

Committee	Dated:
Community and Children Services Safeguarding Sub Committee Audit and Risk	11/01/2019 05/02/2019 12/03/2019
Subject: Ofsted Focused Visit on Care Leavers	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Chris Pelham, Assistant Director People	

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on the outcome of the Ofsted focused visit undertaken in October 2018, which looked at City of London's offer for care leavers.

This visit was conducted under the new Ofsted Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. Notice of the visit was given on 17 October 2018. Two inspectors were on-site on 24 October 2018, and provided feedback on 25 October 2018.

The visit generated a letter setting out the findings of the visit and recommendations for improvement. The visit does not generate a graded judgement of effectiveness – this is given during standard (two-week) or short (one-week) inspections.

The findings of the focused visit are set out in the Ofsted Letter (Appendix 1). The visit found much evidence demonstrating a strong offer for our care leavers, including:

- Care leavers in the City of London benefit from a strong service that ensures they are very well supported. They receive effective help which enables most to achieve good outcomes.
- Skilled, determined social workers are persistent in engaging effectively with care leavers.
- The accommodation needs of young people are being met effectively and all are in suitable accommodation.
- The emotional and physical health needs of care leavers are well considered and well met.
- Senior leaders and managers are making efforts to ensure that care leavers' views and experiences are being used to help inform service improvements.

Inspectors identified three areas for improvement:

- Risk assessments should more clearly articulate measures to address and minimise risk.

- The demonstration of young people’s involvement in preparing their pathway plans should be more explicit and consistent.
- Social workers should receive consistently reflective, analytical supervision and clear management oversight.

There were no priority actions identified.

These findings have been built into our Service Improvement Plan. One key area of work that addresses the improvement recommendations involves the Children’s Social Care workforce engaging in a system-wide development programme with the College of Social Work Systemic Practice. This issue was already in development prior to the focused visit. This 12-month programme will commence in April 2019. It will involve all qualified social workers up to assistant director level who are engaged in theory and practice-based learning that supports the implementation of the systemic model of social work practice in the City of London. This, in turn, will assist in further improving the quality of assessment, supervision and recording.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In 2018, Ofsted introduced a new ILACS framework. This replaced the previous Single Inspection Framework and introduced a risk-based approach to determine the type and frequency of inspections that local authorities would receive.
2. This framework includes:
 - local authorities sharing an annual self-evaluation of the quality and impact of social work practice with Ofsted
 - an annual engagement meeting between Ofsted regional representatives and the local authority to review the self-evaluation and to reflect on what is happening in the local authority
 - Ofsted analysing their local authority intelligence system which compiles data and information into a single record
 - undertaking focused visits that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children
 - undertaking standard inspections (usually for local authorities judged ‘requires improvement to be good’) and short inspections (for local authorities judged ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’)
 - joint targeted area inspections carried out by Ofsted, Care Quality Commission, and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary.

3. Focused visits evaluate an aspect of service, a theme or the experiences of a cohort of children – in this case care leavers. The visits happen between standard and short inspections. Following five days' notice, two inspectors are on-site for up to two days in one week. Focused visits include some or all of the same inspection activity as a standard or short inspection.
4. Each focused visit will cover part of the scope of standard and short inspections. Leadership is a feature of all focused visits, principally through the lens of the impact of leaders on practice with children and families.
5. In carrying out a focused visit on care leavers, Ofsted inspected:
 - looked-after children aged 16 and 17
 - care leavers aged 18 to 25
 - accommodation
 - employment, education and training
 - transition to adulthood
 - staying close and in touch.
6. During the focused visit, inspectors evaluate the effectiveness of:
 - performance management
 - management oversight
 - supervision
 - quality assurance
 - continuous professional development of the workforce.
7. Inspectors do not make graded judgements at the outcome of a focused visit. Nor will they indicate what the grade may have been if the visit had been a short or standard inspection. The outcome will include findings about strengths and areas for improvement, reported in a published letter (see Appendix 1).
8. Where inspectors find serious weaknesses, they will identify areas for priority action. An area for priority action is either:
 - an area of serious weakness that is placing children at risk of inadequate protection and significant harm; or
 - unnecessary delay in identifying permanent solutions for children in care that results in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted.
9. Priority actions may result from particular or localised failings to protect or care for children, as well as from systemic failures or deficits.
10. Inspectors will use findings from focused visits when planning their next short or standard inspection. The evidence from a focused visit will not be used as

primary evidence but may enable inspectors to target their evidence gathering more effectively.

Current Position

11. In September 2018, Ofsted held the annual engagement meeting with the Director of Community and Children's Services, the Independent Chair of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board and senior managers from Community and Children's Services. This meeting noted that City of London had a good self-evaluation that was clear and well evidenced.
12. On 17 October 2018, City of London received notice of a focused visit in respect of care leavers. The visit took place on 24 October 2018, with feedback on 25 October 2018.
13. The focused visit involved meeting with social workers, partners, young people, managers and the Chairman of Community and Children's Services in their capacity as Lead Member for Children's Services.
14. The findings from the visit are detailed in the letter at Appendix 1. The letter highlighted the following good practice areas:
 - Care leavers in the City of London benefit from a strong service that ensures that they are very well supported. They receive effective help which enables most to achieve good outcomes. There is a determined and appropriately ambitious political and corporate focus to sustain and improve outcomes for care leavers. The service knows itself well and is aware of areas where further improvement is required.
 - Skilled, determined social workers are persistent in engaging effectively with care leavers. All care leavers are in suitable, safe accommodation and 'staying put' arrangements are actively promoted. There is a strong and consistent determination to ensure that care leavers access education, employment and training. Care leavers receive effective help in developing the necessary skills to live independently.
 - Social workers are consistently tenacious in their efforts to stay in touch with young people who leave care. The local authority has meaningful contact with all its care leavers. Young people who had been spoken to by inspectors reported that they felt safe where they lived.
 - The accommodation needs of young people are being met effectively and all are in suitable accommodation. The different levels of support needed by young people are well understood, including the need for staying put arrangements where this is indicated by the level of need.
 - Care leavers who are unaccompanied asylum seekers or refugees receive good support from their social workers. This includes help with understanding how to progress their application to stay in the UK.

- The emotional and physical health needs of care leavers are well considered and well met. Health assessments are conducted regularly and are of good quality. Care leavers consistently receive their health histories in a written form and meet with the designated nurse for children in care.
- The Independent Reviewing Officer is effective in improving planning for young people aged between 16 and 17 years.
- Senior leaders and managers are making efforts to ensure that care leavers' views and experiences are being used to help inform service improvements.

15. The report also identified areas for further development:

- Risk assessments to more clearly articulate measures to address and minimise risk.
- More explicit and consistent demonstration of young people's involvement in preparing their pathway plans.
- Supervision of social workers to consistently demonstrate reflective, analytical supervision and clear management oversight.

16. These development areas have been built into the Service Improvement Plan to ensure that sustained practice improvement is evident. This will be subject to review by the Service Improvement Board and the Safeguarding Sub Committee.

17. System-wide training will be undertaken from April 2019 with all qualified social workers, practice managers and leaders engaged in systemic social work training. This will support improvement in the quality of supervision and case oversight.

Corporate Plan

18. The provision of services for care leavers sits within the Corporate Plan priorities of 'People are safe and feel safe'; 'People enjoy good health and wellbeing'; and 'People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential'.

Conclusion

19. This report provides Members with the details of the outcome of the Ofsted focused visit inspection of care leavers services in October 2018.

20. The visit noted the good service delivered across a range of areas, including education, accommodation and social work engagement and leadership.

21. There were no priority action areas identified.

22. Three areas were identified for improvement work, which will be built into the Service Improvement Plan.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Ofsted Letter

Chris Pelham

Assistant Director People

T: 020 8332 1636

E: chris.pelham@cityoflondon.gov.uk