

Report for: Cabinet – 14 July 2020

Title: Haringey Children and Young People’s Service OFSTED Action Plan Update Report

Report authorised by : Ann Graham, Director, Children and Young People’s Service

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Ward(s) affected: N/A

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Non key decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with a summary of the activities and findings from the focused visit undertaken by Ofsted on 17 and 18 December 2019 and the action plan to address the areas for improvement in the focused visit letter. It also provides an update on the action plan arising from the Ofsted inspection in October 2018. This report was originally intended for a Cabinet meeting earlier in the year. This was not possible due to the COVID 19 pandemic and the requirement for urgent decisions only.
- 1.2 The report also makes reference to the recent published Family Court Judgment, in May 2020, raising serious issues regarding social work practice in the Disabled Children’s Team (DCT).

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 This report provides Cabinet with an update on the 2018 Ofsted inspection action plan, the actions in place to address the findings of the Ofsted focused visit of 2019 and the actions Children’s Services is taking in response to Family Court Judgment on 20th May in the case of Child A and Child B. The updated 2018 Ofsted inspection action plan speaks of the improvements the service continues to make as does the 2019 focused visit action plan. However, the Family Court Judgment is critical of the social work practice in the DCT team, it suggested that the practice in the team may not have improved since the 2018 Ofsted inspection.
- 2.2 As a council our vision is that every child in Haringey should have the best start in life, be happy, healthy, and safe, and grow into adulthood with a successful future. For those children, young people and families that need our support, I

am committed to ensuring that this is of high quality at all times. When our standards fall below expectations, we are determined to address these issues no matter how uncomfortable that process might be and ensure that we learn from them. We do this because we are a learning organisation committed, every day, to continuing to drive improvement in children's service so that our vision is realised for all the children in our community.

- 2.3 This report sets out the actions we are taking to review the practices in the DCT team. We will return to Cabinet with a full report on improvements and activity in October 2020.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet

- a) note the findings of the Ofsted Focused visit in December 2019 as attached as Appendix 1 and endorse the ongoing Action plan attached as Appendix 2
- b) note the progress of the Ofsted inspection 2018 Action plan attached as Appendix 3; and
- c) endorse the assurance measures to improve practice in the Disabled Children's Team set out in paragraphs 7.8 to 7.11 of this report.

4. Reasons for decision

Non key

5. Alternative options considered

N/A

6. Background information

6.1 Ofsted Framework

- 6.2 The ILACS framework is focused on evidence about improving outcomes for children and young people and evidence of the impact of leaders. There is a strong emphasis on examining frontline practice, talking directly with practitioners and taking into account the views of children, young people, parents and carers. Our work with partner agencies and in fulfilling responsibilities as Corporate Parents was also considered.

- 6.3 In accordance with the ILACS framework, each year the service produces a self-evaluation that sets out the strengths, areas for improvement and actions needed to improve children's social care. Prior to both the standard inspection and focused visit, Ofsted received the most recent copy of the self-evaluation and used this alongside a set of required data and information to form their key

lines of enquiry. As part of the inspection process, inspectors also looked for evidence of progress from previous inspections.

- 6.4 The Ofsted inspection framework is a 'system' that results in much more contact by Ofsted with Local Authorities than with previous inspection frameworks. There are annual engagement meetings with an HMI Inspector and contact throughout the year.
- 6.5 Since 2018, Children's Social Care has been visited twice by Ofsted inspectors:
- a) a standard Ofsted inspection took place over a three-week period from 22 October to 9 November 2018. During the first week of the inspection, inspectors were off site and were provided with data and information in line with statutory guidance. Inspectors were based in Haringey for the last two weeks of the inspection.
 - b) the focused visit took place over one week, with the inspectors based in Haringey for two days. During the week inspectors were provided with data and information from Children's Services prior to inspectors arriving on site. The focused visit on 17 and 18 December 2019 was an evaluation of the MASH, Early Help Hub within the MASH and the Assessment Teams.

7. For ease of reference, the Ofsted 2018 inspection and the focused visit each have their own action plan and will be discussed separately in this report.

7.1 Findings and recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection 2018

7.2 The findings from the inspection were published on 14 December 2018 and identified areas of strength in practice and areas for improvement. The judgement for all areas inspected was that services 'require improvement to be good':

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families – graded as Requires Improvement to be good.
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection– graded as Requires Improvement to be good.
- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers– graded as Requires Improvement to be good
- Overall effectiveness – graded as Requires Improvement to be good.

7.3 These judgements were consistent with the service's own June 2018 self-evaluation. Whilst the Ofsted inspection report underpins this judgement with evidence in the examination of practice, inspectors were positive and encouraging about the work underway and the arrangements and plans for improvements. Services were regarded as being safe and there was no practice found in which a child was considered to be at risk.

7.4 Under a heading 'What needs to Improve', inspectors noted the following nine areas:

- Assessment of children’s needs when their circumstances change, in order to inform plans.
 - Child-focused plans, particularly in the disabled children’s team, where the understanding of thresholds when risks escalate also needs to improve.
 - Timely and effective permanence planning for all children in care, including effective challenge brought by independent reviewing officers.
 - Placement sufficiency for vulnerable adolescents.
 - The quality and timeliness of case recording, including the recording of management decision-making.
 - The quality of audits to inform practice and drive practice improvements.
 - The strategic partnership response to criminally exploited children.
 - The offer and take-up of return home interviews and the subsequent use of intelligence to inform individual children’s plans and wider partnership activity.
 - Pathways to private fostering.
- 7.5 The Director of Children’s Services produced an action plan to address the Ofsted recommendations as required by the inspection framework. A report on the inspection and the action plan was presented to Cabinet on 12 March 2019. Detailed updates on the progress were provided to the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Panel in March and September 2019 and to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee in April and September 2019. A report and the action plan was also presented to the former Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) on 20 March 2019. A further update was provided to the new Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) on 16 June 2020. The Ofsted 2018 action plan is attached as Appendix 3.
- 7.6 Improvement continues to be made in each of the areas noted by Ofsted, with the action plan rag rated Blue (closed) or Green (on target/ongoing). This is partly evidenced by significant improvements in our performance data and the feedback from Ofsted at the focused visit. Nevertheless, the areas are such that few would say that they are completed and need not be reviewed again. Continuous improvement is part of our approach and the areas for improvement noted by Ofsted are core social work practice issues that will always require our focus and oversight. They therefore remain as key priorities to monitor and improve. It is in this changed context that the sufficiency arrangements (ensuring we have sufficient high quality placements for children needing care), rag rated amber, will be reviewed.
- 7.7 In order to further improve sufficiency arrangements, the service plans a review of the commissioning arrangements for children’s services. In response to need that could not be met by the market, the service has recently developed two in-house units: at 55 Bounds Green Road a specialist housing provision for families with No Recourse to Public Funds, and Haselmere a pilot residential assessment centre for children in care with a history of living away from Haringey and experiencing placement instability. However, it is anticipated that a review of commissioning arrangements will enable the service to see what more it can do further develop in-house services and services with our near neighbours.

- 7.8 We acknowledge the Family Court Judgment of May 2020 and its reference to the quality of practice in the DCT team. We are determined to improve our practice in this area and have set out a programme of work to inform our learning in this case and to provide assurance that this is not a systemic issue in the DCT. A full report on the findings, recommendations for improvement and assurance activity will be reported to Cabinet in the autumn.
- 7.9 The Judgment relates to care proceedings issued by the Local Authority (LA) in respect of two children referred to as Child A and Child B. It is highly critical of the LA social work practice with regard to the failure to assess the risk posed to the children by mother's new partner who was a Schedule 1 sex offender and the failure to inform father of the risk posed by the mother's new partner. The children are both safe and this is recognised in the Judgment.
- 7.10 Haringey children's services are committed to learning from all cases. The full programme of work has been put in place to bring about improvements in the DCT and to ensure that there is no systemic issue in the DCT. Please see table below.

Actions	Lead	Timelines
Peer Review of the Disabled Children's Service	Islington Council as part of the DFE managed programme – Partners in Practice	July 2020
Whole file Audits	External auditors	July 2020
Court work Project	External scrutineer	August 2020
Learning Review of Child A & B	Independent Chair	August 2020

- 7.11 Children's Services will produce an annual report on performance for Cabinet in October (with updates half yearly). We will also bring a full report on all the improvement and assurance activity relating to the DCT.

8. Findings and recommendation from the Ofsted Focused Visit 2019

- 8.1 On 17 and 18 December 2019 Children's Social Care received a focused visit from Ofsted. A focused visit is not an inspection but is part of a 'system' of activities that forms the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework. A focused visit results in a letter with findings and areas for improvement to the Director of Children's Services,(DCS). It does not result, for example, in a judgment of Good or Requires improvement to be Good. A letter that raises concerns about practice usually triggers a standard inspection by Ofsted. The DCS is not required to send an action plan on the areas for improvement to Ofsted.

- 8.2 During the focused visit inspectors considered the local authority's arrangements for the front door and evaluated the quality of help and protection provided to vulnerable children and their families in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and in the assessment teams. The findings of the visit were published in a letter to the Director of Children's Service on the 21st January 2020 and Her Majesty's Inspectors positively note the improvements from the last Ofsted inspection of November 2018. The letter supports the approach taken to improve services. Ofsted observed that the service is moving in the right direction and "working determinedly to systematically improve services" for children and young people. A copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 1.
- 8.3 The inspectors found that senior leaders have maintained a strong focus on improving services and the quality of social work practice. The scope and the pace of the work set out evidence that the workforce was effectively supported, that there was a commitment to keeping caseloads low and that leaders were not complacent about the need to design into the organisational systems, measures to stabilise the workforce.
- 8.4 The inspectors noted the improvement plans to build the quality assurance processes and found that further work was required to establish the quality assurance framework and tighten the recording of management oversight and decision making.
- 8.5 The inspectors found that the following areas require improvement:
- The recruitment and retention of permanent social workers and managers
 - Work to support and protect vulnerable adolescents who go missing, including those who are criminally and sexually exploited
 - The quality and effectiveness of case management oversight and supervision by team managers in the assessment teams
 - The impact of audit and quality assurance arrangements.

10. Overview of the Inspection and focused visit

- 10.1 Overall, the inspectors in 2018 and 2019 reported an improving picture for services for children and young people.
- 10.2 The inspectors noted that senior managers and leaders have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the complex demands presented by a highly mobile and diverse local community in an inner London borough with high levels of need. (Please see letter from Ofsted at Appendix 1).

11.0 Focused visit – update on the areas for improvement

11.1 Recruitment and Retention of social work experience.

11.2 The service continues to focus on the recruitment and retention of permanent staff. For example, the service has made improvements in the permanent recruitment of managers in children's social care. In 2017, only 55% of managers were permanent. This improved to 65% in December 2019 and in April 2020, 70% of children's social care managers are permanent.

11.3 Although the service continues to hold vacancies in the service, these posts are covered by agency staff. This is necessary to ensure that there is sufficient management oversight for staff in the service. The Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and all social care heads of service are permanent officers.

11.4 The recruitment and retention framework is continually reviewed and updated with targets to reduce our reliance on agency social workers. Structural factors, such as resetting the children's service budget with the support of an additional £7million in 2019 have enabled the service to permanently fund posts that had been unfunded. The difficulty with recruiting permanent social workers is a national issue; however, we continue to explore ways to recruit a permanent workforce and prior to the pandemic we recruited a number of social workers who are due to join Haringey Council this month. Stability in the workforce at all levels is a necessary key principal for the development of a strong social care practice and workforce. These benefit children and young people through building trusting relationships, the direct work achieved and with greater chance of improved outcomes.

11.5 Manageable social work caseloads contributes to staff retention. In December 2017 caseloads were high in children's social care. A dedicated focus to reduce caseloads has resulted in caseloads being maintained at approximately 17, since the 2018 Ofsted inspection.

11.6 A strong training and development offer also supports retention. In November 2019, Children's Services launched the new Haringey Children's (training) Academy at the first HSCP conference. The Haringey Academy is supported by noted professors and academics.

11.7 The action plan describes the recruitment and retention activities which have been completed and the key improvement activities for the remainder of 2020/21. The action plan is at Appendix 2.

12.0 Work to support and protect vulnerable adolescents who go missing, including those who are criminally and sexually exploited.

12.1 The Borough has in place a highly regarded Youth at Risk Strategy to support all children and young people at risk including from exploitation. As part of this strategy, Children's Social Care launched a joint initiative with the police to safeguard children and young people from the psychological and physical harm caused by exploitation and serious youth violence as a priority for the North Area Safeguarding strand.

- 12.2 The initiative takes a wider view across Enfield and Haringey and centralises the response to exploitation of children and young people, at risk of child sexual exploitation, missing, gangs, county lines, modern slavery and all forms of criminal exploitation.
- 12.3 The service has worked with partners to extend the Exploitation and Prevention Panel into the Vulnerability, Violence and Exploitation Service. The principles of the model fosters partnerships with Connected Communities and Early Help contextual safeguarding delivery. The Vulnerability, Violence and Exploitation (VVE) working together report has been presented to statutory partnership group and agreed. The Service Plan is finalised and will be presented to the Youth At Risk Strategic Board and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee. The delay is Covid-19 related.
- 12.4 The work has been supported by the University of Bedfordshire who are independent experts in the field of child exploitation.
- 13.0 **The quality and effectiveness of case management oversight and supervision by team managers in the assessment teams**
- 13.1 Having well trained and skilled team managers in the service supporting our social work practitioners provides a strong base for the development of good social work practice through high quality management oversight and supervision. To support this work the service has engaged with Research in Practice¹ (RIP) who brings together academic research, practice expertise and the experiences of people accessing children and adults services, to support managers and social workers to apply this knowledge in their practice. RIP also develops a range of resources and learning opportunities, as well as delivering tailored services, expertise and training to over 80 LAs. This has meant supporting six social work managers to access the DFE funded, Practice Supervisors Development Programme with a further six managers earmarked to attend the training from September 2020.
- 13.2 This Development Programme is led by a strong consortium of leading professionals from the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, Goldsmiths University and the University of Sussex the managers receive intense and bespoke skills and knowledge development in a residential setting over the course of six months.
- 13.3 With the establishment of the Haringey Children's Academy managers will continue to work with Professor David Shemmings to support improvement in the quality of supervision and management oversight across the service. David Shemmings is a leading national expert in Relationship Based approaches to working with families. Alongside Research in Practice and the developments under the Children's Academy this will further enhance the Signs of Safety social work practice model and positively impact the delivery of safeguarding services to children and young people. A set of expectations, practice promises and practice standards are in place for staff and there are

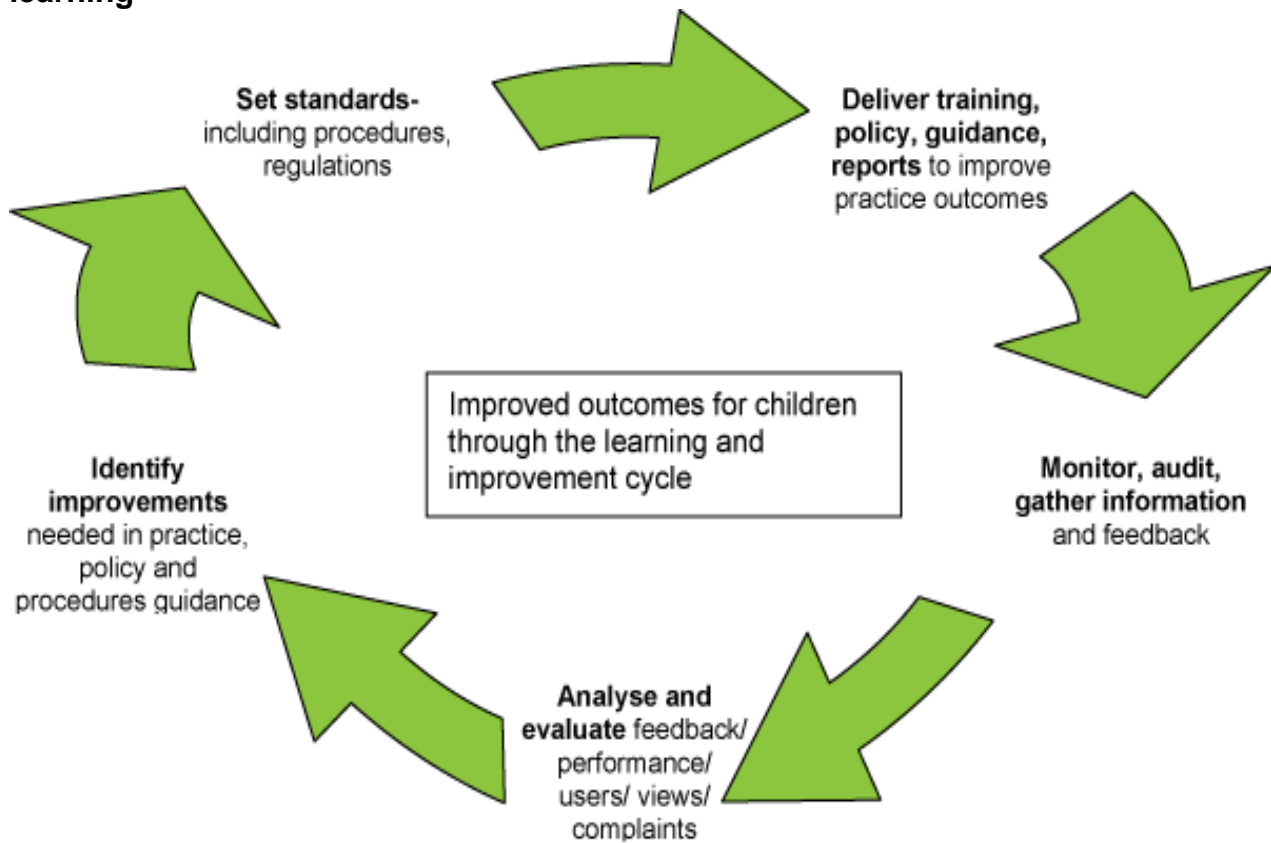
arrangements to provide support through regular reflective supervision along with training.

14.0 The impact of audit and quality assurance arrangements

14.1 Children's Services and its partners are ambitious for the children and young people growing up in Haringey and want every child to enjoy their childhood and achieve their potential. The service remains committed to achieving good outcomes for children, young people and their families through the continual improvement of the services provided. Measuring the impact of our service delivery is crucial to achieving improved outcomes for children, young people and their families. In order to do this, a strong Quality Assurance Framework is required to monitor and evaluate that the services are delivered effectively, and to the standards that enable children and young people's welfare to be safeguarded and promoted, and their needs met. The improvement plan recognises that quality assurance is a continual and dynamic process. Since the Ofsted focused visit we have reviewed our quality assurance systems and adopted an improvement cycle methodology. This has enabled us to set practice standards, move to monitor our impact, use the information we have to improve services, and undertake ongoing reviews. The improvement cycle allows the service to move away from a quality assurance approach that is compliance and target driven towards a coherent and qualitative approach, which measures standards and identifies areas for improvement. The improvement approach is systematic and themed, allowing for a focus on single agencies and building in opportunities to work across agencies with our partners.

14.2 The Director of Children's Services has initiated a Children's Assurance Board. The purpose of the Children's Assurance Board is to provide a place for key Leaders within the Council to discuss outcomes delivered for children and young people in the community creating a strategic place to continually monitor and improve performance and outcomes for children and young people.

The Improvement Cycle – improves outcomes for children through continuous learning



15.0 Future Inspections

15.1 Currently, all Ofsted inspections (except for exceptional circumstances) are suspended in line with the Coronavirus Act 2020. As reported above the Ofsted inspection frameworks means that there is regular inspection activity with local authorities. The annual social care engagement meeting planned for July 2020 has been delayed until the autumn due to the pandemic. Ofsted has visited Haringey every year since 2017. It is expected that upon commencement of inspection activity that the annual inspection visit from Ofsted will continue. It should be noted that most local authorities receive an Ofsted or Joint (with other inspectorates) inspection regularly.

16.0 Contribution to strategic outcomes

16.1 The findings for improvement will be included as part of the programme of service improvement plans which is led and overseen through the Departmental Management Team. These are aligned within the wider framework of the Borough Plan and its outcomes for children and young people in Haringey, most particularly:

- Best start in life: the first few years of every child's life will give them the long-term foundations to thrive

- Happy childhood: all children across the borough will be happy and healthy as they grow up, feeling safe and secure in their family, networks and communities
- Every young person, whatever their background, has a pathway to success for the future.

16.2 This is particularly relevant to contributions to the Borough's strategic work with vulnerable adolescents at risk of crime and exploitation; early help and preventive work; work with children and young people who have special needs and/or are living with a disability; those who are affected by neglect; children and young people who experience domestic abuse or parenting affected by alcohol or drug misuse.

17.0 Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

17.1 Finance

The service improvement plans are supported by the service's approved budgets and the Council's MTFS.

17.2 Procurement

N/A

17.3 Legal

There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The recommendations are intended to take forward the findings from the Ofsted inspection and focussed visit and to bring about service improvements to children and families in the borough. They will also enable the Council to better discharge its statutory obligations to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable children.

17.4 Equality

N/A

18.0 Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Focused Visit Letter, 21 Jan 2020.
 Appendix 2 – Ofsted Focused Visit Action Plan 2019
 Appendix 3 – Ofsted Action Plan 2018

19.0 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

N/A