

Cabinet – 21 June 2018

Ofsted Working Group

Portfolio: Councillor Wilson

Related portfolios: N/A

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

- 1. Summary:** Following the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers that took place in June and July 2017, Ofsted produced a report that made twelve recommendations. In responding to this report, the Council has prepared a post-Ofsted Action Plan setting out how these recommendations will be addressed.

On 16 October 2017, the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that a working group be established to conduct an in-depth examination of one or more of the twelve recommendations and the responses provided by the action plan.

This report relates to a 'deep dive' review undertaken by the Scrutiny Working Group in relation to progress being made into the responses to the post – Ofsted Action Plan. It was formed by the Members of the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and met on three occasions. It focused on two Ofsted recommendations and reported back to the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2018.

The two recommendations which were the focus of the 'deep dive' review were

Recommendation 1: Ensure that thresholds of need are understood and applied at every stage of the child's journey.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that frontline management oversight of practice improves the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children.

The methodology of the 'deep dive' review involved meeting directly with a range of front line staff and managers, the Chair of Walsall Children's Safeguarding Board and representatives of key partner agencies.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet approves recommendation of the Working Group for implementation.
- 2.2 Cabinet notes and endorses the methodology of the review.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 Recommendation in relation to Ofsted recommendation one '**Ensure that thresholds of need are understood and applied at every stage of the child's journey**'.
- 3.2 A further briefing to be provided to Members regarding the removal of the statutory requirement to have a Local Safeguarding Children's Board to ascertain what arrangements are to be made to continue to exercise the functions that have been carried out by the LSCB.

The new Chair of the LSCB is in the process of working with partners to determine the arrangements in response to the Social Work Act 2017 which removes the statutory requirement to have a Local Safeguarding Children's Boards. A full briefing for Members will be prepared by the Head of Safeguarding once these arrangements have been agreed.

- 3.3 *That the MASH team needs to be strengthened by the allocation of support from a housing worker and a mental health nurse, and that the partners for these areas of activity be invited to consider this request.*

The MASH Operational Group which oversees the working arrangement for MASH is already in discussion with 'Money, Home, Job' to secure housing expertise into the MASH. The recommendation to secure a mental health nurse will need to be considered by the Clinical Commissioning Group as part of ongoing discussion in relation to the MASH and a business case has already been submitted.

- 3.4 *That the Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust be requested to consider allocating additional staffing to increase the nursing support provided by the trust to the MASH.*

The recommendation to consider allocating additional staff to increase nursing support will be considered by the Clinical Commissioning Group as part of ongoing discussions in relation to the MASH and this has been included in the current business case.

- 3.5 *That the use of the escalation policy be encouraged and further information on the policy and its use (including a clear indication of how to escalate cases) be communicated to all partners to encourage them to take ownership of it and to incorporate it into their own processes and training programmes.*

The LSCB will be launching the revised 'Threshold Guidance' in June and this articulates the escalation policy. The ongoing training which is delivered on behalf of the LSCB will raise awareness of and promote the escalation policy.

- 3.6 *That there is a regular audit to improve social worker assessments of families and their children prior to such cases being referred into the MASH.*

There is a clear audit schedule which addresses the focus on quality of social work and early help assessments.

- 3.7 *That comparative data be sought from the other local authorities that use the Wolverhampton Court and CAFCASS, in order to assess/ understand the regional practice in relation to making care orders at home.*

The local Family Justice Board produces regular performance information. In addition, there is national research being undertaken into the increase in Public Law Proceedings and rising number of care orders. Information about the numbers of children subject to care orders at home is available.

- 3.8 *That the forthcoming training on thresholds be subject to evaluation and follow up within six weeks of the events. This is to determine and assist the LSCB to understand the difference that is being made due to its impact.*

This recommendation will be reported back to the Learning and Development sub group of the LSCB which is responsible for the delivery of multi-agency training and will inform their existing evaluation process.

- 3.9 Recommendation in relation to Ofsted recommendation two '**Ensure that frontline management oversight of practice improves the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children**'.

That consideration be given to the commissioning of amendments to the supervision monitoring tool and mosaic in order to:

a) *Either:*

(i) take account of staff member of absence, for example due to illness or being on maternity leave, and accurately reflect this in the statistics;

Or

(ii) incorporate an additional field in the template to allow an explanation for when supervision meeting could not take place;

b) Provide managers with a facility on the dashboards that will enable them to generate both 'in time' data and reports

- 3.10 Significant progress has been made in updating the existing supervision monitoring tool which will be trialled over the next month and which will be able to take into account staff absence and give a more accurate reflection of compliance. This will take some time to embed but should provide improved performance information. In addition, the development of Performance dash

boards is well underway and currently is focused on delivery of key aspects of practice such as child protection which can be used in supervision to support improved performance.

- 3.11 *That further investigation be carried out into the manner in which informal discussions of cases can be more effectively recorded by managers and staff members and then better incorporated into the supervision process.*

This will be explored further by the Principle Social Worker with social workers and managers.

- 3.12 *That the communication of information on training programmes be reviewed to achieve a consistency of approach, so that all members of staff are aware of training opportunities as and when they are available*

An up-to-date training brochure is in the process of being finalised and will be publicised across Children's Services in June. In addition, there is regular communication from the Social Work Academy about forthcoming training events. The training steering group regularly reviews both publicity and take up of training courses and Managers receive regular updates.

- 3.13 *That a further investigation be carried out into the caseloads being borne by on-call and duty social workers.*

There is a regular monthly update at Children's Services Performance Board on the caseloads of all social workers and this is closely monitored. The ability to recruit both permanent and agency social workers has an impact on caseloads and the Recruitment and Retention strategy is currently being reviewed. However, recruitment and retention of social workers continues to be a major challenge not only within Walsall but regionally and nationally.

4. Council Corporate Plan priorities

The Key Council Priority: **Children** have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.

5 Risk management

Progress in relation to the Ofsted action plan is regularly monitored at Children's Services Senior Management Team and Cabinet receives a quarterly update report.

6. Financial implications

None

7. Legal implications

None

8. Property implications

None

9. Health and wellbeing implications

None

10. Staffing implications

None

11. Reducing inequalities

The implications for reducing inequalities have been taken into account and assessed as set out below. Responding to the recommendation detailed in the Ofsted Report must enable greater and demonstrable improvements in the equality of services, which, when achieved will have a positive impact across our most vulnerable children, young people and families, in the more immediate and longer term to support the raising of aspirations.

12. Consultation

Background papers

Ofsted Inspection Report
Ofsted Action Plan

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