

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (People)

to

Cabinet

on

17th September 2019

Report prepared by: Ruth Baker, Head of Children's Service
Transformation

Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services

People Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member: Councillor Anne Jones
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet of the outcome of the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the report is noted
- 2.2 That the action plan and revised Strategic Children's Services Improvement Plan is brought to Cabinet in January 2020 to enable Cabinet to provide scrutiny and challenge of, and support for, progress

3. Background

- 3.1 Ofsted undertook an ILACS full inspection of Children's Services between 15 and 26 July. An inspection team of 4 inspectors, with 2 additional inspectors for education, fostering and adoption being present for 3 days in total, were on site for 8 days across the 10 day inspection period.
- 3.2 The inspection focused all areas of statutory children's social work services and early help services delivered by the Council. It did not inspect the work of partners.
- 3.3 During the week before the inspection team arrived on site they accessed a large of amount of performance and child level data, documents describing the work we do and reports to corporate parenting group, children's services improvement board, success for all children group, annual reports and report to LSCB.
- 3.4 The inspection team spoke to a number of schools attended looked after children and to 8 foster carers and adoptive parents. In addition they met with

the Young Experts Group (children in care council) and a group of 20 young people aged 16 to 25 years who are in or have left care.

- 3.5 For the majority of the time spent on site inspectors sat with social workers in all teams, and with their team managers, looking at the records of children. The inspectors also spent time accessing children's records on our electronic case management system alone.
- 3.6 Each day the lead inspector met with the Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services and some Heads of Service to give feedback on what they had seen during their previous day's activity.
- 3.7 ILACS result in graded judgements, an overall judgement for effectiveness and sub-judgements for the impact of leaders on social work practice for children, the experiences and progress who need help and protection and the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers. The inspectors stated that services for children in Southend require improvement to be good across all areas.
- 3.8 The inspectors highlighted areas of significant improvement and many areas which they describe as excellent, effective and highly effective. This is contained in the opening statement within their report which says:

"Services for children in Southend-on-Sea require improvement to be good, as was the case at the last inspection in 2016. While senior leaders have made significant progress in some areas in improving the quality of practice, despite a challenging local context, there is more work to do. Leaders have concentrated heavily on strengthening the 'front door' multi-agency response to contacts and referrals, planning for children in need and services for vulnerable adolescents, following learning from a joint inspection. These services are now highly effective".

- 3.9 Other areas which were described as very strong include the work of the virtual school, planning for children in need, using the voice of children in assessments, the quality of evidence presented before the courts when we make applications to remove children from their parents care and the work of our adoption team.
- 3.10 The cross party political commitment, and the role of the lead member for children and learning, were identified as an area of strength within the inspection report.
- 3.11 The inspection report details main areas for improvement. This compares with 12 areas for improvement following the inspection in 2016. The areas for improvement are:
 - Managers' and leaders' oversight, and evaluation, of the quality of frontline practice, and translating this into timely planning for improvements for children within their timeframe.
 - The quality of planning for children in need of protection.
 - The oversight and challenge from independent chairs of children's child protection conferences and children's care reviews.
 - The timeliness and effectiveness of pre-proceedings under the public law outline (PLO) arrangements.

- 3.12 We are required to produce an action plan based on the four areas to improve within 60 days. The action plan will be included in a revised children's services improvement plan. It is of note that the areas identified are areas that we had been working to improve prior to the inspection within the improvement plan, at Children's Services Performance Board and in individual service plans.
- 3.13 The progress of our improvement plan will continue to be challenged, monitored and scrutinised by the Children's Services Improvement Board, Improvement Board Scrutiny Panel and People Scrutiny Committee.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 No other options are available

5. Reasons for Recommendations

None

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

Improved outcomes for the most vulnerable children in Southend contributes to all Southend 2050 ambitions and outcomes as these are children who will be the leaders, workers, business owners, citizens and users of services in 2050. The outcomes of Safe and Well, Active and Involved and Opportunity and Prosperity are those which have the strongest link to the work we are undertaking to improve outcomes for children.

- 6.2 Financial Implications

None identified at present

- 6.3 Legal Implications

None identified at present

- 6.4 People Implications

None identified at present

- 6.5 Property Implications

None identified at present

- 6.6 Consultation

Not required

- 6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

No implications relating to equalities and diversity were identified during the inspection

6.8 Risk Assessment

Not required at this time

6.9 Value for Money

Not identified at present

6.10 Community Safety Implications

No specific Community Safety Implications were identified as part of the inspection. The work with vulnerable adolescents, which relates to criminal and child sexual exploitation, was identified as an area of strong practice

6.11 Environmental Impact

None identified.

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Final report, ILACS inspection of Southend on Sea Borough Council