

Subject:	Ofsted – an update on the 2015 children’s services inspection		
Date of Meeting:	13th November 2017		
Report of:	Pinaki Ghoshal – Executive Director Families, Children & Learning		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 To provide the committee with an update on progress made since the 2015 Children’s Services Ofsted inspection, providing assurance around action planning to ensure identified recommendations are followed up.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1 That committee note the progress made around recommendations arising from the Ofsted inspection in 2015, and agree that future updates should focus on the new inspection framework referred to in the body of the report.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In November 2013 Ofsted introduced a single inspection framework which focusses on the “experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers”. It looks at the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help these children, including local authority adoption and fostering services. A review of Local Children’s Safeguarding Boards was introduced alongside this new inspection framework. This inspection framework is now nearly completed, with only a small number of Local Authorities left. The focus is now on preparing for the next framework, the Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Service’s (ILACs). The new framework will have some changes, introducing a self-evaluation element and more of a focus on practice observation but it is likely to retain the 4 point judgement scale as currently (inadequate, requires improvement, good, outstanding).
- 3.2 Brighton & Hove City Council staff formed a working group back in 2013 which looked at the new framework and managed a programme of work to improve services in light of the new requirements. This group also took a wider look at how social work services were being delivered in the city and recognised that changes needed to be made. This work started the process of introducing a new model of relationship based practice, with a structure that removed transition

points between teams and ensured the right child, in the right place, at the right time.

3.3 Brighton & Hove were notified on 13th April 2015 that the inspection team would arrive the next day. The inspection ran from 14th April to 7th May with initial feedback being given on 8th May. During the inspection Ofsted looked at around 200 cases, met with 18 parents and grandparents, 16 adopters and carers and 48 children & young people. They also met with many professionals across the city in a series of meetings.

3.4 The inspection report was published on 22 June 2015 and confirmed the overall judgement as:

Children's services in Brighton and Hove require improvement to be good

There are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. However, the authority is not yet delivering good protection and help for children, young people and families.

Sub judgements were:

- The Local Safeguarding Children Board is good. The arrangements in place to evaluate the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and board partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children are good.
- Leadership, Management and Governance Good
- The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence are Good
- Adoption Performance Good Experiences and progress of care leavers Good
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection Requires Improvement

3.5 The local authority considered the report to be fair at the time and accepted the findings and recommendations. Ofsted recognised that the authority had already identified all the areas that needed improvement and work had already been underway to change elements of service delivery.

3.6 In the two years following the inspection there has been a focussed attention on tackling the areas identified. Progress is regularly monitored.

3.7 Appendix 1 shows a recent assessment against the Ofsted recommendations.

3.8 There were eleven recommended areas of actions, nine of which have been brought in to acceptable performance levels. The remaining two areas have seen a significant level of improvement but we are committed to achieving a higher performance before taking them off our work plans.

3.9 In September 2016 we asked the Local Government Association to coordinate a Safeguarding Peer Review of our services in Brighton & Hove. They coordinated a team of 8 colleagues from other local authorities who were invited in for 5 days as critical friends to assess our progress against the matters raised by Ofsted.

- 3.10 This was a positive experience and the team confirmed that we continued to 'know ourselves' well, providing accurate self-evaluations of our current performance. Like Ofsted the year before, they agreed that our business plans had identified the correct areas of improvement work that was needed.
- 3.11 We had only very recently introduced our relationship based model of practice, but the peer review team recognised that social workers were already better supported with more opportunities to reflect on their practice, and they could see this would impact positively on the families we work with.
- 3.12 In early 2017 an evaluation of the new relationship based model of practice was conducted, involving the Centre for Social Work Practice and the University of Sussex's Centre for Social Work Innovation and Research, amongst others.
- 3.13 The evaluation found that:
- Families have a better experience of social work
 - Social workers feel more supported and more able to make a difference for families
 - Relationship-based practice seems to be supporting safe and stable family lives for children
 - The model of practice appears to have decreased demand for social work (a 5.4% decrease in the number of open families) and high-level interventions (a 10% decrease in both children with child protection plans and in care) during a time of increasing national demand.
- 3.14 The evaluation drew strongly on direct feedback from young people themselves plus their family members. This feedback is a key way in which we manage our service improvement work.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 These statutory inspections are conducted under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- 4.2 Ofsted only required us to produce an action plan back in 2015 (agreed by this committee in July 2015) however we feel it is appropriate to continue to monitor our progress, thus maintaining the document provided at appendix 1. When Ofsted inspect our children's services arrangements again they would expect us to be able to demonstrate our progress since the previous inspection.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The voice of children, young people and their families is an essential part of our service delivery and work has progressed in the past few years to ensure this is consistent and genuine. The inspection report is very positive about the engagement with children and young people, in particular children in care and care leavers and we continue to build on this work.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Ofsted were satisfied in 2015 that Brighton & Hove provided a safe service for children in the city. However, Ofsted and the Local Authority identified that there

was work to be done to ensure that we are delivering consistently good and outstanding services for all. An improvement journey had begun before Ofsted's arrival and continues with reassurance that the right direction is being taken. If the improvements already undertaken continue then the quality of service and a future Ofsted inspection judgement should recognise that good services are delivered across all areas.

- 6.2 It is unlikely that this area of work within Children's Services will be inspected under the new incoming framework before later in 2018 as the city is considered to be a low risk Authority given that the judgement has not been Inadequate and also given that leadership, management and governance has been judged to be Good.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The actions contained within Appendix 1 have been incorporated into service plans for 2017/18 and any costs will be met from the Families, Children & Learning budgets. These budgets are currently under significant pressure with an overspend projected in 2017/18.

Finance Officer Consulted: Louise Hoten

Date: 29/09/2017

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 As described in the body of the report the Ofsted inspection regime is designed to look at the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and progress children in need of help and protection, looked after children, and care leavers. These are core statutory duties for the local authority, and a key area of responsibility for all councils. The council is the corporate parent for children removed from their parents care. The council should be assured that it is fulfilling the expectations of the Working Together statutory guidance (2015). Together with the Leader and Chief Executive, the Lead Member for Children Services and the DCS are considered to be politically and professionally accountable for performance and the effectiveness of children's services, per the responsibilities set out in statutory guidance

Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson

Date: 05/10/2017

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Ofsted's inspection framework ensures that the safeguarding and voice of our most vulnerable children & young people is heard. Work with the Corporate Parenting Board, our Children in Care Council and direct work with those subject to a child protection plans was particularly highlighted by Ofsted. Inspectors recognised that staff had been trained and encouraged to consider equalities issues in a child's life and to understand how this may impact on their wider experiences. This was seen as a strength and improvement since the previous inspection in 2011.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 In 2015 Ofsted recognised that the changes we were making were looking to create robust services that support families better. We have recently conducted a thorough evaluation of the new practice and this highlighted positive feedback from children & families. We are also in the process of refreshing our Early Help Strategy in light of the formation of the Front Door for Families and are looking at how we better support families earlier in the process.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. September 2017 Ofsted action plan update

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. [Brighton & Hove's 2015 Ofsted inspection report.](#)

