

REPORT TO: OSC**DATE: 7th November 2018****REPORT TITLE: Children's Social Care Self-Evaluation****REPORT AUTHOR/S:**

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Under the new ILACS (inspection of local authority children's services) framework launched in 2018, all Local Authority Children's Social Care services are required to complete an annual self-evaluation to be shared with the regulator, Ofsted, in readiness for annual engagement meetings, visits and inspections. This report is a summary of the information captured in Enfield's self-evaluation, highlighting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the key areas shared with Ofsted in June 2018.

SUMMARY:

In Enfield, Children's Social Care services are on a trajectory of continuous improvement with strong, stable leadership in place.

During 2017/18 there has been considerable progress in many areas of practice for example in our work with for looked after children, care leavers and in fostering and adoption services.

The changes to the Single Point Of Entry and early help services have significantly improved the quality and timeliness of responses to vulnerable children. Early Help Services are making a real difference to children and their families. However, the high volume of work in the Referral and Assessment team is impacting on the quality and timeliness of assessments and visits to some vulnerable children.

Frontline staff, managers and leaders continue to work hard in challenging circumstances, with increasing demand and new pressures.

Social workers in a recent cultural review have said they like working in Enfield, they have passion for the profession. This enthusiasm must be supported by reducing caseloads and improving recruitment and retention across all areas. This will maintain and consolidate Enfield's strong reputation, in readiness for the next full Ofsted inspection expected within 6 months.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The London Borough of Enfield is London's most northerly and fifth most populous borough. The overall population is approximately 333,000 and this is projected to continue to rise over coming years. There are currently approximately 84,200 children (aged under 18) living in Enfield, making up 25% of the borough's population. Enfield has a relatively young population with the number of children and young people aged 0-15 representing approximately 23% of the total population (compared to a London average of 20.5%). Data from The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families. Their data concludes that Enfield is the 13th most deprived borough nationally and the 5th most deprived in London.

1.1.2 The Single Point of Entry (SPOE) continues to process around 2000 contacts every month. In March 2017 a restructure was implemented which increased capacity in the SPOE to manage demand. Evidence from the recent Ofsted focused visit indicates that the SPOE is making good, consistent triage decisions in a timely manner, based on sound information.

1.2 Early Help

1.2.1 There is a well-established range of early help services in Enfield including Change & Challenge (Troubled Families), Parent Support, Children's Centres and Behaviour Support Services. The Joint Service for Disabled Children (JSDC) has both an early help and statutory component for children and young people aged 0-17 years inclusive.

1.2.2 In 2017-18 there were **977** early help assessments completed the outcomes of which were:

- **470** families were supported with a range of interventions.
- **164** families were stepped down from early help targeted services and received ongoing support from universal or community services.
- **278** families continue to receive low level early help support.
- **46** cases were stepped up to social care.
- **8** families moved out of the borough.
- **11** families chose not to engage with early help support services.

1.2.3 As of the 31st March 2018, in Cheviots (part of the Joint Service for Disabled Children) social workers had **177** open cases; there were a further **370** children with disabilities who were receiving a support service.

1.3 Children in Need and Child Protection

1.3.1 The Referral and Assessment (R&A) team is responsible for assessing all children that meet the threshold for statutory services. They complete approximately 4,500 assessments per year. There are approximately 600 cases open at any one time in this service.

- 1.3.2 In 2017/18 there was a drop in the timeliness of assessments (just over **61%** of Child and Family Assessments had been authorised within the required 45 days). Increased caseloads and high staff turnover have an impact as social workers are over stretched.
- 1.3.3 The Child Protection and Family Support Teams hold the longer-term Child in Need cases including children subject to child protection plans, privately fostered and complex child in need cases. There are currently approximately 600 cases open at any one time in this team.
- 1.3.4 At the end of March 2018 there were **242** children subject to a Child Protection plan, a rate of 28.9 per 10,000 children, significantly lower than the national average (43.3) and our statistical neighbours (49). Importantly there were no children subject to a plan for more than two years as of this date; this follows on from a significant reduction in 2016/17 to from 0.4% and from 0.9% the previous year. This evidences a focus on timeliness in planning and decision making

1.4 Looked After Children

- 1.4.1 As of March 2018, there were 347 children in care. The rate of Enfield's children in care per 10,000 is currently 41.4 this has risen from 39 per 10,000 as of end of March 2017. The outer London average is 45 per 10,000.
- 1.4.2 The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) looked after at the 31st March 2018 was **63**, rates in Enfield remain higher than the national threshold.
- 1.4.3 Personal Education Plans: Autumn term saw a **98%** completion rate, for Spring term there was also a **98%** completion rate and for the recent Summer term **95%** completion rate.
- 1.4.4 Exclusions: Fixed term exclusions for this year are **14%**. There are no permanent exclusions.
- 1.4.5 Persistent absence: In 2016-17 there was a reduction in persistent absence by nearly **4%**, **bringing Enfield** in line with the national average.
- 1.4.6 Statutory Health and Dental Checks: As of the end of June 2018 health checks completed within timescale was **87.70%** and dental checks is **57.40%**.
- 1.4.7 The rate of LAC and CPPs in Enfield is low when compared to national and statistical neighbour averages. There are several factors that may explain this;
 - The Children's Plan is explicit that keeping families together, wherever this is possible, is an important aim of our partnership work with vulnerable children and families.
 - Entry into care (except in emergencies) is overseen by a weekly panel of senior officers and chaired by the Director. This ensures consistent decision making and care planning for children and shares inherent risks at an appropriate level.
 - Timely and child focussed permanency planning and decision-making processes ensure the minimisation of drift as evidenced by the increase in

Special Guardianship Orders and the low number of children subject to a CPP for more than two years.

- Services are led by a stable team of leaders and managers experienced in managing risk and operational anxiety.

1.5 Care Leavers

- 1.5.1 The leaving care service works with approximately 350 young people of which just over 200 are over the age of 18. Young people are supported to develop the skills they need to be independent and to engage in education employment and training over 70% of care leavers are engaged in education employment or training, one of the highest rates in London.

1.6 Permanency

- 1.6.1 In 2017/18 Enfield's fostering service recruited **18** new foster carers, the highest across the 6 north London consortium boroughs.
- 1.6.2 In 2017-18, **32** Special Guardianship Orders were granted, **19** for Children previously in care to Enfield and **13** for Children in Need or subject to CP plans.
- 1.6.3 In 2017-18, **12** Adoption Orders were granted.

2. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- 2.1 Increasing caseloads, high staff turnover in some areas and national difficulties in the recruitment of qualified social workers and managers, particularly in Child Protection.
- 2.2 Increased number of families without recourse to public funds, homeless families, children with EHCPs (education, health and care plans), SGO's (special guardianship orders).
- 2.3 Older looked after children cohort due to UASC (unaccompanied asylum-seeking children), gangs, serious youth violence, sexual exploitation and modern slavery.
- 2.4 New legislative duties requiring the offer of continued support to be extended to all leaving care young people up to the age of 25 years of age from 1st January 2019.
- 2.5 In June 2018 new investment was secured to create extra capacity in the Referral and Assessment team, the recruitment processes are complete, and the new permanent team will be operational from 1st November 2018, releasing agency staff that were covering the posts. However, caseloads currently remain too high and the demand for support continues to rise with new cases coming in for assessment reaching 90 per week. The new team starting on 1st November alleviates some pressure, but further strategies are in development to ensure that caseloads within this team are manageable.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the report for information.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Children's Social Care will maintain a continuous focus upon improvement across all areas to maintain and consolidate Enfield's strong reputation in readiness for the next full Ofsted inspection expected within 6 months.
- 4.2 The Executive Director: People and the Director of Children and Family Services will seek further investment where possible to permanently increase frontline staff in the Referral and Assessment team to reduce caseloads to a manageable level.
- 4.3 The Director of Children and Family Services will lead a workforce development group to further improve recruitment and retention, succession planning and quality assurance processes ensuring the voice of child and the influence of staff is in the centre of all social work practice in Enfield.