

Report of the Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held 15 January 2020

Subject:

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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:

- 1. Ofsted October 2019 monitoring visit outcome, progress and continued challenge.**
- 2. Programme approach, planning and identified projects in Phase One for innovation and improvement.**

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Portfolio:

Children and Families

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

1.1 Bradford's third Ofsted Monitoring Visit took place on the 16 and 17 October 2019.

The focus of the visit was:

1.1.2 Children who are subject of a child protection plan, those subject to the Public Law Outline (PLO) process and children who are at the edge of care. The inspection team consisted of Jan Edwards, Her Majesty's Inspector and Lisa Summers Her Majesty's Inspector with Parveen Hussain shadowing the process.

1.1.3 The outcome of the latest Ofsted monitoring visit which took place in October has now been published on the Ofsted website. [You can read the full letter here](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80449) or you can copy and paste this link <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80449>

1.1.4 The letter indicates that Children's Services are making progress in some areas, but with many areas that still need improvement. A key outcome Ofsted found was that changes have not happened quickly enough.

1.1.5 The letter recognises that the service has a new leadership team in post, it is developing a new staffing structure to help improve management oversight and align Social Care teams to work more closely with Early Help teams, and that the service is actively recruiting more staff to ease capacity concerns.

1.1.6 The letter also acknowledges that there are still significant challenges that Children's Services need to overcome. In particular, there needs to be consistent improvement in the quality of assessments together with management oversight on the quality of practice. Inspectors also noted social work capacity difficulties and issues with some partners not engaging in key child protection meetings.

1.1.7 Inspectors were noted that: *"Social Workers in Bradford are motivated to help children and families improve their circumstances. This is a result of their engagement in the improvement plan and their shared understanding of the vision for children's social care."* And that: *"...children at the edge of care are being effectively supported to remain safely at home."*

1.1.8 The letter also highlights two other areas that are improving: social work caseloads are reducing because of additional capacity; and the oversight of court proceedings has improved reducing the drift and delay that children had previously experienced. This hard work is recognised and shows the difference that this work and the teams involved are making to children's lives. It shows that improvement is being made in what we do to make the changes that Ofsted require.

1.1.9 The next monitoring visit is scheduled for the end of February 2020 and will focus on Permanence and Disabled Children's Services. The service is preparing for this visit, but recognises that this area of focus will prove challenging given the scope of Permanence and Disabled Children's Services.

2 Programme approach to improvement through defined projects

- The programme approach provides a framework to ensure effective management and assurance of the Children's Innovation and Improvement Programme
- The Programme Team has been established to support and challenge through shared experience, advice and guidance for project delivery - *'sit within approach not alongside'*
- This team ensure projects have clearly defined, scoped with a current state analysis; are evidence based, have clear plans, monitoring and reporting systems & effective processes to track and manage risks and benefits/outcomes - *'Theory of change model'* plus

2.1 Programmes

- Prevention and Early Help
- Social Work Practice
- Workforce
- Looked After Children / Leaving Care

2.1.1 Phase one projects:

Prevention and Early Help:

- Establishing and implementing effective Governance and Performance arrangements for Prevention and Early Help for children and families (in context of all age developments).
- Develop and improve the quality and effectiveness of Local Authority Parenting Programmes and Family Support.
- Promotion of Early Help and effective engagement of partners in the role of Lead Practitioner responding to multiple and complex needs.
- Phased approach for the further development of one front door; including Information; Advice and Guidance for Parents and Practitioners to support lower level needs. Work to improve the quality and timely collection of information from partners for the statutory process for SEND.
- Improve the integration of the 0 to 19 Health service in Family Hubs and promoting what Family Hubs are and offer.
- Improving the impact and sustainability of Families First (Troubled Families).

Social Work Practice:

- Developing and embedding practice standards for working with children and families known to Children Social Care - (Systemic improvement within Children in Need, Child Protection and Looked After & Leaving Care practice and processes.)
- Redefining our practice approach and model.
- Improve the functionality and use of case management systems to support effective practice.

Workforce:

- Workforce Recruitment, Retention and Performance.
- Workforce Development Strategy for Children's Social Care, including Youth Offending Service.

Looked After Children / Leaving Care:

- Sufficiency for Children in Care – Care needs and cost analysis.
- Bradford Accommodation for Children in Care.
- Sustainability of B Positive Pathway and Mockingbird Projects.

2.2 In Summary and Next Steps

2.2.1 Programme governance, leadership and programme structure for Phase 1 (Oct 19 to March 20) in place.

2.2.2 Recruitment of Programme team completed end of Nov 2019 aligned to project work to drive the work programme and support colleagues and partners engagement.

2.2.3 Arrangements are in place to monitor project progress and to evidence outcomes at project closure.

2.2.4 Phase one projects agreed with work scoped and work stream identification underway.

2.2.5 Agree and mobilise the project resource requirements, specific to the projects.

2.2.6 The overall journey is planned in 3 phases:

- Phase 1 October 2019 to March 2020 – Foundations of practice.
- Phase 2 April to September 2020 – Enhancing the service/s.
- Phase 3 October 2020 to September 2021 - Business as Usual.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

None.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

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 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

All improvements across Children's Services will strengthen the council's ability to discharge its Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

7.9 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 notes the contents of this report.

11. APPENDICES

1. Ofsted Monitoring Visit Letter.
2. Vital Signs report.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.