



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

**OFSTED INSPECTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF
HELP AND PROTECTION, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE
LEAVERS**

MINUTE EXTRACT FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH MARCH 2017

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Families concerning the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection of children social care services in Leicestershire and an Action Plan prepared to address the recommendation contained with the Ofsted report. A copy of the report, marked Agenda Item 8, is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions and comments made by members of the Committee, the Director and Cabinet Lead Member advised as follows:-

- i) The most recent self-assessment undertaken had concluded that the outcome of the inspection was likely to find that the Authority would be rated as requiring improvement but noting that there were areas of good practice. The Ofsted findings therefore reflected the most recent self-assessment and the Council should therefore accept the findings and seek to address the recommendations contained in the report;
- ii) Based on the self-assessment and in advance of the Ofsted inspection the Department had begun to address some of the issues now identified in the Ofsted report with an investment of £0.5million for making improvements. As a result the Action Plan contained references of work having commenced in January. The Ofsted inspection team were made aware of these proposals and whilst generally supportive advised that they were unable to factor these into their consideration as it was too early to assess their impact;
- iii) The Action Plan would be revised in the light of further work being undertaken and having regard to the impact of the work already underway. As such, and given the need to engage with partners, it was not possible to provide a definitive statement of the resource requirements at this stage. In this regard the Committee were reminded that many of the proposed actions did not have a resource requirement but were about embedding good management and social work practices within teams;

- iv) There was no clear view as to an appropriate social work case load as it varied with the complexity of the case and experience of the staff dealing with the case. However, having recognised that case-loads were on the high side part of the £0.5 million investment was used to engage temporary social work staff. The aim of the department was to have permanent staff in post wherever possible but given the increasingly competitive market for social work staff it needed to engaged interim staff;
- v) With regard to the criticisms made about support to newly qualified social work staff this had been accepted. The Department was now working with the Learning and Development service to address this and involved providing support and mentoring from senior practitioners.
- vi) The concerns regarding First Response related primarily to the timeliness of response and not so much the quality of the response. The Action Plan had prioritised this area with a view to seeking early improvements in response times;
- vii) The Action Plan would be submitted to Ofsted as required. Under the current arrangements there would not be a direct follow up on the Action Plan. There was need to have in place robust systems to ensure implementation of actions but also to provide evidence as to whether such actions were having the desired impact. In addition the Department would look to other means of assessing its performance including a Peer Review process;
- viii) The difficulties identified in the Ofsted report regard therapeutic services such as CAMHS were recognised. The most recent Care Quality Commission report into therapeutic services provided by the Leicestershire Partnership Trust also raised similar concerns. In this regard members were advised that a summit was to be held in mid-March involving the key stakeholders to find a way forward. The Director indicated that he would be pressing for a review of the CAMHS contract and for the development of a new pathway for services which included some early interventions which would in turn reduce the need for more intensive services. The development of the new Children's Plan and the establishment of a new Children's Partnership Group as part of the Health and Wellbeing Board would provide a dedicated forum for championing children health services;
- ix) The concerns raised regarding housing support for young people aged 16-17 was acknowledged and the Director would seek to bring forward actions aimed at speeding up support for these young people.

RESOLVED:-

That the Cabinet be advised that the Committee notes the recommendations set out in the report and:-

- a) accepts the findings of the Ofsted inspection report;
- b) welcomes and supports the Action Plan prepared in response;
- c) would wish to work with the Department and Lead Member to develop a new performance management and monitoring framework so that the proposed actions are implemented and monitored to ensure that they are delivering the required improvements in services to children and young people;
- d) has requested the Director of Children and Families Service to report to the next meeting with an update on the action plan and proposals new performance and monitoring referred to in (c) above.

This page is intentionally left blank