

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

28 OCTOBER 2014

<b>Title:</b> OFSTED Inspection of services for children in need looked after children, care leavers and Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB) Review Outcomes - 2014/15.	
<b>Report of the Director of Children's Services</b>	
<b>Open Report</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Wards Affected: None</b>	<b>Key Decision: No</b>
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<b>Sponsor:</b> Helen Jenner, Director of Children's Services	
<p><b>Summary:</b> This report provides a summary of the key finding and outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need, looked after children, care leavers and the review of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board. The inspection took place between 29<sup>th</sup> April to 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014 and the report was published on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014.</p> <p>The inspection resulted in a 'requires improvement' grading for all judgements. The review of Barking and Dagenham's safeguarding children board (B&amp;DSCB) was also judged as requires improvement for the effectiveness and impact of the partnership in driving safeguarding improvement across the partner agencies.</p> <p>In response to the OFSTED inspection, the Local Authority is required to submit an Improvement Plan within 70 days of the report publication date, which was due on 10 October 2014 and submitted accordingly. This improvement plan is attached for your information.</p>	
<b>Recommendation(s)</b> The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:	
(i) Note the content and outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need, looked after children, care leavers and review of the B&DSCB and provide comments as appropriate.	
(ii) Note the Local Authority Children's Services Improvement Plan and provide comments as appropriate.	

## 1. Background and Introduction

- 1.1 The Ofsted Single Inspection Framework was introduced in November 2013 on a universal three year cycle, replacing the previous Safeguarding and Looked after Children inspection framework. The single inspection framework is conducted under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and focuses on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, the experiences and progress of children looked after, including adoption, fostering, the use of residential care, and children who return home. The framework also focuses on the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after and the experiences and progress of care leavers. In parallel to the single inspection, a review of the LSCB is undertaken by Ofsted. Although this review is not an inspection of the LSCB, it is provided with the equivalent grading from the inspection process.
- 1.2 The single inspection is unannounced and took place over a four week period during 29<sup>th</sup> April and 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014. The inspection involved 7 inspectors on site during the field work stage, which lasts for two weeks. The final inspection report for Barking and Dagenham, including the outcome of the LSCB Review, was published on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2014.
- 1.3 The outcomes of the inspection are as follows (taken directly from the OFSTED Report page 1);

The overall judgement is <b>requires improvement</b>	
There are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. However, the authority is not yet delivering good protection and help and care for children, young people and families.	
<b>1. Children who need help and protection</b>	<b>requires improvement</b>
<b>2. Children looked after and achieving permanence</b>	<b>requires improvement</b>
2.1 Adoption performance	<b>requires improvement</b>
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	<b>requires improvement</b>
<b>3. Leadership, management and governance</b>	<b>requires improvement</b>
The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is <b>requires improvement</b> The LSCB is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of good.	

## 2. Summary of the Ofsted Inspection findings

- 2.1 The inspection focused on children who need help and protection, the experiences and progress of children looked after, including adoption, fostering, the use of residential care, and children who return home, the experiences and progress of

care leavers and leadership and management of services. Although the overall judgement was requires improvement, a number of strengths were identified during the inspection as follows:

- Early help services support large numbers of children and their families. Purposeful work with vulnerable families leads to improvements for most children, such as increasing school attendance and the early provision of support for very young children with additional needs.
- Social workers appropriately challenge parents of children who are the subject of a child protection plan if they do not engage with services. When families are not making the progress needed, decisive action is taken to protect the child, including escalation into public law and transition to a safe and settled future.
- Help and protection services are responsive to families' diverse needs. Inspectors saw examples of proactive, skilled social work sensitive to children's needs, giving parents a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Social workers are creative in the ways in which they engage and communicate with children. These include observations and other work with pre- or non-verbal children.
- The range of services targeted at children who are on the edge of care are effective and make a positive difference in many individual cases. Family group conferencing supports children and families well.
- When needed, legal and social care services work constructively and effectively together at all stages. The average duration of care proceedings within the family court is improving, despite an increase in the number of proceedings.
- Assessment and support for carers is of a high quality, meaning that children can be placed safely with skilled and well supported carers. Placements are well supported by the local authority, resulting in positive attachments and high levels of stability. The use of special guardianship has increased and there is a low rate of placement disruption.
- Case conferences and other formal meetings are effective in ensuring the engagement and participation of families. Parents' attendance at conferences is good and their feedback is routinely collected. Almost all parents told inspectors that they had been helped to understand the concerns for their child.
- Agencies share information quickly and effectively to make sure those children at risk of child sexual exploitation and those who go missing from home, care or education get a well-co-ordinated response.
- The Adoption Panel is well managed and chaired, supported by a stable and experienced adoption team. Post-adoption support is also a strength and is valued by those who have used the service.

- Care Leavers feel well supported and prepared for independence by their allocated workers. Young people report that training programmes are valued and the service overall is very accessible and welcoming.
- Leaders have a clear picture of the current pressures faced by front-line practitioners. Strategic bodies, such as the Children's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board, have a shared understanding of these pressures. Extra staffing has been recently agreed to help children's social care meet its responsibilities.
- The Local Safeguarding Children's Board learning and improvement framework has developed good communication from front line practitioners across the key agencies. This is an effective approach to understanding what is happening on the ground.

The following areas for improvement were identified:

- Ensure that sufficient checks and enquiries are undertaken before any unplanned removal of children from their families. This concerns the exercise of police powers of protection. This was an area for improvement in the last inspection.
- Improve the quality of referrals to children's social care by partner agencies to ensure that timely and appropriate decisions are based on all relevant information.
- Ensure that child protection strategy discussions are focused on all children in families, are clearly recorded, have engagement from all relevant agencies and identify clear and achievable outcomes.
- Ensure that all key information is shared and considered at initial and subsequent child protection conferences through regular attendance by all key agencies.
- Ensure that assessments include children's wishes and feelings; provide a thorough consideration of parenting difficulties, their impact on the child, and a full analysis of risk.
- Ensure that all children are seen in a timely manner, assessments are timely and thorough, and written plans consider all areas of need and identify the outcomes sought.
- Introduce a permanency policy that emphasises parallel planning from the earliest point when children become looked after, as well as tracking of the timescales for individual children with a plan for adoption.
- Further develop consultation arrangements for children in care, including through increased representation of looked after children in the children in care group.

- Improve the quality of planning towards adulthood for those leaving care, with a greater focus on those not in education, employment or training, or with other vulnerabilities.
- Continue to improve the opportunities for young adults leaving care to continue living with their carers as part of 'staying put' arrangements.
- Develop and implement medium and long-term strategic service plans that fully take account of known and estimated increases in amount and type of demand for the whole range of services for vulnerable children.
- Strengthen management oversight, including oversight of plans by conference chairs and independent reviewing officers, as well as formal social worker supervision, to reduce drift or delay in assessments.
- Ensure that corporate parenting responsibilities are fully understood by elected members to achieve greater awareness and accountability across the local authority.

2.2 The 13 areas for improvement identified by Ofsted have been incorporated into a detailed action plan, which is set out in Appendix 1. To drive forward improvement the Local Authority is required to submit an improvement plan to Ofsted within 70 working days of the inspection report publication (13th October 2014).

2.3 The Ofsted action plan will be monitored and evaluated by the Children's Services Inspection Board, which has representation from the LA and partner agencies i.e. Health and Police. Quarterly progress reports will be delivered to the B&DSCB with six monthly reports to Cabinet, Health and Wellbeing Board, Children's Trust and Corporate Parenting Group.

### 3. Local Safeguarding Children's Board Review

3.1 The review of the effectiveness of the Barking & **Dagenham Local Safeguarding Children's Board** (LSCB) was judged as requires improvement in May 2014. Although the overall judgement was requires improvement, a number of key strengths were identified. Key strengths were (taken directly from the Ofsted published report):

- The LSCB operates in line with its statutory responsibilities. The Chair is suitably independent and uses this independence well to hold partners to account, for example through direct communication with the metropolitan police and crime commissioner, and with NHS England over a range of issues which have a potentially adverse impact on local safeguarding work.
- The Board's recent use of a structured development session between member agencies is a positive approach to tackling shared concerns. This is aimed at enabling agencies to work together to identify issues under a range of previously agreed themes (for example, 'pressures in the system') encouraging a more robust approach to problem-solving and forward planning.

These discussions lead to an agreed action plan, and while it is too early to see impact from this, or how it will link with other existing priorities of the Board and other strategic planning arrangements, this is a positive approach that is being taken.

- The LSCB Chair promotes links between partnerships through membership of the Children's Trust, attending regularly, and feeding back on the work of the Board. However, the LSCB Chair is not a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board. This weakens the LSCB's link with and influence on the work of this body.
- The LSCB risk register provides a helpful and coordinated approach through collating and monitoring progress of the priority risk issues for each partner agency as well as shared ones. Detailed consideration of the issues facilitates a sustained focus on those issues most important to partners as well as in the identification of areas where partners should take action to support one another to improve outcomes. Key issues at the time of the inspection include the impact of health service changes, workforce difficulties and limits to commissioning capacity across several agencies. While the difficulties around the extent of exercise of police powers of protection and dwindling attendance at conferences have been escalated there remains no satisfactory outcome to these issues.

The LSCB offers a wide range of relevant training for practitioners across the partnership. It also monitors training applications and attendance, identifying any trends in non-attendance. Immediate feedback from attendees is collated and reported to the board. This provides a picture of attendees' views on the value of training, facilitating the further development and tailoring of courses. There is, however, no evaluation of the longer-term impact of training on the practice of front line professionals and managers or on outcomes for children.

- The LSCB has established two multi-agency practitioners forums, that are well planned and offer front line practitioners a constructive opportunity for discussion and debate of current professional challenges. The results of these are feedback to the Board giving it a direct view of current practice and practitioners' views on improvement. However, the attendance of social workers at the forums has declined, reducing the effectiveness of this positive initiative.

The following areas for improvement were identified:

- Ensure the LSCB Chair strengthens the coordination, focus and impact of the boards work in the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Undertake an evaluation of the full impact of training on the performance of practitioners to ensure it targets improvements in outcomes for children.
- Sustain and extend the positive and constructive role of the practitioners forums in promoting multi-agency working through improving the attendance of social workers.

- Strengthen oversight of private fostering by the board, supporting efforts to ensure all such children are identified.
- Ensure the annual report and business plan are focused on understanding and addressing local needs and on evaluating progress made in achieving improved outcomes for children.

3.2 The LSCB recognises the need to have a more developed approach to how it measures the impact of learning and development across its multiagency training programme and will be working with the London Safeguarding Board to further develop this. As a partnership, the LSCB needs to strengthen how it demonstrates the impact of work with families and have more confidence in reporting this through the LSCB Annual Report. Following the inspection, the LSCB has developed an action plan to address the areas for improvement and will also be working alongside Children's Social Care to support and oversee the action plan from the single agency inspection. The BDSCB action plan is in Appendix 2 of this report. The B&DSCB action plan will be monitored and evaluated by the Board quarterly.

#### **4. Summary**

4.1 Overall, the single inspection reported a number of strengths in the borough, but it is clear that further improvements need to be made to secure a grading of good inspection. The Ofsted action plan will help us deliver those improvements and secure a good outcome at the next inspection.

#### **5 Mandatory Implications**

##### **5.1 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**

The JSNA has sections dedicated to the of services for children in need, looked after children, care leavers, child deaths and safeguarding. The JSNA is used to inform Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) annual report. It is important that the LSCB has an influence on the priority setting of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

##### **5.2 Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

Services for children in need, looked after children and care leavers are an integral part of the safeguarding and early intervention elements in our Health and Wellbeing Strategy. At this point there is no need to change the focus of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy as a result of this Ofsted inspection report.

##### **5.3 Integration**

As stated above, an integrated improvement plan has been worked up to address the areas of weakness identified by the inspection. The result of the inspection will require all agencies to work together to improve services for vulnerable children.

##### **5.4 Financial Implications**

Children's Services budget for 2014/15 in total is £61.8m and Social Care and Complex needs is currently forecasting pressures of c£5.6m, however there is a full Management review being conducted by the Director of Children's Services to reduce this with immediate management actions within the service and review and redesign of services and procedures including a 'spend freeze' to mitigate this and reduce the overspend.

Financial implications as a result from the Ofsted action plan currently amount to c£35k for immediate effect of the outcomes from the inspection. £10k of this will be received in a grant directly from the Local Government Association (LGA).

Implications completed by: Patricia Harvey, Interim Group Manager, Children's Finance

## **5.5 Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications arising from this report, which is for noting.

Implications completed by: Lindsey Marks Principal Solicitor Children's Safeguarding

### **Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:**

Ofsted Inspection Report of Services for Children in Need, Looked After Children, Care Leavers and the Review of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board

### **List of Appendices:**

Ofsted Action Plan  
Local Safeguarding Children's Board Action Plan