

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

11

Report of Corporate Director for
People

to
Cabinet

on

20th September 2016

Report prepared by: Simon Leftley, Corporate Director,
Department for People

Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the LSCB and Southend Children's Services Improvement Plan

Executive Councillor: Councillor Courtenay
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

To inform the Cabinet of the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).

To advise members of the actions taken to date in response to the outcome of the Inspection and Review and to note the Southend Children's Services Improvement Plan.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked

2.1 To note the findings of the Inspection and Review.

2.2 To note the content of the draft Improvement Plan and delegate finalisation of the Improvement plan to the Director of People in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Children's Services.

3. Background

3.1 Ofsted inspected Children's Services over a 4 week period from 26th April to 19th May 2016. A team of 10 inspectors undertook the inspection and were on site for 9 days across the 4 week period. The Inspection was based on the Ofsted single inspection framework which covers all service areas from Early Help, First Contact (referrals), Children in Need, Children subject to Child Protection Plans, Looked after Children and Care Leavers, Fostering and Adoption services.

- 3.2 The inspection team gave initial feedback on their Inspection findings on 19th May. Their findings were then moderated and a draft report was shared with the Corporate Director for People on Friday 17th June. A number of factual inaccuracies were identified, some of which were accepted by Ofsted. The final report was published on 7th July and a copy is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.3 To date 106 local authorities have been inspected under this new inspection framework and 24% have been judged as inadequate, 49% requires improvement, 25% good and 2% outstanding (as at 12th September).

The report sets out the key judgements on Southend Children's Services as: "Overall, Children's services in Southend-on-Sea require improvement to be good". Individual judgements were:

- Children who need help and protection - Requires improvement (nationally 56% rated as requires improvement)
 - Children looked after & achieving permanence - Requires improvement (nationally 56% rated as requires improvement)
 - Adoption performance – Good (nationally 47% rated as good)
 - Experiences and progress of care leavers – Good (nationally 33% rated as good)
 - Leadership, management and governance - Requires improvement (nationally 48% rated as requires improvement)
- 3.4 The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) was also reviewed during the inspection and deemed to require improvement. (See pages 34 - 39 of the Report at **Appendix 1**.)
- 3.5 Within 70 working days of the publication date of the final Report the Council is required to submit a post-inspection Improvement Plan to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (**The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007**). The last submission date will be **14 October 2016**. This is contained in Appendix 2.
- 3.6 The Draft Improvement Plan (**Appendix 2**) has been prepared to address the issues identified by the Inspection and Review and to meet the Council's aspiration of being a good/outstanding authority. Support and challenge for this process is being provided by the Eastern Region Sector Lead Improvement advisor, John Harris, and consultation has been undertaken with key partners in the LSCB.

The Improvement Plan will be overseen by an Improvement Board consisting of senior Members, officers, an experienced senior manager independent of the Council, the chair of the LSCB and key partners to ensure robust delivery.

In addition the plan recommends the creation of a Scrutiny panel reporting to the Peoples scrutiny committee to provide challenge and oversee the progress of the plan.

The focus of the plan is to ensure that every child and family receives good or outstanding support from Southend Children's services. To deliver this the Improvement Plan consists of an overarching plan detailing key actions and the priorities for completion of the actions. It is supported by a detailed plan containing the actions which will need to be completed to achieve the outcomes of the plan. We expect further changes to be made prior to submission to Ofsted and, along with feedback received from the Local Government Association (LGA), Ofsted, and staff; we welcome members' comments to help produce a finalised Improvement Plan.

3.7 The following actions were taken while the inspection was underway or shortly afterwards. These actions have been taken to address areas of greatest priority in order to improve the experience of children, young people and families:

- The findings of the inspection were shared with practitioners and managers at Director led briefings on the day of the publication of the report. This enabled teams to begin to discuss what immediate steps they would take to improve the experience of children, young people and families;
- Consultation events with managers and practitioners across children's services took place during August. The consultation has informed the improvement plan and means that we all know what we need to focus on to make improvements for children, young people and families.
- Social Workers and managers have been clearly advised of expectations relating to how long it should take to conduct a section 47 enquiry. This means children do not have to wait for a multi-agency child protection plan to be put in place to meet their need for protection once it has been decided this is what is needed;
- We commissioned external audits of contacts which are deemed No Further Action (NFA. The learning from the audits is supporting improvements in the consistency of decision making for children, young people and families who are in need of help and protection;
- Additional temporary management capacity has been put in place to support consistency of decision making at the point the public and partners make contact with children's social care. This means children and families receive a consistent, timely, response from children's services when they are in need of help and protection.
- In addition to the immediate focus on constituency of decision making and timescales for Section 47 enquiries we have focused on the statutory home visits being undertaken on time. This will mean children, young people and families will find it easier to build and maintain trusting relationships with their social workers and the plans in place to meet their need for help or protection will progress.
- The step-down process from children's social care to Early Help and Family Support has been clarified. The access point into children's social care is now co-located with that of early help services. This means there is

no wrong 'front door' for anyone who thinks a child, young person or family needs additional help, support or protection to access. It supports consistent decision making and intervention from the right team at the right time.

- We have employed a Practice Lead who will help social workers and managers to improve their practice across all the areas identified in the inspection. This will improve the experience for children, young people and families;
- We have increased the capacity within the participation and engagement service which will mean we can support children and young people to design how services are delivered.
- We have decided that the work of children's services will be underpinned by a shared set of principles and ways of working. This Southend Way for Children and Families will mean that families will work with confident practitioners who will support them to identify and achieve their goals.

4. Other Options

The development and delivering of an improvement plan is a statutory requirement

5. Reasons for Recommendations

To deliver improvements in Children's Services and support scrutiny in this area of work

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

This work will contribute to the Corporate Priorities and Aims of:

- Safe Look after and safeguard our children and vulnerable adults
- Healthy Improve the life chances of our residents, especially our vulnerable children and adults, by working to reduce inequalities and social deprivation across our communities.
- Excellent Work with and listen to our communities and partners to achieve better outcomes for all

6.2 Financial Implications

At this time it is too early to quantify the financial costs and funding of the improvement plan.

Once identified these would need to be funded through a combination of existing budgets, one-off investments and permanent investments to sustain the improvements made in the Service.

Any one-off and on-going investment required from 2017/18 onwards will need to be considered as part of the forthcoming budget process.

6.3 Legal Implications

None

6.4 People Implications

At this time it is too early to state whether there be implications for people

6.5 Property Implications

None

6.6 Consultation

The draft has been developed through widespread consultation with front line staff key partners and external experts. In addition to this Ofsted have received an early draft and had the opportunity to provide feedback on the plan. We have also held two meetings with specialist Local Government Association (LGA) representative tasked with providing support to Local Authorities post inspection.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

The proposed improvement plan will help to promote equalities by focussing on improving outcomes for all children and young people. There is also an emphasis on improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people with early intervention.

6.8 Risk Assessment

The Plan is regularly monitored with a clear governance structure and robust accountability and any risk of not completing or delivering actions is reviewed with corrective actions taken where needed. In addition to this the plan includes a high level risk register which will be monitored on an on-going basis.

6.9 Value for Money

None

6.10 Community Safety Implications

The proposed plan includes a detailed outcomes, actions and milestones which will support keeping vulnerable children and young people safe. There is also a clear focus on prevention.

6.11 Environmental Impact

None

7. Background Papers

None

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 Southend Final report - Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the LSCB

Appendix 2 Southend Children's Services Draft Improvement Plan

Appendix 3 Southend Children's Services detailed Improvement Plan