

Please note the content of this report and the CSCI inspection report are embargoed until the Lead Inspector commences his presentation to Cabinet

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	23 June 2005
Subject:	Inspection of Children's Services
Responsible Officer:	Paul Clark, Director of Children's Services
Contact Officer:	Mark Gillett, Group Manager – Strategic Commissioning and Business Management
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Margaret Davine, Social Care and Health
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part 1

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

That the inspection report and the actions being taken be noted.

Reason for report

To report to Cabinet on the outcome of the Inspection of Children's Services

Benefits

The inspection report enables Members to form an overview of the effectiveness of those parts of Children's Services which were inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection

Cost of Proposals

None directly related to this report

Risks

The outcome of the inspection contributes to the Corporate Performance Assessment of the Council

Implications if recommendations rejected

Not applicable to this report

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

The inspection of Harrow Children's Services by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) took place between 7 and 18 March 2005. It was undertaken by three inspectors and a lay assessor using a nationally consistent methodology. The purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of council services in three areas.

- The provision of family support;
- Services to children looked after; and
- Child protection.

The inspection involved an analysis of:

- The council's self-evaluation;
- Supporting documents provided to CSCI;
- Relevant performance data;
- Questionnaire surveys; and
- Written responses gathered from a number of statutory and voluntary agencies.

The Inspectors undertook an examination of a number of case files and observed the council's systems for response to the public. Parents, children, young people, senior officers, staff, councillors and partner agencies were interviewed.

2.2 Summary of the Report

The inspection and the subsequent report are to be welcomed as they confirm our views of the progress made to improve service delivery. The report will add impetus to drive change at a faster pace and sharpen the focus of our work to secure and sustain further improvement. The report recognises that:

- Harrow is engaged in a major programme of change and improvement

- Good work has been done on the strategic agenda and particular progress in engaging and involving young people.
- There were clear signs of improvement and we need to continue our work to embed consistent good practice.
- We need to engage staff and parents and carers in plans and developments more actively.
- There was good work in interpreting, translation, leaving care, and educational support for Looked After Children.
- Some teams had made good progress in delivering consistent quality, others needed to ensure clarity over thresholds, decisions, case work recording, assessment and plans.
- We need to focus on improvement of our cost and efficiency management.
- We need to make progress in our work to recruit and retain a skilled consistent workforce.
- The implementation of our draft workforce strategy needs to be given high priority.
- There was good work in Leaving Care, Children with Disabilities and Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Children teams

However, the report makes 22 recommendations where improvement is required in aspects of the six areas under which the service was inspected. These are:

- National priorities and strategic objectives
- Effectiveness of service delivery and outcomes
- Quality of services for users and carers
- Fair access
- Cost and efficiency
- Management and resources

Overall the report shows a positive start, that we have examples of good practice, but that we must ensure the consistent detailed delivery of practice is managed and supported. We have plans to work with staff and partners to deliver the required improvements. The inspection will help in ensuring our focus on innovation and consistent quality.

The report judges Harrow as serving some people well with promising prospects for improvement, and awards one star in a rating system 0-3 stars.

2.3 Consultation

The methodology for the inspection involved CSCI sending out questionnaires to 100 parents and young people. A number of focus groups were also held. An analysis of the surveys is presented with the CSCI report.

2.4 Financial Implications

There are no additional financial implications contained in this report. The budget is in place to support the recommendations and any pressures identified as a result of future amendments to the business plans will be addressed as part of the budget process.

2.5 Legal Implications

None

2.6 Equalities Impact

Standard 4: Fair Access (in The Framework for Inspection) judges the extent to which the Council provides a fair, consistent and inclusive service.

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

Appendix 1: Recommendations and Accountability Map

Appendix 2: Report of the Inspection of Children's Services, London Borough of Harrow Council. *(The report will be available for circulation under embargo to Members of Cabinet only in advance of the Cabinet Meeting but after 10 June).*

A copy of the inspection report will be placed in the Members Library and will be publicly available on the Council's web-site after publication on 24 June.

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