

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR of EDUCATION SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

TO:	ADULT, CHILDRENS SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	1 JULY 2013	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	PROTECTION OF CHILDREN INSPECTION & ACTION PLAN		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR JAN GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN & FAMILIES
SERVICE:	CHILDRENS	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) has a duty to inspect children's services, focussing on evaluating outcomes for children and young people. A new child protection inspection framework was introduced in 2012 shortly after Reading's last inspection. Ofsted subsequently arrived unannounced in March 2013 to conduct an inspection under this new framework.
- 1.2 An overall grading of adequate was reported and the 3 sub judgments were also given an adequate finding. Inspectors clearly indicated that they saw improvements in the last year. The judgement must also be seen in the context of another rise in the 'bar' and the context overall of Ofsted judgements as highlighted in the body of the report below.
- 1.3 Appended to the report is the Ofsted Inspection Report and the proposed Ofsted Action Plan for approval.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee receives the Ofsted Inspection Report on the arrangements for the protection of children and agrees the associated action plan.
- 2.2 That a further report is provided to the Adults, Children's Services & education Committees meeting in November to report on progress.

#### 3 POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) has a duty to inspect children's services, focussing on evaluating outcomes for children and young people. A new child protection framework was introduced in 2012 shortly after Reading's last inspection under the Safeguarding and Looked After Children (S&LAC) framework. This new framework was specifically designed to inspect local authority

arrangements pending an Ofsted and government commitment to develop a new multi-agency inspection framework.

- 3.2 This new interim framework considers how effectively the local authority leads partnership working, and how effectively local services contribute to the protection of children and young people. i.e. it is not aimed at services for looked after children.
- 3.3 The inspection is completely unannounced and involves a team of inspectors working in the authority for 10days The inspection considers key aspects of a child's journey through the child protection system, focusing on the experiences of the child or young person, and the effectiveness of the help and protection that they are offered.
- 3.4 The inspection is designed to focus on the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements: for identifying children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, harm from abuse or neglect; and for the provision of early help where it is needed. It also considers the effectiveness of the local authority and its partners in protecting these children if the risk remains or intensifies.
- 3.5 The inspection focuses on the child's journey through intensive and extensive case sampling and case tracking. The evaluation schedule for the child protection inspection can be summarised as
  - An overall judgement of effectiveness, including areas for development.
  - The effectiveness of the help and protection provided to children, young people, and their families and carers
  - The quality of practice
  - leadership and governance

The grading used to describe the findings of the inspection uses a four point scale:

Outstanding	a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good	a service that exceeds minimum requirements
Adequate	a service that meets minimum requirements
Inadequate	a service that does not meet minimum requirements.

- 3.6 Of the recent (reported up to May 2013) inspections held under this framework 33% of authorities have been found to be inadequate, 57% 'adequate, 10% good and none have been found by Ofsted to be outstanding. The 'bar' that Ofsted is using has obviously risen again in the last year.
- 3.7 Having been inspected under the S&LAC Framework in February 2012 it was not felt likely that Ofsted would visit again so soon. However on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 the service received a call to say the Lead Inspector would arrive that morning and an inspection would occur under the new framework.

## **4 THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

- 4.1 As noted the inspection team focused on key aspects of a child's journey through the child protection and early help system and how well multi-agency arrangements for identifying children and provision of early help services in protecting children worked. An overall grading of adequate was reported and the 3 sub judgments were also given an adequate finding. Inspectors clearly indicated that they saw improvements in the last year. The judgement must also be seen in the context of another rise in the 'bar' and the context overall of Ofsted judgements as highlighted in 3.6 above. The full inspection report is appended but the key headlines are:
- 4.2 Progress has been made in a number of key areas, such as securing a stable workforce, developing early help services; Ofsted reported that elected members and staff all show an ambition for the council in securing and maintaining high quality services. They noted parents felt listened too and respected, that children and young people receive a timely and robust response to their needs for protection. Referrals are responded to promptly. Ofsted inspectors at their verbal feedback noted that Reading were in the upper most quartile of the adequate grade and that with a concerted drive in the next year it would reach good.
- 4.3 Having said that there is no room for complacency and the service is clear that there still remains some variability in provision and key challenges that it needs to address to continue to drive up performance. Ofsted did note that they did not highlight anything that the service was not already alert too and that the right plans were in place to address the need to improve.
- 4.4 Ofsted in their reports note recommended areas for improvement in three bands, immediate, within three months and within six months. In this instance there were no immediate actions identified and ten others. These have been placed into an action plan (appended) with allocated actions and owners to drive forward their completion.
- 4.5 It is proposed therefore that the Committee receives the Inspection report and agrees the action plan, It is also proposed that a further report is provided in due course to report on the progress being made against the plan.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 5.1 The continued work to improve services for children in need of early help and protection will promote the Council's strategic aims to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 6.1 The Ofsted Inspection involves consultation and involvement in the inspection with parents, children and young people receiving services and their views and comments are incorporated in the report. A young peoples version of the inspection report is also provided and is made available to local young people.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this particular decision.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None of note for this report

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

No new financial implications for this report

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 Ofsted Inspection Framework for the Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children.