

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PEOPLE) TO CABINET ON 6 FEBRUARY 2019

OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN BARNSELY (2018)

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspection of the Local Authority's Children's Services.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the findings and recommendations of the Ofsted inspection report and the commitment to drive continuous improvement in the effectiveness of children's services in the Borough.**

3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 Our Assessment Trajectory

- 3.2 In 2012, Ofsted's inspection of services for Safeguarding Children and Looked After Children was judged to be 'inadequate' for the overall effectiveness of safeguarding services. In 2014, Ofsted's inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers in the Borough, together with the review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board received an overall judgment of 'Requires Improvement' for 'Overall Effectiveness' with 25 recommendations for improvement.

- 3.3 Ofsted inspected Barnsley MBC Children's Services on the 8th to the 19th October 2018. The inspection found Barnsley Children's Social Care Services to be 'Good' across all the following, four judgement areas:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
- The experience and progress of children who need help and protection
- The experience and progress of children in care and care leavers
- Overall effectiveness

- 3.4 Ofsted reported that services for children in Barnsley are good and there has been steady improvement at successive inspections since 2012. Children are at the heart of strategic thinking, decision-making, and operational practice, which leads to good-quality services from a skilled and motivated workforce. The resolute focus on improving outcomes for children is shared across the partners of the Borough's Children and Young People's Trust and is underpinned by political commitment and

financial investment and a self-evaluation that shows that leaders know their services well. Other key highlights include:

- Children and families benefit from a good early help offer
- The integrated front door and multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) in Barnsley work well to protect children.
- Robust arrangements are in place to safeguard children, including those at risk from the impact of domestic abuse
- Thresholds for early help are clearly understood, and this has resulted in lower level work being diverted away from social work services to universal or targeted early help for assessment and intervention.
- The strong multi-agency partnerships in Barnsley ensure good participation at child protection conferences, with children offered the opportunity to have advocates to support them through the process.
- A good quality services from a skilled and motivated workforce.
- Children are at the heart of strategic thinking, decision making, and operational practice.
- Social work practice in Barnsley is flourishing. Social workers are confident practitioners who are professionally curious and tenacious in their work with families.
- The voice of the child is embedded throughout the service
- Leaders and managers, who offer effective and principled leadership, have created a culture in which social workers are valued, feel valued and are proud to work in Barnsley.
- Children in Barnsley benefit from a committed and 'pushy' corporate parent with a determination to raise the aspiration of all children, families, and the communities in which they live.
- The virtual school head teacher provides strong leadership and direction for her team.
- Children in care and care leavers receive a good service and social workers know their children well.
- Children with a wide range of needs benefit from achieving permanence through adoption, including older children, brothers and sisters together, and children with complex needs
- Foster carer recruitment training and approval are effective and children are helped to develop secure attachments in stable placements
- Children in care and care leavers receive assistance and support from a range of services to strengthen their journey into independence.
- Effective and principled leadership by the executive director, chief executive, and leader of the council models and sets out high aspirations for children in Barnsley.
- Our active and vocal Children In Care Council (Care4Us) has worked hard to influence service development
- Staff morale is high, and staff are proud to work in Barnsley. They are positive about the support, guidance and training they receive and the visibility of senior managers.

A copy of Ofsted's final inspection report is attached as Appendix 1.

3.5 The inspection made four recommendations for improvement, as follows

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- Risk assessment and the understanding of the wider risks to which young people are exposed in the community, including the timeliness and quality of return home interviews when children are reported missing from home and care.
- Regular review of the use of private fostering arrangements to ensure that they remain appropriate in meeting children's needs.
- Numbers of care leavers aged 19-21 participating in education, employment and training.
- The rigour of audit and dip sampling activity and how data informs an understanding of the quality of social work practice and timeliness of performance for initial child protection case conferences.

3.6 Continuous Improvement

3.7 Under the existing inspection framework, local authorities previously judged to be good or better will receive a 1 week 'short' inspection every 3 years, rather than a 2 week standard inspection for local authorities judged as 'requires improvement to be good'. This will now apply to Barnsley. In between inspections, the local authority will usually receive up to two focused visits or a possible Joint Targeted Area Inspection of Child Protection Services would replace a focused visit. There is also a requirement for an annual engagement meeting between the Executive Director (People) and Ofsted to share our updated Self Evaluation.

3.8 The Ofsted recommendations for improvement will be managed and progressed within the Trust's Continuous Service Improvement Plan (CSIP), which enables Children's Services to focus on areas for improvement and aspirations for delivering services that are as a minimum good and better. A multi-agency Officer Group, chaired by the Service Director for Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Services drives the CSIP, reporting on progress to each meeting of the Barnsley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) and the Trust's Executive Group (TEG). The annual joint BSCB and TEG event, held on the 30th November 2018, confirmed the ongoing commitment across the Children's Trust, to maintain all performance and improvement activities and governance arrangements.

4.0 PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION

4.1 Local authority children's services continue to be subject to rigorous external inspection and the outcome of Barnsley's inspection provides assurance to children, young people and their families, that services for helping and protecting children in need of help or at risk of harm are effective in meeting their needs, including through early help and intervention.

5.0 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

5.1 The purpose of this report is purely to inform Cabinet of the outcomes of Ofsted's latest inspection report and the assurance this provides to communities concerning the effectiveness of services, together with the steps to be taken in ensuring the Council and its partners continue to drive further improvement to services.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS

6.1 Please see Paragraph 4.1.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no financial implications emerging through considering Ofsted's inspection report.

8.0 EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Whilst there are no employee implications directly arising through the inspection report, Ofsted comments extensively on the morale and stability of the Children's Social Care workforce with the investments made by the Council.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no legal considerations emerging through publication of Ofsted's inspection report.

10.0 CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no implications for customers' access to the range of Council services or for digital transactions through consideration of this report.

11.0 COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The findings and recommendations of the inspection report have been shared with partners across the Children and Young People's Trust and Local Safeguarding Children Board, together with internal social work forums.

11.2 Significant interest has been generated in the local government media as a result of the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection which has the potential to enable the Council to spread sector-based good practice.

12.0 CONSULTATIONS

12.1 No formal consultations have been held in relation to the report. However, it should be re-iterated that the Council and its partners within both the Children and Young People's Trust and Local Safeguarding Children Board remain committed to ensuring the wellbeing of children and young people continues to be a priority through which the recommended improvements in the Ofsted report will be pursued and implemented.

13.0 THE CORPORATE PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

13.1 Ensuring children and young people are safeguarded from harm and are empowered to achieve their potential remains a corporate priority for the Council. In the last Quarterly Performance Report, the following areas of strong performance, improvement and stability were evident:

Number Of Care Leavers Aged 19-21 In Education, Employment And Training

An increase, in the level of participation, from 57.9% in Quarter 1 to 62.5% in Quarter 2. This is, now, better than the National and Regional Averages.

Referral Rate Into Children's Social Care (Per 10,000 Of The Population Aged 18)

Improved from 151.9 in Quarter 1 to 119.4 in Quarter 2 and on track to better the Year-end target for 2019/20.

Percentage Of Children Becoming The Subject Of A Child Protection Plan For A Second Or Subsequent Time

Also on track to better the Year-end target of below 10%.

Percentage Of Assessments For Children's Social Care Completed Within 45 Days

The Authority continues to perform very strongly against the National Indicator.

14.0 PROMOTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

- 14.1 Ofsted reported that the practice relating to help and protection in the Disabled Children's Team is good. Social workers are aspirational for these vulnerable children, and the child's voice shines through in the work. Children's situations improve and the risk of harm reduces as a result of the good assessments that inform strong multi-agency planning, leading to effective support and interventions for children. There is timely and proactive transition planning with adult services.
- 14.2 Ofsted reported that Leaders understand well the communities they serve. The infrastructure of early help redesigned through a family centre delivery model, has meant a more equitable distribution of targeted resource in local communities.

15.0 TACKLING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY

- 15.1 There are no implications for the reduction of poverty in the Borough, through consideration of the inspection report. However Ofsted reported that neglect and its cumulative impact on children is well understood and has been supported using the graded care profile. This enables earlier identification of neglect and helps to target interventions in order to improve children's circumstances.

16.0 TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

- 16.1 Ofsted reported that children in care and care leavers receive good support and have their need met. However, there are a small number of children whose emotional health needs are not being adequately met by the provision of a child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS). The proposals will continue to be addressed within the Children's Services Continuous Improvement Plan.

17.0 REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER

- 17.1 There are no implications for the reduction of crime and disorder in the Borough, through consideration of the Ofsted report. However, for some older young people, particularly where they have been involved in criminal activity, Ofsted found that assessments and subsequent intervention is not informed by multi-agency information about the range of risks to which they are exposed. This will form part of the action planning arising through the Barnsley Safeguarding Children's Board's Child Criminal Exploitation Strategy.
- 17.2 An All-Member Information Briefing on a whole Council approach to tackling child criminal exploitation is to be scheduled during 2019.

18.0 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 18.1 Please see Paragraphs 17.1 – 17.2.

19.0 HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESILIENCE ISSUES

- 19.1 There are no implications for the health and safety of the public or the resilience of the Borough, through consideration of the Ofsted report.

20.0 COMPATIBILITY WITH THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

- 20.1 The findings and recommendations of Ofsted's inspection report are compatible with the Articles and Protocols of the Convention, particularly concerning the rights of the child to be safeguarded from harm.

21.0 CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

- 21.1 There are no implications for the local environment or the conservation of biodiversity arising through consideration of this report.

22.0 GLOSSARY

- 22.1 None, applicable.

23.0 LIST OF APPENDICES

- 23.1 Appendix 1: Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (Barnsley) .

24.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 24.1 If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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