

MAYOR & CABINET		
Report Title	Ofsted Inspection of 'Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers' and the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board	
Key Decision	Yes	Item No.
Ward	All	
Contributors	Executive Director for Children & Young People (Director Children's Social Care)	
Class	Open	Date: 23 March 2016

1. Summary and Purpose

- 1.1 An Ofsted inspection of 'Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers' was undertaken in Lewisham between 26 October 2015 – 20 November 2015, at the same time an Ofsted inspection of the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) was completed simultaneously. This report gives an overview of the main findings, grading and subsequent action being taken as a result of these inspections. This report should be read in line with the full inspection report attached as Appendix A, both reports are available on www.reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/lewisham.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Mayor:

- Notes the Inspection reports, findings and associated recommendations
- Endorses the Lewisham Improvement plan as a response to the inspection findings (Appendix B.)
- Notes the associated LSCB Improvement plan (Appendix C)

3. Policy Context

The purpose of an Ofsted inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

This inspection was conducted under s136 Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The proposals within this report are consistent with the Council's corporate priorities as set out in the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020. In particular, the proposals relate to the Council's priorities regarding young people's Achievement and Involvement, Protection of Children and Community Leadership and Empowerment. The proposals are also in line with the Children and Young People's Plan 2015-18 and the four outcomes of building resilience, staying safe, being healthy and active and raising achievement and attainment.

4. Background

4.1 Overview of Inspection

4.1.1 An Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers was undertaken in Lewisham between 26 October 2015 – 20 November 2015. The framework for this inspection was first used in 2014 and was subsequently updated in October 2015. The Inspection was conducted as part of a 3 year cycle of inspection and was undertaken over a period of 4 weeks by a team of 7 of Her Majesty's inspectors and 1 Quality Assurance manager. The Inspection consisted of data analysis, documentation review, observation, file audits, focus groups and individual meetings with children and young people, Local authority staff and partner agencies.

4.1.2 The full Ofsted report was published at the same time as the Inspection report of the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board on 20th January 2016. The Inspection Framework allows for 4 potential judgements, Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate, the specific areas judged are outlined below with the overall inspection grading.

4.1.3 The judgements for Lewisham were made in the 3 categories and 2 sub categories as follows:

- Overall grading – Requires Improvement
- Children who need help & protection – Requires Improvement
- Children Looked After & Achieving Permanence - Good
 - Adoption – Good
 - Care Leavers – Good
- Leadership, Management & Governance – Requires Improvement

4.1.4 This inspection outcomes constituted a change from the judgments made in the previous inspection with the overall effectiveness for Safeguarding being 'Outstanding' and for Looked After Children being 'Good.'

4.1.5 The new Inspection arrangements are undoubtedly more stringent than previous inspections although the grading of "Good" has remained for Looked after Children, inspectors noted a deterioration in standards for children in need of early help and protection.

4.1.6 At the time of presentation of this report 83 authorities have been inspected under this framework and of these the following gradings have been made:

- Outstanding – 0
- Good – 19
- Requires improvement - 42
- Inadequate – 22

4.1.7 The inspection judgement for the LSCB was 'Requires Improvement.'

4.2 Recommendations

Local authority

4.2.1 As outlined within the report there are 9 recommendations:

- 3 recommendations relate to Early Help
- 3 recommendations relate directly to social work practice
- 1 recommendation relates directly to Child Sexual Exploitation
- 1 recommendation regarding Governance
- 1 recommendation relates to performance management and information systems.

4.2.2 The 9 detailed inspection recommendations are outlined below:

1. Improve governance arrangements so that there is effective oversight, support and challenge of children's services by the local authority's Children and Young People's Select Committee and the Corporate Parenting Panel to drive and monitor service improvement.
2. Review processes within the duty team to ensure that systems to manage contacts and referrals, including domestic abuse notifications, are secure and enable social workers and other professionals to keep children and young people safe and protected, in a timely manner.
3. Ensure that a revised early help strategy is implemented so that early help is effectively targeted, coordinated and evaluated so that families receive appropriate support when need is first identified.
4. Take action to improve information and intelligence sharing across partners regarding children at risk of sexual exploitation and/or going missing and use this to improve prevention and disruption activity.
5. Improve performance management and information systems to ensure that managers at all levels have timely, relevant and accurate performance information to enable them to work effectively and deliver a consistently good service.
6. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of step-up and step-down arrangements between early help and children's social care to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to improve services.
7. Ensure that all plans for any child or young person receiving a service focus on reducing risk; identify the needs of all children in the family; and are understood by parents and young people. Plans should be specific, measurable and time-bound.
8. Ensure that initial strategy discussions include relevant professionals to inform timely decision-making and planning in child protection investigations, as required by guidance.
9. Ensure that life story work is completed for those children and young people in long-term care who need to know and understand their life histories.

LSCB

4.2.3 For the LSCB there were 4 recommendations, 3 of these align with recommendations to the Local Authority with 1 recommendation relating to the workings of the LSCB itself.

4.2.4 The recommendations are detailed below:

1. Review the board's early help and threshold documentation in the light of changes to frontline services as part of an overall review of the early help offer within the local authority area.
2. Clarify the governance role of the board's sexual exploitation sub-group to align it with other groups within the local authority area.
3. Implement fully the performance framework to ensure that there is interrogation of performance reports to provide a clear understanding of any exceptions or deficits.
4. Streamline action planning and ensure that any actions undertaken are aligned with the board's priorities.

4.3 Improvement Plan and Delivery

4.3.1 The outcomes of the Inspection have been shared with elected members, partners, managers and front line staff within the Local Authority. An Inspection seminar has been held with the Lead Ofsted Inspector and senior officers and partners on 29th February 2016 to discuss detailed aspects of the inspection outcome as is customary practice.

4.3.2 From the date of publication of the inspection report on 20th January the Local Authority has 70 days to prepare and forward an Improvement Plan to Ofsted; this is also the case for the LSCB to respond. Understandably the plans will be reviewed by Ofsted to measure progress at the next scheduled inspection; the improvement plan for the Local Authority is attached as Appendix B and for the LSCB as Appendix C.

4.3.3 The plans aligns to areas of focus in line with the recommendations but also address some of the additional development areas highlighted within the report that did not lead to a formal recommendation. Work has already been initiated to address the recommendations as detailed within the plans, this includes:

- The creation of a multi-agency Early Help Board, the first meeting was held in January, dedicated staff have been aligned to assist the delivery of this.
- A review of our CSE arrangements with proposals for change due to be presented to the next Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board in March.
- 4 development sessions with our Corporate Parenting board to refresh Governance arrangements and associated delivery for services to our Looked After Children; the first of these was held on 3rd February 2016.
- Development of a comprehensive workforce strategy to assist in consistency of social work interventions and best practice to protect and support vulnerable children and young people. A Strategy Group has been created and workforce surveys have been completed to inform the strategy.

- A review of performance information has been initiated to ensure integrity of information and that the right information is available to the right people to inform good analysis and decision making. In association with this the IT platform for Lewisham was singled out as hampering service development and delivery, as such the improvement plan addresses the need for the roll out of Thin Client in April/May 2016 to promote greater stability as well as to allow usage of the most current release of the Liquid Logic system used for social care casework recording. There is still significant work required in this area to allow more mobile working and the use of digital technology to maximise efficiency and costs.
- An LSCB development day was held on 3rd March to assist with the framework to deliver priorities moving forward.

4.4 Monitoring and Reporting arrangements

- 4.4.1 The Local Authority Improvement Plan will be overseen by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and will be subject to quarterly progress reporting until completion. Co-ordination of the plan will be provided by the Corporate Strategy Unit and additional monitoring reports will also be made to the Children's Social Care Senior Management Team as well as the wider Children's Services Departmental Management Team. Priorities within the Improvement Plan are aligned with the Children's Social Care Business Plan 2016-17.

The LSCB in turn will monitor Appendix C via the main Board, the plan will be co-ordinated via the LSCB business manager.

5. Financial implications

There are no direct revenue implications arising for this report

The improvement plans may identify that extra expenditure is required in the future. In the first instance this will be managed through the current Children and Young People's budget.

There are no capital implications from this report.

6. Legal implications

Services to children are provided within the statutory framework providing support and protection to the general child population as well as those requiring individual intervention. The efficacy of these services and the operation of the framework as a whole is inspected by OFSTED as described in the report, with timescales for action and improvement plans where required as set out above.

7. Crime and disorder implications

There are no crime and disorder implications from this report.

8. Equalities implications

There are no Equalities implications from this report.

8.2 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

8.3 In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

8.4 The duty continues to be a “have regard duty”, and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.

8.5 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/equality-act-codes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/>

8.6 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

1. The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
2. Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
3. Engagement and the equality duty
4. Equality objectives and the equality duty
5. Equality information and the equality duty

8.7 The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty/guidance-on-the-equality-duty/>

9. Environmental implications

There are no particular environmental implications

10. Background documents

None.