

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES OFSTED INSPECTION AND COUNCIL RESPONSE

<b>Cabinet Member(s)</b>	Councillor David Simmonds
<b>Cabinet Portfolio(s)</b>	Education and Children's Services
<b>Officer Contact(s)</b>	Merlin Joseph, Director, Children and Young People's Services.
<b>Papers with report</b>	Appendix 1 – Ofsted Inspection Report

## 1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

<b>Summary</b>	Between 25 November 2013 and 18 December 2013 Ofsted undertook an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after, care leavers and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in Hillingdon. The overall judgement from Ofsted was 'requires improvement' with adoption services receiving a 'good' judgement. There were no surprises for the Council and the inspection confirmed many strengths. Plans to bring about changes to services are ambitious and the Council has a strong track record in delivering a positive and sustainable difference to the lives of residents through the Council's Business Improvement Delivery (BID) Transformation programme. Action is underway to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in the inspection.
<b>Contribution to our plans and strategies</b>	The areas for further development highlighted by Ofsted align with the plan being implemented as part of the BID Children's Pathway Programme.
<b>Financial Cost</b>	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
<b>Relevant Policy Overview Committee</b>	Children, Young People and Learning
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	All

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet:

1. Note the findings from the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in Hillingdon (Appendix 1) and;
2. Note that through the BID Children's Pathway Programme the areas highlighted by Ofsted for further action are already being addressed.

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**3. Authorise the Director of Children and Young People's Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader of the Council, to agree the final statement from the Council to Ofsted in response to the findings of the inspection, noting that this statement is a requirement from Ofsted.**

**Reasons for recommendation**

To ensure that Cabinet are up-to-date with the findings from the Ofsted inspection of services in Hillingdon and the headline actions being taken. Agreement to the recommendations will also meet the requirement placed on the Council to publish a statement in response to the findings of the inspection.

**Alternative options considered / risk management**

None considered.

**Policy Overview Committee comments**

The Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee considered the Ofsted Inspection report on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2014. Its comments to Cabinet are set out below:

Whilst the Committee noted this report and the judgement of "requires improvement" with a degree of concern, it wished to place on record its belief that there were a number of qualifying factors that should be taken into consideration.

Firstly, the judgement was based on the current, rather than the emerging, service. The Committee wished to emphasise that Children's Services has been developing the Children's Pathway Programme for some time. Radical alterations and improvements are planned to the support provided to Hillingdon's vulnerable children (including children in care and children with disabilities) through a refreshing of the vision of how the Council delivers services across the tiers of need. Many of the areas raised by Ofsted had already been identified through the Programme and measures were being put in place to address these issues. Although Ofsted were not able to include the planned changes in their judgement, the Committee was reassured that plans to resolve the major issues facing the service were advanced and in the process of being implemented.

Secondly, one of the major areas highlighted for improvement by Ofsted was with the stability of staffing across the service. Again, plans to address this issue formed a large part of the Children's Pathway Programme through the development of new, more attractive ways of working. Furthermore, a recent review of pay for social workers has been undertaken resulting in an uplift in pay across the service. The uplift will bring pay in line with other London boroughs and is expected to help to address the issue of staff recruitment and retention. Although the Committee itself has, for some time, expressed its concern about the churn in social work staff and the implications that this has on Hillingdon's vulnerable children (including children in care and children with disabilities), it was satisfied that significant steps were being taken to increase retention.

Finally, the Committee considered that the judgement should be considered in the light of the changes made to the Ofsted framework. In the new regime, local authorities that would previously have been judged as "good" are now being judged as "requiring improvement". It is the Committee's aspiration to contribute to the development of a service that is outstanding in

all that it does but it is important to note that the service has not deteriorated since the last inspection took place.

The Committee affirmed its commitment to holding officers and partner agencies to account on the areas highlighted during the inspection and to monitoring the measures being put in place to address them. However, Members stressed that they were reassured that the above were mitigating factors that importantly placed the current judgement in the context of an improving service.

### **3. INFORMATION**

#### **Supporting Information**

3.1 Between 25 November 2013 and 18 December 2013 Ofsted undertook an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in Hillingdon. The overall judgement from Ofsted was 'requires improvement' with adoption services receiving a 'good' judgement. The inspection identified many strengths and confirmed that there are no serious or widespread failures:

*"There are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. However, the authority is not yet delivering good protection and help and/or care for children, young people and families."*

3.2 The findings of the inspection have not come as a surprise as the Council has been reviewing how services have been working. Plans to bring about changes to services are ambitious and the Council has a strong track record in delivering a positive and sustainable difference to the lives of residents through the Council's Business Improvement Delivery (BID) Transformation Programme. The Leader of the Council both approved and launched, the Children's Pathway Programme, and monitors progress on a monthly basis.

3.3 Ofsted recognised many strengths such as the strong political and managerial leadership, highlighted the Council's focus on early intervention and prevention as the right approach and praised local partnership working with the police to ensure children are safe. Local Authority services to support families adopt children in care was judged to be 'good' and the strong commitment to help looked after children achieve the best outcomes in life and the effective support provided to care leavers was positively recognised by the inspectors. The feedback from Ofsted is a strong endorsement to the new ways of working being implemented as part of the Council-wide improvement programme.

3.4 Work is already underway to make further improvements including the need for consistent assessments, improving care plans, managers holding regular supervision sessions and achieving greater stability in the social care workforce. A draft action plan is in place in response to the findings of the inspection. Progress will be reported to the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services. Updates to the plan are reported every two weeks to senior managers to ensure progress is delivered in line with the BID Children's Pathway Programme.

3.5 The new approach to this inspection undertaken by Ofsted unfortunately means it was not possible for the inspectors to take into account the positive changes the Council is introducing

for children and their families in Hillingdon. Ofsted felt it was too early to see how changes are benefitting children. This issue has been raised by the Council during the evaluation process for the inspection.

3.6 The Council is required to prepare and publish a written statement of the action it intends to take in response to the report. Ofsted confirmed on 3 March 2014 that there is not a prescribed format or content of information to be included in the statement from the local authority. The statement will not cover the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board which is independent of the local authority. This report recommends to Cabinet to agree to delegate to the Director, Children and Young People's Services in full consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services the final statement to be sent to Ofsted in response to the inspection findings.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES**

### **What will be the effect of the recommendation?**

The recommendations will ensure the implementation of service changes to improve the outcomes for children, young people and their families in Hillingdon.

### **Consultation Carried Out or Required**

None required.

## **5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Corporate Finance**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **Legal**

The Cabinet is being asked to:

1. Note the findings from the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in Hillingdon (Appendix 1) and;
2. Note that through the BID Children's Pathway Programme the areas highlighted by Ofsted for further action are already being addressed.
3. Authorise the Director of Children and Young People's Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Leader of the Council, to agree the final statement from the Council to Ofsted in response to the findings of the inspection, noting that this statement is a requirement from Ofsted.

The 25 November - 18 December 2013 Ofsted inspection of the Council's Looked After Children (LAC) and care leavers was carried out pursuant to Section 136 of Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the 2006 Act). The inspection also included a review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) under section 15A of the Children Act 2004 (the 2004 Act). Section 152 of the 2006 Act, confers upon Her Majesty's Chief Inspector the power to prepare combined reports.

Section 137 (of the 2006 Act) stipulates that on completion of an inspection under section 136 the Her Majesty's Chief Inspector must prepare a written report on the matters subject to the inspection. A copy of the report is to be provided to the Local Authority and the Secretary of State. On receipt of the report the Local Authority must prepare a written statement highlighting the action it proposes to take in response to the report and the period within which it proposes to take that action. Further, the Local Authority must publish the inspection report within 30 days of receipt and its statement within 70 working days of receiving the report (Regulation 2 & 3 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007).

With regards to the LSCB, on receipt of the report the LSCB must, within 30 working days, arrange for the report to be published in such a manner the LSCB considers it appropriate (Regulation 3 of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations 2013).

The outcome of the 25 November - 18 December 2013 Ofsted inspection is that the service 'requires improvement'. The inspection did not find any serious failures or widespread malpractices which would place Looked After Children and care leavers at risk of significant harm. The Council is therefore not in breach of any of its statutory duties towards assisting children within its area and safeguarding their welfare.

Under the Council's Constitution the Cabinet has the appropriate powers to agree the recommendation proposed at the outset of this report.

There are no other significant legal implications arising out of this report to bring to Cabinet's attention.

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The full inspection report for Hillingdon published is by Ofsted. A copy of the inspection report can be found attached at appendix 1.

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/hillingdon>