



Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Executive to be held on 24 March 2020

Subject: **BM**

OUTCOME FROM THE OFSTED MONITORING VISIT – 25TH AND 26TH FEBRUARY 2020

Summary statement:

The service was subject to the fourth monitoring visit which took place on the 25th and 26th of February 2020. During this visit, Inspectors reviewed the progress made in achieving permanence for Children in Care. Inspectors also considered whether performance management information and quality assurance activity provides managers and leaders with an accurate view of social work practice and children's experiences.

The letter following the monitoring visit will be published by Ofsted on the 19th of March 2020, until such a time there is an embargo in place.

This report has not been included on the published forward plan as an issue for consideration as the publication date of the Monitoring Visit letter was not known. As it is impractical to defer the decision until it has been included in the published Forward Plan the report is submitted in accordance with paragraph 10 of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution.

Mark Douglas
Strategic Director of Children's Services

Report Contact: Irfan Alam
Phone: (01274) 431266
E-mail: Irfan.alam@bradford.gov.uk

Portfolio:
Children and Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children's Services

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Areas Covered in the Visit

This was the fourth monitoring visit since the Local Authority was judged inadequate in October 2018. The Inspectors were Jan Edwards, Her Majesty's Inspector and Neil Penswick, Her Majesty's Inspector.

The Inspectors reviewed the progress made in achieving permanence for Children in Care. Inspectors also considered whether performance management information and quality assurance activity provide managers and leaders with an accurate view of social work practice and children's experiences.

A range of evidence was considered, including electronic case records, performance management information, and case file audits. Inspectors spoke to a range of staff, including elected members, managers, and social workers. Inspectors also met with a small group of children who shared their experience of what it was like to be a Child in Care in Bradford.

1.2 Summary of Findings

Due to the current embargo, this summary will be brief and based upon the following verbal feedback:

- Our self-assessment was accurate. Senior Leaders have been challenged by the scale and enduring nature of the delay and the quality of care planning.
- There is drift and delay for children achieving permanence.
- The Improvement Plan had initially stalled due to a delay in recruiting permanent senior leaders, and in securing an understanding of the scale of the remedial work required to improve services.
- The new leadership team have now embarked on a wholescale restructuring of the service which has required stripping the service back to basics. The service is now starting to address the legacy of poor practice and ineffective management and are working through children's cases to ensure the right planning is in place.
- While Inspectors found issues with current practice, particularly in relation to the effectiveness of managers in ensuring that children achieve timely permanence, there was also some pockets of better practice which is benefiting some children in care.
- Leaders are now appropriately focused on the development of an infrastructure across the whole service to support improved care planning practice and compliance.

- A new Senior Management Team has been recruited with the right level of qualification and knowledge. However, these recent improvements are yet to demonstrate an impact on the experience of most children in care who require stable and secure permanent homes

2. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The Strategic Director of Children's Services and members of his leadership team will continue to work on the improvement journey and implement the actions in the Improvement Plan.

3. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 3.1 Not applicable at this stage.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 4.1 The Children's Services Improvement Board continues to monitor progress and will ensure that effective responses are made to all Ofsted's recommendations and DfE required improvements. The Children's Services Improvement Board focuses on outcomes for children and provides the drive and focus to ensure that necessary improvements are achieved and evidenced.

5. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 5.1 The Ofsted inspection in September 2018 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 plan, quarterly monitoring visits, and a re-inspection. The recent Ofsted visit is one of the quarterly monitoring visits.

- 5.2 On 4 December 2018, following the Secretary of State's decision to take a non-statutory approach in Bradford's case, the DFE issued an Improvement Notice to the Council, requiring the council to take a number of actions to address all areas of improvement identified in the Ofsted report and providing for DFE reviews of progress against the improvement agenda. The notice also makes provision for statutory intervention under S497A Education Act 1996 should the Local Authority not comply with the notice or make poor progress.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

None.

6.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

6.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

Not applicable.

6.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

6.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Not applicable.

6.6 TRADE UNION

Not applicable.

6.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

Due to the Inadequate Judgement in October 2018, The Improvement Notice and Improvement Plan will affect all Wards.

6.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

The focus of this monitoring visit was permanence, therefore there will be implications for corporate parenting, particularly in relation to how permanence is secured for Children in Care.

6.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

7. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

7.1 Not applicable.

8. OPTIONS

8.1 Not applicable.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Executive is asked to note the contents of this report.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1 – Ofsted Report of Monitoring Visit – 25th and 26th February 2020.
(TO FOLLOW)

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 None.