

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	8 JANUARY 2020	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	OFSTED INSPECTION 2019		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR TERRY	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN
SERVICE:	CHILDREN	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This brief report will provide context and information about the inspection of Children's Social Care Services which resulted in a positive 'requires improvement to be good' judgement.
- 1.2 In June 2016 Reading children's services were judged inadequate by Ofsted. This led to a Children's Commissioner being appointed - Dr Nick Whitfield, the establishment of a Children's Services Improvement Board chaired independently by Di Smith and nine follow up monitoring visits by Ofsted over the following three years.
- 1.3 The expectation is that children's social care services are inspected every three years on average. Where the previous judgement was 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement to be good' the services receive a standard two week inspection with a weeks' notice during which significant preparation and sharing of documents and evidence takes place. The team of four inspectors then spend two weeks on site meeting with practitioners, speaking with partners and auditing case files.
- 1.4 There are four judgements used by Ofsted when make judgements - 'inadequate', 'requires improvement to be good', 'good' and 'outstanding.' And there are four judgement areas:
  - 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.

We are delighted to report that the judgements were 'requires improvement to be good' across all four areas. This is a significant achievement.

- 1.5 Since December 2018, services for children have been delivered by Brighter Futures for Children. Ofsted stated that 'the company and council are working collaboratively, and appropriate arrangements for scrutiny and challenge are in place.'
- 1.6 There was evidence of improvement in most areas of practice since the inspection in June 2016 with recent practice being stronger although variable. It was noted that senior leaders have rightly focused on strengthening the recruitment and retention of staff, caseloads are reducing and there has been an increase in management capacity.
- 1.7 Early help services continue to be a strength with well-targeted interventions and the establishment of the multi-agency hubs contributed to a reduction in the number of referrals to children's statutory services.
- 1.8 There were seven areas identified for improvement in the Ofsted report (see page 3 of the Ofsted report attached). In order to address these, an Ofsted Action Plan has been developed which is reviewed at the Children's Services Improvement Board.

Appendix 1 - Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care Services Report.

## **2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 2.1 That the contents of the Ofsted Inspection Report of Children's Social Care Services in September 2019 be noted.

## **3. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 3.1 The improvement to the inspection judgement and the improved services to the children and families of Reading meet strategic aim number 3 - to protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children.
- 3.2 The improvements achieved thus far and plans for ongoing improvement will support promoting equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.
- 3.3 The safety of Reading children is being improved by them receiving strong services from those based in Early Help and Prevention and from more impactful services within social care. For children looked after, there is ongoing focus on their health and well-being and achieving successful transitions to adult life.

## **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 4.1 Partners from a range of agencies were consulted as part of the Inspection and some are contributing eg police and health, to the Ofsted Action Plan.

Children and young people were spoken to as part of the inspection.

## **5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 There are no decisions to be made therefore the Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There was overtime paid for social care staff during the inspection to enable them to be more up-dated on recording and preparing for the inspection.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 Reading Borough Council: Inspection of children's social care services report September 2019.