewed and developed to include the function of support for the Children in Care Council, Corporate Parenting, Audit and Regulation 44 visiting.

Monthly reporting now takes place from the Quality Assurance (QA) service to the Strategic Director Children's Services (DCS) which includes feedback from Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Child Protection (CP) Chairs.

There have been a number of revisions and additions to the performance data that is available for managers and there are discussions underway about how this can be provided in one easy to use report for social work managers on a weekly basis.

East Riding Council has been commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) (at Bradford's request) as a Partner in Practice (PIP) to undertake a review of Bradford's Quality Assurance arrangements. This includes a review of both systems and of the QA culture. A revised QA Framework has been developed and shared as part of the review with the Partner in Practice East Riding alongside a revised audit schedule.

The Council understands the importance of having a robust programme of quality assurance and leaders recognise that auditing is more meaningful for learning and understanding quality when it is carried out in conjunction with social workers and by social work managers. Therefore, following a period of audit by dedicated audit staff, in April Bradford returned to a model of managers within the social work service undertaking audits. Moderation of this first tranche of audits demonstrates that there is further work to do to enable all staff to consistently recognise what "Good" looks like and to further develop the skill base of auditors and auditing practice. The regular use of moderation provides additional checks and balances while a consistency of approach is achieved, although it has been identified that there is more to do in mandating a conversation between the moderator and auditor where a significant difference arises so that a clear understanding of the reason for the difference in audit grading can be arrived at. At present, not enough casework can be graded Good or better, although it is important to note that no child has been found to be unsafe through audit and many of the "Requires Improvement" or "Inadequate" case judgements are as a result of avoidable drift and delay.

## **2.7 Evidence and Impacts on the workforce**

The recent 'Stocktake' visit from the DfE found that Social Workers generally feel supported and invested in, with regular case and personal supervision and a culture of learning and support. Social Workers are being supported in their learning and development through a 'Bradford Basics' programme, and are fully engaged with and enthusiastic about the change programme following the judgement inspection.

## **2.8 What we plan to do next and when**

- 2.9 In the short term, we have created a number of interim project teams to provide a temporary uplift in capacity at pinch points and these are beginning to have a beneficial effect, although they are challenged to get all allocated casework into an optimal state. We have reviewed the team location of all of our staff and moved experienced Managers from elsewhere to support assessment and Public Law Outline (PLO). We have a mandatory training programme in place for all our team managers. Senior managers have returned to the floor to provide hands on support to team managers.
- 2.10 Although the performance management culture has become better embedded since the last inspection, we have not yet satisfactorily solved how best to deploy targeted performance information to individual Managers in a way that does not unnecessarily bombard them. This is under urgent review.
- 2.11 The improvement journey continues to be underpinned by strong commitment and regular challenge from council senior leaders who are fully committed to supporting the necessary changes so that the children of Bradford receive good quality services at the right time.
- 2.12 **What does this mean for children?**

The Quality Assurance Service is championing the voice of the child and children's participation in all of its work streams, with a particular focus on promoting the voice of the child within Child Protection Conferences. This has meant that children's participation in their Child Protection meetings was up by over 50% in April.

Supplementing this commitment and the ambition of ensuring the voice of the child is at the heart of our planning process, Bradford has extended the scope of the current advocacy service to include advocacy for families in Child Protection. This service started in May 2019 and will be monitored in relation to both take up and impact. This service will increase opportunities to hear the child's voice throughout the proceedings.

The service is also leading on refreshing and re-launching Viewpoint (an online participation tool) to make better use of it within the Child Protection and Child in Need services and revitalising its use within the Local Authority Children's homes and Fostering Service. Increased reporting from Viewpoint has been put in place, and a clear remit for the information to be routinely fed back to inform service planning as well as work with individual children.

### **Children Looked After**

Our ambition is to ensure and embed the culture of listening to children's voices. Already this is reflected by over 90% participation by children in their Looked After Reviews.

The Children in Care Council are redesigning Children Looked After (CLA) paperwork, working with the Head of Service to create a child friendly format to be available for children to use.

Bradford has also started the process of negotiation for a pilot to use the MOMO

(Mind of My Own) app alongside the Leaving Well app already in use, to enable a wide group of young people to participate through the use of technology.

### **Children in Care Council**

Oversight of the participation service and the Children in Care Council is moving on 1 June 2019, into the management of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service, to ensure it maintains its independence, and is more directly aligned with other services promoting the voice of the child. A development and celebration event is being held on 10 July 2019 to plan for the coming year, with the intention of developing the remit and effectiveness of the group.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

None

### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 There are no financial issues beyond the additional social work resources that have already been secured to assist in the improvement journey. Any additional support required will be picked up and supported via the Enablers Workstream.

### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

Risks in relation to improvement are being picked up and managed through the Improvement plan governance framework.

### **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

Not applicable.

### **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

#### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

Not applicable.

#### **7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

#### **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

Not applicable.

#### **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

#### **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

Not applicable.

**7.6 TRADE UNION**

Not applicable.

**7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

The Ofsted judgement affects all wards.

**7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS  
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

Not applicable.

**7.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

All improvements across the Children's Services are the responsibility of Corporate Parenting and regular updates will be provided as part of the Children's Improvement work programme.

**7.10 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

None; the Ofsted report and Notice of Improvement are in the public domain

**8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None.

**9. OPTIONS**

Not applicable.

**10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That this Committee note the contents of this report.

**11. APPENDICES**

None.

**12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.