

Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in Barnsley 2018

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This purpose of this report is to inform the Overview & Scrutiny Committee of the recent Ofsted inspection of the local authority's Children's Social Care Services. The full report can be found at Item 4b.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In 2012, Ofsted's inspection of services for safeguarding children and Looked After Children (LAC) was judged to be 'inadequate' for the 'overall effectiveness' of safeguarding services.
- 2.2 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 judgement of 'requires improvement' for 'overall effectiveness' with 25 recommendations for improvement.

3.0 Current Position

- 3.1 Ofsted inspected Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's (BMBC's) Children's Services on the 8-19 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

- 3.2 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, 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

- 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

4.0 Future Plans & Challenges

4.1 The inspection made four recommendations for improvement, as follows:-

- 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

4.2 Under the existing inspection framework, local authorities previously judged to be good or better will receive a one week 'short' inspection every three years, rather than a two 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 (an inspection of how well local agencies work together in an area to protect children) 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.

4.3 The Ofsted recommendations for improvement will be managed and progressed within the Children & Young People's 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 30 November 2018, confirmed the ongoing commitment across the Children's Trust, to maintain all performance and improvement activities and governance arrangements.

5.0 Implications for Local People

5.1 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.

6.0 Invited Witnesses

6.1 The following witnesses have been invited to today's meeting to answer questions from the committee:

- Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director – People Directorate
- Mel John-Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care & Safeguarding
- Margaret Libreri, Service Director, Education, Early Start and Prevention - People Directorate
- Councillor Caroline Saunders, Cabinet Support Member for People (Safeguarding)
- Councillor Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Member for People (Achieving Potential)

7.0 Possible Areas for Investigation

7.1 Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:

- What are the next steps for children's social care in Barnsley?
- Are there any areas of good performance within the service that you feel were not highlighted by the Ofsted report?
- What progress has already been made around the four recommendations for improvement from Ofsted?
- How do you plan to continue the good work, particularly within financial constraints?
- What support is needed from partners to achieve your goals and is it forthcoming?
- How do you measure the quality of return home interviews and how will you know when it has improved?
- Given the service's journey, which area of improvement are you most proud of?
- What support do young people leaving care receive to access housing, tenancies, employment, benefits, further and higher education and training?
- What are the biggest future challenges that the service faces?
- What can members do to support children's social care in Barnsley?

8.0 Background Papers and Useful Links

- Item 5b (attached) – Ofsted Inspection Report on Barnsley Children’s Social Care Services, October 2018
- Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) Self-Assessment Report (available upon request)

9.0 Glossary

BSCB	Barnsley Safeguarding Children’s Board
CSIP	Continuous Service Improvement Plan
ILACS	Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services
LAC	Looked After Children
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills
TEG	(Children’s) Trust Executive Board

10.0 Officer Contact

Anna Marshall, Scrutiny Officer, 15th February 2019