

Report of the Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 4th September 2019

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Subject:

Progress update following the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authorities Children's Services (ILACS) – Ofsted monitoring visit preparation, progress and continued challenge

Summary statement:

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

Ofsted monitoring visit preparation, progress and continued challenge

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Portfolio:
Children and Families

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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 improvement activity around the next Ofsted monitoring visit, preparation, progress and continuing challenge.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An improvement notice was issued to Bradford Council on 4th December 2018, following the Ofsted judgement, reported on 29th 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.
- 2.4 Further to the Ofsted monitoring visit on 11 June 2019, the Inspectors reported that, while there were some examples of good work, the pace of improvement was slow and not enough work was timely and effective. The letter from Ofsted raised concerns about the number of caseloads allocated to social workers, staff turnover, and management.
- 2.5 Ofsted recognised that some of the changes that had been implemented had not yet had the time to deliver improvements. They also recognised that senior managers and staff were aware of areas or weakness and what needed to change.
- 2.6 Ofsted acknowledged that politicians had committed significant resources to finance the improvements that Ofsted require and that senior leaders had focused tenaciously on recruiting staff.
- 2.7 It is important to stress that Ofsted found that urgent child protection concerns were recognised with the right action being taken, and no child was found to be unsafe.
- 2.8 On 1 July 2019, the new permanent Strategic Director of Children's Services, Mark Douglas, took up his post.
- 2.9 At the beginning of July 2019, a 12-week plan was created, focussing on the following priorities:
 - Priority 1: All Social Workers to receive quality and timely supervision – Improve the quality of assessments, plans and their implementation;

- Priority 2: Quality Assurance via learning through auditing – Improve all aspects of multi-agency child protection work;
 - Priority 3: Engaging partners in the correct application of the Continuum of Need – Review the social work process and systems (LCS) to ensure proportionate and necessary intervention is applied at the relevant tier/level of need whilst ensuring prioritisation of those children in need of help and protection.
- 2.10 The 12-week plan commenced at the beginning of July 2019, with specific tasks, milestones and deliverables which are monitored for delivery and reported on at the end of each week by the individual SROs. The plan will complete on 20 September 2019.
- 2.11 As part of the 12-week plan, The Strategic Director of Children’s Services has requested that the “Back to Basics” training programme, that was implemented earlier this year is now mandatory and the programme is currently being refreshed.
- 2.12 Due to the lack of pace and engagement with the initial Improvement Programme, the Strategic Director of Children’s Services has further requested that a refreshed programme is developed. This improvement business change programme is currently in development, and has the following programmes within it:
- Early Help and Prevention Improvement;
 - Social Work Practice Improvement;
 - Social Work Management Improvement;
 - Enabling.
- 2.13 The distinct projects in each programme are also being developed, and the overall programme structure finalised.
- 2.14 The Children’s Services Improvement Programme is expected to take up to three years to fully implement, and regular reports will be published to provide assurance that the programme is on track and delivering the improvement benefits to the children of Bradford.
- 2.15 In addition to the existing monthly Children’s Services finance, HR and performance reporting, a new performance dashboard tool has been developed, which is used by Service Managers and Team Managers to drill down by locality, team and practitioner on specific KPIs, which are:
- LAC visits on time;
 - CPP visits on time;
 - CIN visits on time;
 - Assessments in date;
 - Cases assessed in the last 6 months;
 - CIN review on time;
 - Core group on time;
 - Pathway plan reviews on time;
 - Cases without a current plan;
 - Workers with 25+ cases.

- 2.16 The data behind the performance dashboard is refreshed twice a week, on a Monday and Thursday to ensure accuracy.
- 2.17 From a compliance perspective, it is evident that the quality of assessments and timeliness of social care practice continues to improve.
- 2.18 Focus is now on improving quality across the service.
- 2.19 All performance data for July will be available in mid-August and discussed at this Committee meeting at the beginning of September.
- 2.20 There are several continuing challenges to the successful delivery of the long-term improvement programme. These include:
- Ensuring that the Council's senior leadership team remain focussed on supporting the successful delivery of the Improvement Programme;
 - Ensuring that staff with the appropriate capacity and capability are available for the full life cycle of the programme;
 - Ensuring that the right outcomes are achieved through the right projects, at the right time;
 - Ensuring that the Improvement Programme has the right levels of pace, grip and control;
 - Ensuring that we keep the children at the heart of all we do on our improvement journey.

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 Programme.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Risks in relation to improvement are being picked up and managed through the Improvement Programme 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 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.