
REPORT FOR: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of Meeting: 14 June 2017

Subject: Ofsted Report on the Inspection of services for children in need of protection, looked after children and care leavers

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Chris Spencer,
Corporate Director, People Services

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Christine Robson
Children, Schools and Young People

Exempt: No

Decision subject to Call-in: Yes

Wards affected: All

Enclosures: Appendix 1: Ofsted Report on Harrow published 31.03.17
https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/harrow/051_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20th

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

The attached Ofsted report follows the recent statutory Inspection of services for children in need of protection, looked after children and care leavers, with the action plan required within 70 working days.

Recommendations:

to note the inspection report and approve the action plan.

Reason: (For recommendations)

- **Ofsted is the independent regulator of children's services.**
- **Addressing the recommendations in the inspection report is not optional.**
- **The Local Authority is required to provide an action plan to Ofsted within 70 working days of the published inspection report.**

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

This statutory inspection of Children’s Services supports delivery of the Council’s vision: **Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow**, and the Ambition Plan theme: **Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families**.

The related action plan identifies how the report recommendations will be implemented across Children’s Services to further support children, young people and their families in Harrow achieve positive life outcomes. The People Services Directorate is ambitious to ensure that good outcomes are embedded across the whole directorate and that future activity is focussed on achieving an outstanding service.

Background

1. The previous full inspection of children’s services was in May 2012, under a different Ofsted framework, with both safeguarding arrangements and services to children looked after judged to be ‘Adequate overall’, with some elements of Good. It is widely recognised that the current framework is a tougher test than the previous inspection framework.
2. Statutory inspection of local authority functions is carried out by Ofsted under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
3. Re-inspection was expected within a 3 year cycle under a revised Ofsted Framework introduced in 2013, which was expanded subsequently into a 5 year programme. The current Ofsted inspection Framework uses a grading system of: Inadequate; Requires Improvement; Good; Outstanding.
4. Harrow’s judgement outcome as ‘Good’ has achieved one grade higher than previously, and demonstrates the continuing journey of improvement being achieved.
This outcome places Harrow in the top performance quartile of local authorities nationally, while maintaining Harrow’s reputation for value for money, while demonstrating value for money as evidenced by local authority comparator data which places Harrow as spending lower per child than the average of its statistical neighbours.
5. The Single Inspection Framework [SIF] inspection considers the following:
 - children who need help and protection, including early help
 - children looked after, including: adoption, fostering, the use of residential care, children who return home, and achieving permanent homes and families for children and young people
 - young people leaving care or preparing to leave care
 - management and leadership

6. During the four week inspection, up to 11 inspectors focused on a wide range of issues:
 - the experiences of children and young people
 - the thresholds for providing help, care and protection to children and young people
 - evaluating the quality and impact of the help, care and protection given to children and young people and families
 - evaluating the quality and impact of the support to young people looked after, and routes out of the care system through adoption, and statutory care leavers provision
 - evaluating the quality and impact of leadership and governance arrangements
 - meeting with children, young people, parents and their carers
 - shadowing social workers in their daily activities
 - observing a wide range of meetings, including child protection conferences and looked after children reviews
7. Inspectors looked closely at the experiences of children and young people who have needed or still need help and/or protection, as well as children and young people who are looked after and those leaving care as young adults. They tracked in the region of 200 individual cases and spoke with many social work staff, several children and young people, parents/carers, foster carers and adoptive parents and other professionals involved such as Health and Police. They considered how well the local authority knows itself and the difference being made to the life chances of vulnerable children and young people resident in Harrow.
8. The local authority is required to prepare and publish a written statement of the action it intends to take in response to the report. It should send a copy of this statement to Ofsted at ProtectionOfChildren@ofsted.gov.uk within 70 working days of receiving the final report. [The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007 www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/462/contents/made]

Current situation

9. Harrow's short notice full inspection of Children's Service started 16 January 2017 and completed onsite 09 February 2017. The inspection team involved 11 inspectors. Ofsted published their combined Harrow Local Authority and Local Safeguarding Children Board report 31 March 2017.
10. Harrow Local Authority was judged 'Good' overall, with services well matched to the needs of children and young people and their families in Harrow, which effectively reduced risk and improve their life outcomes. Inspectors identified strong and effective leadership having a positive impact on service design, development and delivery. Harrow was judged to know itself well, with a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development.

11. At the time of inspection, Early Support Service transformation was in progress but still at an initial phase, following an extended consultation period. Inspectors acknowledged this and recognised the strong foundations underlying the restructure and relocation to community hubs, while identifying Early Support as a priority for continuing progress.

Early Support implementation continues to be rolled out, and during the inspection an Early Support Project Board was convened to oversee progress towards full operation from September 2017.

12. Inspectors recognised the investment made by the Council in creating additional social work posts to meet increasing demand. As a result, the report judged social work caseloads as manageable, enabling social workers to visit children regularly. Inspectors also recognised the positive impact of Harrow's 'joined-up approach' to recruitment, retention and development and the importance of a sufficient, skilled and stable workforce to drive improvement, with appropriate management time and focus.
13. Commitment to performance management and quality assurance activity was identified across the organisation, which had enabled improvements to be achieved and sustained. The proposed action plan will further embed strong performance and address areas for development identified thorough the inspection process.

Failure to address these areas for development effectively risks future inspection adverse impact.

14. Environmental Implications:

There are no environmental impact considerations in this report.

15. Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

Statutory inspections carry considerable reputational and financial risk implications for the Council. As a consequence this has been a significant element of the directorate risk register and senior management priorities. The outcome of this inspection demonstrates this was a well considered and proportionate response. The future inspection regime under the new ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) will continue to form a significant feature of senior manager risk management attention and corporate support across the whole council.

16. Legal Implications

This and future Ofsted inspection of Children's Services lay the regulatory foundations for meeting the statutory requirements for Harrow Council. No other specific legal implications flow from this inspection & report to Cabinet.

17. Financial Implications

The risk of failing an Ofsted inspection is recognised to have considerable financial implications to the council. However, this inspection found all

statutory requirements were met in full and the judgement on the Local Authority delivery of children’s services was ‘Good’. There are no additional implications arising from this inspection, as detailed in the published report.

18. Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

This report sets out the actions we are taking to secure further improvements, which when achieved will have a positive impact on all residents in Harrow.

18. Council Priorities

This statutory inspection of Children’s Services and the related action plan support delivery of the Council’s vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

and meets the Ambition Plan theme:

Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Jo Frost.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 11 April 2017.....		
Name: Sarah Wilson.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 07 April 2017.....		

Ward Councillors notified:	NO, as it impacts on all Wards.
EqIA carried out:	NO No new or changed policy or service
EqIA cleared by:	Not applicable

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Paul Hewitt

Divisional Director, Children and Young People Services

Paul.hewitt@harrow.gov.uk, 020 8736 6978

Background Papers:

- Ofsted Framework and Evaluation Schedule: children in need of help and protection and care leavers and Local Safeguarding Children Boards [Feb 2017]

NOTE: Aug 2016 was the current edition at the inspection.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590899/Framework_and_evaluation_schedule_-_Inspection_of_local_authority_children_s_services.doc