

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019/2020 REPORT NO. 5

MEETING TITLE AND DATE:

Cabinet: 12th June 2019

REPORT OF: Tony Theodoulou

Executive Director: People

Agenda – Part: 1

Item: 4

Subject: Children's Social Care Ofsted Improvement Plan Demand and Pressures

Wards: All

Key Decision: KD4913

Cabinet Member consulted: Cllr Rick Jewell

Contact officer and telephone number:

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Children's Services continue to be a key priority for the Council and Children's Social Care are on an upward trajectory of continuous improvement with strong, stable leadership in place. Following the recent ILACS (inspection of local authority children's services) standard 2-week inspection from 4th to 15th March 2019 Ofsted found services for early help and protection, looked after children, care leavers, fostering and adoption are good.
- 1.2 The Ofsted inspectors identified further work that is required to improve consistency in the following areas:
- decision making and quality of plans for children in need
 - the response to children missing from home
 - the response to children in private fostering arrangements
 - providing health information for care leavers.
- 1.3 The Local Authority has put into place an Ofsted improvement action plan, further investment is being sought to increase permanent staffing and reduce agency costs to:
- deliver on the Ofsted improvement plan
 - maintain the practice improvements made since Autumn 2018
 - keep caseloads at a reasonable level
 - deliver consistency and increase quality assurance processes.
- 1.4 Cabinet are asked to note the good outcome published in the Enfield Ofsted report (15th April 2019), the associated Ofsted improvement plan and the press release that are attached as appendices to this report.

Cabinet are asked to approve:

- £375k investment in Children's Social Care to enable the service to deliver the actions identified in the Ofsted improvement plan. The investment this year will be funded through risk reserves while the permanent investment of £375k in 2020/21 will be managed through the medium-term financial plan process. A review will be completed over the next 6 months to identify where further permanent investment is needed, this will be agreed with the Cabinet Member and presented to the October/November Cabinet.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are asked to note the good outcome published in the Enfield Ofsted report (15th April 2019), the associated Ofsted improvement plan that must be progressed and the press release that are attached as appendices to this report.

Cabinet are asked to approve:

- £375k investment in Children's Social Care to enable the service to deliver the actions identified in the Ofsted improvement plan. The investment this year will be funded through risk reserves while the permanent investment of £375k in 2020/21 will be managed through the medium-term financial plan process. A review will be completed over the next 6 months to identify where further permanent investment is needed, this will be agreed with the Cabinet Member and presented to the October/November Cabinet.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following the recent ILACS (inspection of local authority children's services) standard 2-week inspection from 4th to 15th March 2019 Ofsted found that senior leaders, with cross party support, have worked effectively to strengthen and improve service provision since the recent focused visit in September 2018 and the previous inspection in 2015.
- 3.2 Ofsted recognised that senior leaders continue to work hard to embed and sustain the recent improvements and that Children's Services continue to be a key priority for the Council. They found that Children's Social Care are on an upward trajectory of continuous improvement with strong, stable leadership in place and that services for early help and protection, looked after children, care leavers, fostering and adoption are good.
- 3.3 They recognised the impact of the 11 practice lead positions introduced in November 2018 and the improvement in skills and knowledge of frontline staff and managers. The significant investment in staffing in the MASH and the assessment teams had made a difference to caseloads and the quality of practice. However, practice improvements are still inconsistent, decision making in the MASH is variable and it is too early to see sustained changes particularly in the Children in Need services.
- 3.4 Further work is required to embed and sustain recent progress and improve the consistency of the following:
 - decision making and quality of plans for children in need
 - the response to children missing from home
 - the response to children in private fostering
 - providing health information for care leavers.
- 3.5 Enfield Children's Services continue to be relatively low spending compared to most other local authorities. Social workers in Enfield have been over performing this was recognised by senior leaders and action was taken to secure investment in 2018/19. This has resulted in caseloads in the

assessment teams stabilising yet there remains a fragility in the Child Protection and Family Support Service where the majority of CiN (children in need) plans are managed. Caseloads in this service have been reduced on a temporary basis by bringing in additional agency workers. The investment requested would enable a reduction in agency staffing, an increase in permanent staffing in Child Protection and Family Support it will stabilise reasonable workloads and encourage social workers to stay in Enfield thus reducing staff turnover.

- 3.6 The Local Authority has put into place an Ofsted Improvement Plan to embed the practice improvements made since Autumn 2018, maintain caseloads at a reasonable level to deliver consistency in the 4 key areas highlighted in the recent Ofsted inspection (March 2019). Further investment is needed to enable the service to deliver the outcomes from the improvement plan, strengthen the quality assurance processes evidencing Enfield's strong reputation and further improve it.
- 3.7 This paper requests £375k investment in Children's Social Care to enable the service to deliver on the actions identified in the Ofsted improvement plan. The investment this year will be funded through risk reserves while the permanent investment of £375k in 2020/21 will be managed through the medium-term financial plan process. A review will be completed over the next 6 months to identify where further permanent investment is needed, this will be agreed with the Cabinet Member and presented to the October/November Cabinet.
- 3.8 The investment will enable recruitment to 9 posts (2 practice improvement and audit leads, 5 social workers, 1 missing debriefing officer and 1 audit tracking and evaluation officer). This will enable the service to deliver on the Ofsted improvement plan, sustain and be assured of good practice, achieve consistency by maintaining caseloads at a reasonable level, increase quality assurance processes and continue to lead practice improvements and coaching interventions to targeted key staff. Over the next 6 months the service will review where permanent further investment is needed and with the agreement of the Cabinet member be presented to Cabinet for approval in October/November 2019.
- 3.9 The Multi-agency Safeguarding Children Partnership will scrutinise the Ofsted action plan and progress will be monitored by the Assurance Board, Cabinet Member and Executive Director: People through regular reports. The service will seek further independent benchmarking opportunities, for example through external review, peer reviews and mock inspections to benchmark performance and ensure continuous improvement.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

We have recently commissioned a social care agency to deliver some children in need services to enable swift and speedy reduction in caseloads to meet statutory duties within set timescales however maintaining agency staff is not cost effective in the long term. The investment requested from Cabinet will enable a reduction in agency staff, increase in permanent recruitment, strengthen further the stability of the workforce and reduce staff turnover.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

An annual conversation is expected with Ofsted in December 2019 to track progress following the full inspection (March 2019). This will be followed in quick succession by either a 2-day focused visit or a 4-week Joint Targeted Area Inspection. Through additional investment, the service will be able to deliver on the Ofsted improvement plan, firm up the strong foundations in social care and further hone our trajectory of continuous improvement. Ensuring that Enfield Council delivers a high quality, safe service to children and families that meets regulatory expectations.

6. COMMENTS FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1 Financial Implications

In 2019/20, £375k investment outlined in this report to be funded from the risk reserve while the permanent investment of £375k in 2020/21 will be managed through the medium-term financial plan process. A review will be completed over the next 6 months to identify where further permanent investment is needed, this will be agreed with the Cabinet Member and presented to the October/November Cabinet.

6.2 Legal Implications

- 6.2.1 The recommendations set out within this report are within the Council's powers and duties. The report recommends investment in Children's Social Services to strengthen delivery of the service and ensure that it can continue to support the Council in meeting its statutory obligations.
- 6.2.2 Every local authority has a general duty under Schedule 2 paragraph 4(1) of the Children Act 1989 to take reasonable steps through the provision of services under Part III of the Children Act 1989 to prevent children in their area suffering ill-treatment or neglect. The recommendations set out in this report comply with this legislation.
- 6.2.3 Under the Local Government Act 1972 the Council can appoint such officers as it thinks fit for the proper discharge of its functions. Section 111(1) of the Local Government Act permits a local authority to do anything calculated to facilitate the discharge of their functions. The recommendation to invest in Children's Services is in accordance with these powers.
- 6.2.3 Any recruitment and selection process must be carried out in accordance with the Council's policies, procedures and employment law, and avoid unlawful discrimination in advertising and recruiting to the posts.
- 6.2.4 An equality impact assessment of the impact of any reorganisation proposals should be prepared to enable decision-makers to consider compliance with the Council's duties generally under the Equality Act 2010, to avoid discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and access, including monitoring any possible negative impact hereafter.

7. KEY RISKS

Without this investment the service cannot deliver the Ofsted improvement plan and the strong foundation and positive trajectory within Children's Social Care may weaken. Caseloads will not stabilise and the consistency in the quality of work will not improve. This would also affect staff morale, recruitment and retention, reversing the positive trend we have established in the last 9 months. There is a risk that the annual conversation with Ofsted planned for December 2019 will not assure inspectors of our commitment to sustained improvements and could trigger a full inspection of services as was the case in 2018/19.

8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES – CREATING A LIFETIME OF OPPORTUNITIES IN ENFIELD

The work of Children's Social Care meets all 3 of the council's key priority areas within the corporate plan and the objectives within the Children and Young People's Plan. With emphasis and more weighting upon improving services to those children, young people and families that require prevention and intervention from safeguarding services across a broad spectrum from early help to statutory interventions. Through early intervention and specialist statutory services children are supported to live wherever possible within their families and communities.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

Children's Social Care forms part of the Council's programme of retrospective equalities impact assessments (EQIA). The retrospective EQIA collates equalities monitoring of service users, and consider how the service impacts on disadvantaged, vulnerable and protected characteristic groups in the community.

10. PERFORMANCE AND DATA IMPLICATIONS

This proposal will enhance practice and performance which is monitored regularly through national statutory returns and at political, corporate, departmental, service and team levels.

11. HR IMPLICATIONS

- Consultation on recruitment to take place with trade unions in accordance with statutory regulations and Council guidelines.
- Upon approval, once it has been identified which frontline posts will be created and where they will sit in the structure, HR will be provided with up to date organisational charts to enable the department to create the posts and provide post numbers for recruitment to commence without delay.

- Generic Social Worker and Advanced Social Work Practitioner posts will not require formal job evaluation. Any changes to job role profiles affected by the proposals to be submitted to HR to update records, or possible evaluation where the change is material. The Council's recruitment policy will be applied.

12. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Safeguarding children is a public health issue: preventing abuse and supporting vulnerable children and their families increases wellbeing. Children's Social Care protects and promotes the welfare of children and young people in Enfield and works in partnership with all health partners to improve outcomes in early life and childhood that leads to healthier, successful adults and improve the health of the population. For example: protecting children and young people results in improved population health outcomes by reducing mental health issues, sexually transmitted diseases, injuries and long-term poor health.

Resourcing adequate support to improve the quality in the key areas recommended by Ofsted could contribute towards the life course approach to improving health through safe and effective children services.

Background papers

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Enfield Ofsted Improvement Plan

Appendix 2 – Enfield ILACS Ofsted Report 4th – 15th March 2019 published 15th April 2019

Appendix 3 – Press Release April 2019

Appendix 1 - Enfield Ofsted Improvement Plan

Between the 4th - 15th March 2019, London Borough of Enfield Children Services were inspected by Ofsted under the Inspection of local authority's children services (ILACs) framework. The formal report was published on 15th April 2019, with the following judgements:

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

The grading indicated that children in need of help and protection, child in care and care leavers in Enfield receive good services. It is acknowledged that there are areas where further improvement is required. Ofsted identified four key areas and LB of Enfield are required to respond within 70 working days providing details of actions we intend to take.

This improvement plan sets out the actions we have taken since the inspection and our ongoing actions in response to the four areas identified for improvement by Ofsted.

Area for improvement 1:	The quality of plans for children in need
Area for improvement 2:	Return home interviews for children missing from home
Area for improvement 3:	Private fostering responses, including timely statutory checks and regular visits to ensure that children live in safe arrangements to meet their needs
Area for improvement 4:	Health information for care leavers

Progress since inspection:

- **Area for improvement 1:**
 - a. Child in Need planning groups have been set up to address care planning and smart plans.
- **Area for improvement 2:**
 - a. Immediate interim arrangements have been put in place to respond to children missing from home and not known to the local authority to ensure they are offered the same as children missing known to the Local authority.
- **Area for improvement 3:**
 - a. The 2018/19 annual private fostering report has been presented to the multi-agency safeguarding children's partnership – aimed to increase partnerships understanding and a reminder of their responsibility in raising awareness and referring private fostering arrangements to social care.

- b. The transition of responsibility of private fostering is now underway and local guidance has been updated.
- c. A review on our local practice of seeking private fostering references has been concluded and guidance updated.
- **Area for improvement 4:**
 - a. A review of all 18-year olds who did not have their health passport has been undertaken and they have been provided with a copy.

Area for improvement 1: The quality of plans for children in need

	Improvement Action	Lead	Timescale	Improvement Measure
1.1	We will focus our internal practice lead and coaching support on improving the quality and practice of children in need plans across our services.	Director of Children and Family Services	May 2019	There is a clear and shared understanding amongst practitioners on what a quality plan looks like.
1.2	We will establish a working group focused on ensuring our social work practice standards are embedded and that practitioners know what makes a good plan.	Heads of service	May 2019	Plans will evidence that all practitioners and managers have consistently implemented practice standards in plans.
1.3	We will undertake an audit of the quality of CIN plans, including when the decision at Child Protection Conferences has been made to that the threshold for Child protection has not been met.	Director of Children and Family Services	June 2019	
1.4	We will ensure that CIN plans are in place for a minimum of 3 months when the decision has been made to step down from child protection.	Heads of Service	June 2019	
1.5	We will increase focus on improving educational outcomes for Children in Need	Head of Virtual School	June 2019	

Area for improvement 2: Return home interviews for children missing from home

	Improvement Action	Lead	Time scale	Improvement Measure
2.1	We will undertake a review of our current return home interview arrangements of children missing from home and care.	Director of Children and Family Services	May 2019	Our response to children missing from home and care will be consistent whether the child is known to the local authority or not.
2.2	We will seek partnership sign of for the updated multi agency missing from care and home protocol and disseminate to all agencies.	Head of Safeguarding ¹	June 2019	
2.3	We will deliver a series of workshops to ensure staff understand the processes and importance of safeguarding missing children from home and care.	Head of Safeguarding and Head of Practice Improvement	June 2019	
2.4	We will ensure there is regular reporting to senior management meetings, the local safeguarding partnership and vulnerable young person's group for scrutiny and monitoring.	Head of Safeguarding	Ongoing	

Area for improvement 3: Private fostering responses, including timely statutory checks and regular visits to ensure that children live in safe arrangements to meet their needs

	Improvement Action	Lead	Time scale	Improvement Measure
3.1	We will transfer responsibility for private fostering arrangements from the Child Protection and Family Support team to the fostering team.	Director of Children and Family Services	May 2019	Private fostering arrangements will be identified, assessed and needs met promptly within timescales.

¹ (delegated named lead for missing)

3.3	We will review all our Private Fostering procedures and update to reflect changes of practice.	Head of Practice Improvement	May 2019	
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Area for improvement 4: Health information for care leavers

	Improvement Action	Lead	Time scale	Improvement Measure
4.1	We will undertake an audit of all young people to identify any children or care leavers who do not have access to their health passport	Head of LAC and Vulnerable Young People	End of May 2019	All our care leavers will be aware and in receipt of their health passports.
4.2	We will increase staff's awareness across all services by delivering a series of health passport workshops and then embed regular 6 weekly health workshops thereafter	Designated LAC Nurse	From May 2019	
4.3	<p>We will embed a more systematic approach to looked after children and care leavers pack to minimise young people not having access to their health passports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All key documents including health passport to be put in their packs • Local Authority to retain a copy of young person packs in case of loss of papers • Track all young people have access to their packs through reviews and direct contact with Personal Advisors and record outcome on case files. 	Head of LAC and Vulnerable Young People	June 2019	

4.4	We undertake an audit of LAC reviews to ensure Independent Reviewing Officers are reinforcing the importance of the need for health passports	Head of Safeguarding	July 2019	
5	Leadership			
5.1	Seek further investment to deliver on the Ofsted improvement plan, sustaining good practice and achieving consistency by maintaining caseloads at a reasonable level, increasing quality assurance processes and continuing to deliver practice lead and coaching interventions to targeted key staff.	Executive Director: People and Director of Children and Family Services	June 2019	Maintain reasonable caseloads (below 21) in line with Pan London standards. Improve consistency in decision making, quality of CiN (children in need) assessments and plans, debriefing of missing children, private fostering assessments and health passports for care leavers

Monitoring

The Continuous Improvement Board chaired by the Director of Children and Family Services and the Practice and Performance Board chaired by the Executive Director, both meet on a regular basis and will oversee progress and agree the improvement plan and the wider practice improvement activities.

The improvement plan will be scrutinised by the Corporate Enfield Assurance Board, Enfield Multi-agency Safeguarding Children's Partnership and monitored by the Cabinet member and Executive Director: People through regular progress reports. The service will seek further independent benchmarking opportunities for example through external review, peer reviews and mock inspections to benchmark performance and ensure continuous improvement.

Anne Stoker: Director of Children and Family Services: May 2019

