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| <b>Subject:</b>          | <b>Update on July 2018 Ofsted ILACS Action Plan</b>             |  |                          |
| <b>Date of Meeting:</b>  | <b>11<sup>TH</sup> November 2019</b>                            |  |                          |
| <b>Report of:</b>        | <b>Executive Director for Families, Children &amp; Learning</b> |  |                          |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>  | <b>Name:</b>  | <b>Deb Austin</b>                      | <b>Tel: 01273 295237</b> |
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| <b>Ward(s) affected:</b> | <b>All Wards</b>  |  |                          |

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

- 1.1 To provide the committee with a further update on progress made in addressing the recommendations arising from the 2018 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS).

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the progress made in respect of the recommendations made by Ofsted following the 2018 ILACS.

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 In January 2018 Ofsted launched the 'Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services' or ILACS, a flexible framework for inspecting children's services for local authorities. The ILACS replaced the Single Inspection Framework (or the SIF), which was in use 2013 - 2018.
- 3.2 The ILACS framework focuses on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children; the experiences and progress of children in care; the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption; the experiences and progress of care leavers. In addition, it evaluates the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people and the quality of professional practice.
- 3.3 Brighton & Hove were notified on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2018 that a standard inspection under the ILACS framework would commence the following day. A local authority receives a standard inspection if their previous Ofsted judgement was "requires improvement to be Good". Brighton & Hove received this judgement following the previous SIF inspection in May 2015.
- 3.4 The ILACS inspection involved one-week off-site analysis of data, followed by two weeks on site activity by four Ofsted inspectors, who were joined by an Education HMI for one day and a Regulatory Inspector for two days. The team

were also joined by a Quality Assurance officer for several days across the inspection.

- 3.5 The inspection ran from 9<sup>th</sup> July to 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018. During the inspection Ofsted looked at over 200 cases, met with young people and a group of foster carers. They spoke with adopters and visited all the social work teams across the city. They spent much of their time with social workers talking about cases and reviewing case files.
- 3.6 The inspection report was published on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018 and confirmed the overall effectiveness as Good, an improvement on the 2015 Requires Improvement judgement.
- 3.7 Sub judgements were:
- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families – Good
  - The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection – Requires improvement
  - The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers – Good

Ofsted recognised the effective work that had taken place to improve service since the 2015 inspection. Leaders were judged to have improved services which had resulted in children in need of early help and children in need of protection receiving prompt and appropriate help in line with their needs.

- 3.8 Children in care and care leavers were judged to be in receipt of a good service, with improvements in the planning for these children resulting in timely child-centred work and a positive impact on their lives. Social workers and managers were seen to be aspirational for the children in their care and to demonstrate a strong focus on improving their experiences and outcomes.
- 3.9 Social workers' morale was noted to be high, that they enjoyed working in Brighton and Hove and had a good understanding of the children they work with. Senior managers worked purposefully across the partnership to tackle exploitation, including the growing problem of criminal exploitation leading to the development of a detailed understanding of risk in the area.
- 3.10 The response to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was identified as a strength. Social workers knowledge was highlighted as was their ability to carefully assess the needs of these children and to advocate to ensure that their health, education and well-being needs were well met.
- 3.11 There were 5 recommended areas of action identified by Ofsted:
- Case recording to be consistent in all areas
  - Response to Children in Need to be as robust as that for Children in Need of Protection and Children in Care
  - The progression of pre-proceedings work to be effectively monitored to reduce any delay
  - The response to children who go missing, in particular Return Home Interviews to be more robust

- All private fostering and care leaver cases to be allocated to named workers
- 3.12 An ILACS action plan was drafted and this was presented to Children, Young People & Skills Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018.
- 3.13 Since this time, further progress has been made in addressing the recommendation made by Ofsted with 3 of the 5 actions fully addressed:
- A pre-proceedings tracking forum, chaired by a Head of Service, has been established and meets on a quarterly basis to ensure effective oversight of relevant cases and that delay is minimised.
  - The contract for undertaking Return Home Interviews (RHI) was terminated in August 2018 and the service brought in house resulting in improved performance. A dedicated RHI worker is now part of the Adolescent Service and is co-located at the Front Door for Families. In addition to undertaking RHIs for cases not open to social work services, the RHI worker attends weekly missing meetings with the police and is linked into the Adolescent Vulnerability & Risk Meeting, thereby enabling intelligence to be shared across the partnership and patterns and trends to be identified.
  - Recruited staff are now in post and all private fostering and care leavers cases have an allocated worker.
- 3.14 Significant work has been undertaken to ensure that the social work response to Children in Need is robust and responsive. This has involved a review of procedures and processes, building in mandatory review mechanisms to ensure social work intervention is purposeful and impacts positively upon outcomes for children and their families. A Child in Need steering group, comprised of frontline practitioners and managers, has been working on devising new documentation and piloting these. The new system will be launched on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 with presentations to partners scheduled to ensure multi-agency sign up to the new arrangements. Additionally, a Lead Practitioner for Children in Need has been appointed to support social work staff with this new approach to Child in Need cases. Whilst this work has been in development, there has been an improvement in Child in Need work under the existing procedures, with Pod Managers and Heads of Service promoting this work within their teams, ensuring effective oversight and supervision. Quality assurance activity shows that 63% of (52 out of 81) CIN cases audited over Q3 & Q4 18/19 & Q1 19/20 were judged overall as Good; 100% of cases CIN cases audited during Q4 18/19 & Q1 19/20 had a standalone Plan and 90% had evidence of effective analysis of risk and strengths; supervision & management oversight; involvement of child/young person. There remains work to do to ensure every case has a chronology and genogram on record.
- 3.15 Consistent good quality case file recording is a key component of excellent social work practice. Records should be written in a way that enable a child and their family to have a clear narrative about why decisions were made and what their purpose is. The current Integrated Children's System (CareFirst) is a barrier to achieving this given the limitations of the system. A new system, Eclipse, has been procured and from September 2020 this will enable social workers to use technology to record in a more innovative way (e.g. audio files & photographs).

Work has also taken place to review current assessment documents to ensure these are child and family focused and support the social worker to record in a way that is proportionate and meaningful. The One-Story Recording Group, comprised of front line practitioners and led by the Principal Social Worker, oversees this work. A recording audit was completed in May 2019 and this highlighted the areas that continue to require improvement, namely the use of chronologies and genograms.

- 3.16 Appendix 1- Updated ILACS Action Plan- details progress made against the 2018 recommendations.
- 3.17 Whilst receiving an Ofsted overall judgement of Good is an achievement, there is still work to do. All children who require a social work service should consistently receive a high-quality service that builds on the strengths in families and improves outcomes. The service is committed to moving from Good to Great and areas for further development include:
- The 'One Story' model of relationship-based assessment and recording (including the use of chronologies) is further embedded supported by the new Eclipse integrated children's system.
  - A continuation of the successful recruitment and retention of social workers to provide stability and continuity for families.
  - Further development of the Fostering Development Programme to provide children in care with high quality well supported placements, which meet budgetary targets.
  - Building resilience in families where exploitation is a feature and the embedding the response to contextual safeguarding issues in practice, via innovative and creative approaches.
  - Providing community and wider family support to families at the earliest opportunity via the introduction of earlier Family Group Conferences.
  - Developing a reunification project so children & young people can safely return to the care of their family at the earliest opportunity.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The statutory inspections of children's social work services are conducted under S136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The voice of children, young people and their families is an integral part of social work delivery in the city. The inspection report is positive about the engagement of children and young people, in particular with children in care and care leavers.

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Ofsted have judged Brighton & Hove to overall be delivering Good children's social care services. Work has taken place over the past 12 months to improve

the quality of social work provided to all children, regardless of their legal status but there remains further work to do.

- 6.2 The main areas that require further improvement are case file recording and the response to Children in Need. Both areas have been a priority in terms of strategic development over the past 12 months and there are clear plans in place to deliver further improvement over the coming months. The procurement of a new integrated children's system, Eclipse, will further support these improvements.

## **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no financial implications as a direct result of the recommendations in this report. The procurement of the new integrated children's system has been fully funded and resourced without impacting on operational budgets within Families, Children and Learning.

*Finance Officer Consulted: David Ellis*

*Date: 24/09/2019*

### Legal Implications:

- 7.2 In seeking to meet and exceed the ILACS framework measuring the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, the Council will be enhancing the ability to meet a range of statutory duties to children and families, including those children for whom the council are corporate parents.

*Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson*

*Date: 30.9.19*

### Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Broader arrangements for children and young people with disabilities are covered in a separate local area SEND framework. The 2018 ILACS inspection found that "disabled children benefit from high quality, responsive support" and that the support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was a strength, with social workers giving "good consideration to children's cultural and religious needs".

### Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 None

### Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 None

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Updated ILACS Action Plan Sept 2019