

**REPORT FOR: Council Meeting**

---

**Date of Meeting:** 28 September 2017

**Subject:** Scrutiny of action plan following Ofsted report on the inspection of services for children in need of protection, looked after children and care leavers January 2017

**Responsible Officer:** Chris Spencer,  
Corporate Director People Services  
Chris.spencer@harrow.gov.uk  
0208 424 1356

**Exempt:** No

**Wards affected:** All

**Enclosures:** **Appendix 1: Ofsted Report on Harrow published 31.03.17**

**Appendix 2: Harrow Children's Post Inspection Action Plan April 2017**

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

Appendix 1 is the attached Ofsted report following the January 2017 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. The final OFSTED report was published 31/3/2017 and Appendix 2 is the action plan and subsequent progress that was submitted by the Council to OFSTED following receipt of the report and consideration of the 10 recommendations.

**Recommendations:**  
Council is requested to:

Note and comment on the inspection report and associated action plan, with progress reports on 10 recommendations and to note that progress on the implementation of the action plan will be kept under review by elected Members and officers through Service Planning, Improvement Board, Overview and Scrutiny, and Corporate Parenting Panel processes, well as the Local Safeguarding Children Board and Health and Well-Being Board.

**Reason: (For recommendations)**

- Ofsted is the independent statutory regulator of children's services.
- Addressing the recommendations in the inspection report is not optional, and will be tested in future inspection activity.
- The Local Authority is required to provide an action plan to Ofsted within 70 working days of the published inspection report.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introduction**

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 themes: **Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families**.

The related action plan identifies how the report recommendations have been 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. As the updated action plan is monitored through the Council Corporate performance process: it is covered in this report under performance

## 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 the Local Authority to be 'Adequate overall', with some elements of Good. It is widely recognised that the current Safeguarding Inspection Framework (SIF) is a tougher and more rigorous 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.

Re-inspection was expected within a 3 year cycle under a revised Ofsted Framework originally 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; and Outstanding.

The judgement on Harrow Council with an outcome as 'Good' 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 all local authorities across London and nationally. This outcome was achieved whilst maintaining Harrow's reputation for value for money, as evidenced by local authority comparator data, available through the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), the London Councils Social Care Finance Survey, and indicative 2017/18 benchmarking through Section 251 returns. This data places Harrow as spending lower per child than the average of its statistical neighbours. Children and Young People Services in Harrow really have achieved more with less than most other local authorities, both across London and from a national perspective.

3. 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
4. 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
5. 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.
  6. The local authority is required to prepare and publish a written statement of the action it intends to take in response to the report. A copy of this statement was sent to Ofsted at [ProtectionOfChildren@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto: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](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/462/contents/made)]

## **Current situation**

1. 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.
  2. 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.
  3. 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.
4. 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.

5. 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 through the inspection process.

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

### **Legal Implications**

Part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides the statutory framework of OFSTED inspections. Section 136 and 137 provide the power for OFSTED to inspect on behalf of the Secretary of State and requires the Chief Inspector to produce a report following such an inspection. Following receipt of the report, the local authority must prepare a written statement of (1) action which they propose to take in light of the report and (2) the period within which they propose to take that action.

### **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.

### **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 and in particular children and young people.

### **Performance Issues**

1. Following the published inspection report a action plan has been devised and implemented. Activity across all 10 recommendations has been achieved, and is subject of ongoing developmental actions and management oversight.
2. The first recommendation was aimed at ensuring that all children and their family needing an early help assessment and a package of support coordinated by a lead professional were able to receive one. This has been addressed by the Local Authority (LA) in partnership with the Harrow Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) up-dating and implementing a revised early support pathway following the re-organisation of early support services. The pathway was subject of a comprehensive consultation with partner agencies, and was launched in June 2017. The new approach has dispensed with the Common

Assessment Framework (CAF) as a means of assessing young people and their families. Instead a Family Led Needs Analysis (FLNA) or Youth Led Needs Analysis (YLNA) has been piloted and introduced. This process values families identifying the things that they would want to change in order to be the young person / parent they want to become. When fully embedded, this will mean that families will not be subject of unnecessary assessment processes.

The new early support model is a non-statutory service that actively works with young people and their family to reach their goals and aspirations through positive activities, group work and direct work where required. Bespoke programmes which are time limited have been developed from themes identified through contacts via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The comprehensive early support offer has been communicated to professionals and families through a range of channels, and take up of services is increasing. Performance management data is under development across 3 case management systems: E-start, Framework I (Mosaic), and the Integrated Youth Support System (IYSS). An Integrated suite of performance management data currently under development will be available from September 2017. Current reach levels across early support hubs (Cedars and Hillview) demonstrate increasing activity, with 2,198 families attending sessions in June 2017 compared to 2,053 in January 2017. It is estimated that year end reach levels will be 9,200 families, which exceeds the previously highest level in 2014 (9,066). This is demonstrating that the reach of early support services is back to the level prior to the 2015 re-organisation, and testament to the success of the new operating model.

3. The second recommendation was aimed at ensuring that decision making within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is consistently timely, so that all children who are subject of a referral receive assessment and support in a timely manner. This has been addressed through a review and revision of the performance management framework in Framework I (Mosaic). As a result, daily tracking systems have improved management oversight. The impact has been a sustained improvement in MASH RAG performance April – July 2017. This has also supported the timely delivery of assessment activity in the First Response Team (FRT) with 97% of referrals being completed within 45 days in April-July 2017.
4. The third recommendation was aimed at ensuring that assessments and plans are consistently up to date, reflective of children's views and clear about what is expected of families. This has been addressed through the managers of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) and Child Protection Chairs (CPC's) focussing through supervision SMART planning. Internal SMART plan training is currently being commissioned to be delivered in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, to include managers in the Children In Need and Children Looked After services. Plans are consistently up-dated following Child Protection Conferences, and Children Looked After Review's. Re-assessment practice is becoming embedded through Child In Need (CIN) Review meetings. Monitoring by IRO's and CPC's, and audit analysis demonstrate that young people

are encouraged to contribute to these processes and, satisfaction levels are high with regard to the quality of social work input, and that young people feel safe where they live.

5. The fourth recommendation was aimed at ensuring that child protection strategy discussions under S47 of the Children Act 1989 involve the full range of relevant agencies, so that the full range of relevant information informs assessment of risk. This recommendation has been addressed by the development in FRT of guidance and clear contact pathways for key agencies in Harrow. This has been adopted in CIN Service for the S47 investigations undertaken on open cases. As a result local data demonstrates that there has been an increase in key agencies participating during S47 investigations. From April – July 2017 there have been 309 S47 investigations. These investigations have been supported by 21 different agency categories, 3,532 occasions. On average 11.4 agencies contribute to a child protection investigation in Harrow.
6. The fifth recommendation was aimed at ensuring that Children Looked After (CLA) receive timely therapeutic support when they need it. This recommendation has been addressed through the commissioning and launch of the Harrow Horizons service in July 2017. Therapeutic services for CLA have also been further strengthened through a Tripartite Funding panel with Education and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), which also considers young people placed out of borough. Specialist nurses for CLA are closely aligned with Children Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to track and monitor CLA referrals.
7. The sixth recommendation was aimed at improving the quality of plans when children return to their families, so that there is clarity about what services will be provided, who will provide them, and by when and what they are aimed at achieving. This has been addressed by ensuring that all young people have a final review meeting so that discharge arrangements are considered and in place prior to moving back into the care of their family. During April – July 2017 no formal escalation by an IRO was required following a discharge review meeting. Of the 55 young people that left the care of the local authority during this period, 21 returned into the care of their family. None of the 21 young people have since been subject of a child protection plan, or have returned into care.
8. The seventh recommendation was aimed at ensuring professionals consistently implement actions required between review meetings for children looked after (CLA). This has been addressed by Supervising Social Workers (SSW) and IRO's ensure that foster carers are prepared and supported to participate in CLA review meetings. Social work managers will ensure that agreed actions are progressed between review meetings. A performance management report is currently being refined to capture SSW visiting arrangements, and will be in place by September 2017. The Advocacy service for young people is being re-commissioned (September 2017), and the scope of advocacy has been widened to include care leavers and parents

requiring support in CP and CLA cohorts. Review timeliness remains good, with 98% of reviews held between April – July 2017 being on time, and no formal escalations by IRO's required regarding significant delay in progressing care planning.

9. The eighth recommendation was aimed at ensuring the good support experienced by the vast majority of care leavers is extended to all care leavers, so that their needs are better met. This has been addressed through the timely completion of pathway planning, so that support for emotional well-being, education, employment, training, and accommodation needs is timely. Current outcomes indicate through key performance indicators reported to the Department for Education (DfE) that fewer care leavers in Harrow are not in employment, education or training (NEET) 28.3% compared to a national average of 37.9%. Also, higher numbers of care leavers in Harrow are in suitable accommodation with 95.7% compared to 83% nationally. Performance improvements have been supported through a commissioned service "Prospects" that support employment and training opportunities for care leavers, and extending the reach of the Virtual School for CLA nurse supporting care leavers.
10. The ninth recommendation was aimed at strengthening the quality of learning from audits through better involvement and use of feedback from children and their families. This has been addressed by revising the audit process to include direct feedback from young people and their family. Further action is required to fully embed this in audit practice. However, feedback and analysis themes from young people are included in quarterly analysis e.g. young people report dissatisfaction when they experience a change in social worker. Direct work skills of social workers is planned to be enhanced through the delivery of motivational interview technique and mental health training over the next 2 quarters.
11. The tenth, and final recommendation, was aimed at ensuring that there are improvements in the functioning of overview and scrutiny panel, to ensure that it is more sharply focussed on children and that its work has an impact on improving both services for children and the outcomes they achieve. Comprehensive response has been agreed with significant progress on track as planned. This is being addressed through the Centre for Public Sector Scrutiny (CFPS) which has been commissioned to conduct a review of scrutiny effectiveness in the LA. The review will report in September 2017. The membership of Overview and Scrutiny has recently been refreshed, and the work plan is being aligned to include key issues in Children's Services. Recent examples of how impact of the revised work plan, include scrutiny on budget pressures in relation to CLA placements, and families that have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The Overview and Scrutiny process is being used to monitor this important OFSTED action plan.

## **Environmental Impact**

There are no environmental impact considerations in this report.



## Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

Separate risk register in place? Yes – included in Corporate Risk Register

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.

## Equalities implications

Was an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) carried out? No

A specific EIA was not required in the planning and implementation of a statutory inspection of Children's Services.

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.

## 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: 22/8/17		
Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 22/8/17		

**Ward Councillors notified:**

**NO**

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact: Paul Hewitt**

**Divisional Director, Children and Young People Services**

[Paul.hewitt@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.hewitt@harrow.gov.uk), 020 8736 6978

### **Background Papers:**

Ofsted Report -

[https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local\\_authority\\_reports/harrow/051\\_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf](https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/harrow/051_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf)

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