
REPORT FOR: **Corporate Parenting
Panel**

Date of Meeting:	7 th October 2020
Subject:	Harrow Ofsted Inspection Outcome and Report
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Paul Hewitt, Corporate Director of People
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Christine Robson, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Wards affected:	None - This is an Information report
Enclosures:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. February 2020 Harrow Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care Services Report2. Ofsted Improvement Action Plan

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Harrow Children's Services was inspected by Ofsted Inspection from 10th to 14th February 2020. Ofsted judged Harrow as "Good" across all the inspection domains:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers
- Overall effectiveness

This inspection outcome is an improvement from the 2017 Ofsted inspection. Ofsted found, that "when children come into care, they receive a very good service. Staff at all levels work tirelessly to help children in care and care leavers to achieve in life and protect them from further harm". There are 4 identified areas for improvement which were set out by Ofsted and which are being addressed via an improvement plan across Children's services.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted

Reason for Recommendation: To keep the Panel updated on the February 2020 Ofsted inspection and "Good" judgement across all inspection domains.

Section 2 – Report

See the attached Inspection report from Ofsted which is publicly available on their website.

Key Points:

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers is "good".

When children come into care, they receive a very good service. Staff at all levels work tirelessly to help children in care and care leavers to achieve in life and protect them from further harm. Children are matched carefully with carers who promote their needs and help them to achieve. Social workers and personal advisers (PAs) work steadfastly to advocate on behalf of care leavers to ensure that they receive the best support to move safely towards independence.

Permanence planning and stability for children in care is good. Long-term plans for all children are considered promptly at the monthly care planning group. Parallel planning for those children unable to live safely with their parents is

progressed speedily. Appropriate use of family group conferences and special guardians allows children to live with family members. Most children live in safe, stable, good-quality placements that meet their needs, with their brothers and sisters and extended family or carers, who provide them with emotional warmth and stability.

Social workers know their children in care well and are active and committed advocates for them. They demonstrate an understanding of key factors that contribute to children's stability in their placement and the impact of the child's unique experiences. A mainly permanent social work staff team means that most children are benefiting from consistent and established relationships with someone they know well. Visits are regular, including for those children living at a distance from Harrow. Children are visited according to their needs, with many examples of increased visits when they are worried or upset. Sensitive, thoughtful and creative life-story work is helping most children to understand their experiences, for instance the use of sensory tools, smell and touch, which engender memory and help children understand why they cannot live with their parents.

A sensitive approach taken to engage and support birth families to maintain contact with children has a positive impact on children's emotional needs. This also contributes to the stability of placements. Careful consideration is given to sustaining relationships with brothers and sisters in future permanence plans. Children are supported to participate in their reviews, with independent reviewing officers (IROs) providing effective oversight and challenge. Children in care are offered the opportunity for advocacy, as well as independent visitors.

Children's physical, emotional and mental health needs are closely monitored and supported throughout their placement. A dedicated clinical psychologist attached to the virtual school supports professionals and young people and carers. Children can also access support via the jointly commissioned early intervention treatment and support via Harrow Horizons project.

The well-established fostering service has been successful in recruiting and supporting a range of foster and connected carers to meet the diverse needs of the children in Harrow. Foster carers' passion about helping and protecting children is a real strength of the service. Experienced carers offer a range of specialist services, including life-story work, caring for teenagers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. They provide outreach support and mentoring for families and for each other.

The local authority has smoothly transitioned its partnership arrangements with a voluntary adoption agency into a regional adoption agency. There are no children waiting for adoption because early permanency planning is effective, which is ensuring that children are placed in adoptive homes quickly. Adopters describe

positive experiences of their contact with the regional workers. They feel welcomed and valued. Adopters are offered a continued high-quality adoption support service in the region or via the adoption support fund for more specialist services.

The virtual school's philosophy is 'Achieving Excellence Together', with the child at the heart of the school's programmes. Education, training and employment outcomes for children in care and care leavers are good, and children achieve well across all key stages. Schools are complimentary about the support offered by the virtual school team (VST). They believe the team to be approachable and efficient. School leaders say that, often, the VST staff will go 'over and above' to support the pupils. Electronic personal education plans are detailed, focus on the key areas, and include pupil targets and the pupils' perspectives. A range of extra-curricular activities are available to support and enrich the lives of children in care.

The virtual school is proud of its achievements to date. Staff know that although attendance has improved, there is more to do. This is an area of priority. The virtual school carefully tracks the progress of all pupils and is quick to intercede should a child's attendance start to reduce. At the time of the inspection, there were six pupils with highly complex needs who, despite constant efforts by all agencies, were without a school place for several months without a resolution.

Most care leavers live in suitable accommodation. The local authority actively commissions good-quality supportive accommodation according to individual assessed need. Consequently, there are no young people in unregistered provision. Young people said that they feel safe and can readily access advice, support and guidance to help them to move towards managing their own tenancies. Comparatively high numbers of young people are engaged in purposeful education, employment and training (EET) activities. Tenacious efforts by genuinely concerned and caring staff help most young people 'stay in touch'. Social workers and personal advisers take pride in young people's achievements.

Senior leaders are aware that the transition from child in care to care leaver is not as smooth as it needs to be, and they have plans to integrate the existing separate teams. The quality and effectiveness of early pathway planning is variable. Some young people do not have an up-to-date pathway plan. Risks to most young people are well identified but not in all cases. They are not consistently reviewed to reflect changing risks and to inform planning. Care leavers told inspectors that they are not provided with their (emotional and physical) health histories.

What needs to improve

- The quality and impact of supervision so that child in need and protection plans address the specific needs of individual children.
- Care leavers need to have access to their (emotional and physical) health histories and pathway plans, which should be of consistently good quality.
- Quality assurance practice evaluation audits across all teams.
- Meeting the needs of pupils with complex needs who are not in mainstream school and who remain on reduced timetables for too long.

How we are going to improve

The attached Ofsted improvement action plan outlines the 4 target areas for improvement and what actions are being undertaken to address the individual areas. Due to the impact of Covid-19 on all aspects of Council business, some actions were delayed. Pathway plans are reviewed on a monthly basis via performance meetings. In addition, work is currently in progress to combine the Children Looked After (CLA) Team and the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children / Leaving Care Team (UASC/LCT) into a single service. The vision for this service is to build and strengthen capacity within Corporate Parenting, to minimise changes of workers for children and young people, to develop consistent decision-making and to improve pathway planning for young people leaving care

The work on developing “health passports” or health histories for care leavers is underway and a task and finish group involving Health and Children’s Services Team Managers will be developing a model to be shared with Care Leavers in the Autumn/Winter. Further progress will be shared with the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2021.

Options considered

Not applicable as this is an information report.

Risk Management Implications

The Children’s Services Risk Register includes corporate parenting responsibilities.

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

Separate risk register in place? No

Legal Implications

Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child's needs, provided this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child's wishes and feelings.

Local authorities also have specific duties in relation to looked after children and care leavers. For looked after children, the statutory virtual school head is responsible for ensuring that they receive appropriate education, working in partnership with allocated social workers to ensure each child has a personal education plan.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

The inspection report is complimentary in relation to services offered to children with special educational needs or a disability. Children's mental health is supported via access to the Harrow Horizons project. The report highlighted areas for improvement which are directly related to protected groups. Care leavers, being young people aged 18 to 25 years, were flagged as requiring access to health histories and pathway plans, which should be of consistently good quality. There were also identified a small number of children with complex needs who were not in mainstream schooling and remained on reduced timetables for too long.

Council Priorities

Supporting Those Most in Need

- Children and young people are given the opportunities to have the best start in life and families can thrive

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not applicable – for information only

Name: Jo Frost	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 23/09/2020_		

Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 24/09/2020		

* Delete the words “on behalf of the” if the report is cleared directly by the Chief Financial Officer / Monitoring Officer.

Name: Paul Hewitt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Corporate Director
Date: 24.09.2020		

MANDATORY	
Ward Councillors notified:	NO, this is an information report only
EqIA carried out:	NO
EqIA cleared by:	N/A information report only

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Jacinta Kane Head of Service Corporate Parenting Tel - 020 8736 6617 Email - Jacinta.Kane@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:

- Attached paper – February 2020 Harrow Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care Services Report
- Attached paper – Ofsted Improvement Action Plan