

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 24 OCTOBER 2017

UPDATE ON THE CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – OFSTED MONITORING VISIT FEEDBACK

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Assistant Director Safeguarding Services (Children's Social Care) have been invited to the meeting to provide an update on the Children's Social Care Service Improvement Plan.
2. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the outcome of Ofsted's second monitoring visit of the Council's safeguarding services, which took place on 12 and 13 September 2017 and focused on the Family Front Door (FFD) service.

Background

3. On 24 January 2017, Ofsted published their report entitled 'Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers; and review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board'.
4. The overall judgement for Worcestershire was 'inadequate'. This was a very disappointing judgement for Worcestershire's children and young people, as well as for the committed and hardworking staff within the service.
5. Following the Ofsted judgement, an eight-point Service Improvement Plan (SIP) was developed to cover all of the recommendations made by Ofsted.
6. Ofsted conducted their first monitoring visit on 23 and 24 May 2017, with the focus being the Family Front Door service. Unfortunately, the feedback Ofsted provided in May was not as we would have liked.
7. During the May visit, Ofsted acknowledged our detailed improvement plan, which is targeted on outcomes but challenged whether the focus was too broad based at our current point in the improvement journey.
8. In response to this feedback, Children, Families and Communities agreed to focus on a smaller set of key priorities to enable tangible and sustained improvement to take place. It is important to note that this does not supersede the eight point plan, but instead places an intensive focus on the following priorities/activities already included:
 - Family Front Door – Management of Contacts, Referrals and Assessments

- Remodel the Early Help Offer
- Culture – Create a Child-focused and Accountable Culture
- Quality Assurance – Understand What 'Good' Looks Like

Feedback from Ofsted Monitoring Visit – No.2

9. Ofsted conducted their second monitoring visit on 12 and 13 September 2017, with the focus again being on the Family Front Door service. Dominic Stephens, HMI from Ofsted, led the inspection working alongside fellow Ofsted inspector Brenda McInerney.

10. Appendix 1 is the outcome letter which was published by Ofsted on 12 October 2017. The purpose of each letter following an Ofsted monitoring visit is to outline the outcome of the visit. There are no judgements made, but instead a statement summarising the direction of travel.

11. Ofsted's headline statement on Worcestershire following the monitoring visit in September is that 'the local authority has taken steps to tackle the serious weaknesses and is now beginning to make progress to improve services for children and young people'.

12. This is a positive message and reference is made to the local authority's priority improvement plan for July to September 2017, which is described by Ofsted as succinct and well-focused. Ofsted feel that the revised priority plan has been used effectively to drive and measure progress against key priorities, in particular, improving both the pace and quality of the work of the FFD.

13. It is important to note that there is a clear understanding that Worcestershire are still in the early stage of their improvement journey and there is still much work to be done. Appendix 2 is a presentation which will be delivered to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 24 October, by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding Services and will elaborate on the feedback provided by Ofsted, as well as outlining next steps.

Next Steps

14. Based on the feedback provided by Ofsted and recognition that we are still in the early stages of improvement, a decision has been made to retain the priority plan with the focus on the same four priority areas, whilst refreshing the activity within them.

15. The next phase of the plan will cover the period October 2017 to March 2018.

16. The next Ofsted monitoring visit (No. 3) has not been confirmed but is likely to be scheduled to take place during February 2018 with the focus of the visit to be decided.

Purpose of the Meeting

17. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider the information in the report and the presentation to be provided on the day;
- determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny; and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Ofsted Monitoring Visit Outcome Letter
- Appendix 2 – Presentation to be delivered to Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel by Assistant Director: Safeguarding Services

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities) the following background papers relate to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and background papers for the meetings of the Cabinet held on 2 February 2017, 6 April 2017 and 28 September 2017
- Agenda and background papers for the meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 13 March 2017 and 14 August 2017