

Committee:	Date:
Safeguarding Sub Committee	5 February 2014
Subject: Ofsted inspection preparation Self-Assessment	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
<p style="text-align: center;">Summary</p> <p>This report summarises the approach taken by the City of London in preparing for its Ofsted Inspection of services to children in need of help and protection, children looked after and leaving care. It identifies strengths and areas for development after a self-assessment exercise was undertaken within the Department of Communities and Children's Services.</p> <p>As a result of the assessment, the Department is confident that it is delivering 'good' services to children and families and that there are indicators of 'outstanding' practice. An action plan has been created to address the areas for development.</p> <p>Recommendation(s)</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the report; and • Agree the proposal to bring regular updates on progress to this Committee. 	

Main Report

Background

1. Ofsted is the regulatory body that inspects local authority Children's Services' arrangements in respect of Safeguarding and Looked After Children.
2. These inspections focus on evaluating outcomes for children and young people and the impact that practice and services have on improving outcomes, including through managing risk and minimising the incidence of child abuse and neglect. The programme of inspections of safeguarding and looked after children services and outcomes is carried out by experienced inspectors from Ofsted under section 20 of the Children Act 2004.
3. The scope of the inspection covers safeguarding and looked after children and the Local Safeguarding Children Board arrangements. Ofsted adopts the definition of safeguarding used in the *Children Act 2004*, and in the government guidance document *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2013). This can be summarised as:

- protecting children and young people from maltreatment
 - preventing impairment of children and young people's health or development
 - ensuring that children and young people are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
 - undertaking that role so as to enable those children and young people to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.
4. Inspection serves to contribute to improved and sustainable outcomes for looked after children and their families. The inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers focuses on:
- the **overall effectiveness** of services and arrangements for children looked after, care leavers and children who need help and protection.

The overall effectiveness judgement is a cumulative judgement derived from:

- the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
 - the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence including graded judgements on:
 - adoption performance
 - the experiences and progress of care leavers
 - leadership, management and governance.
5. Local authorities will be notified of the inspection the day before inspectors arrive on-site. When scheduling inspections, Ofsted will take account of: previous inspection outcomes; information from other sources such as whistleblowing, complaints and serious case reviews; and any other relevant information.
6. Normally, seven suitably qualified and experienced HM Inspectors (HMI) will carry out the inspection. Six will be experienced in both the delivery and inspection of social care, while one inspector will be experienced in the inspection of education provision. The inspection will always be led by a social care HMI. The inspection team will normally be on-site for 11 working days across a four-week period although this depends on the size and context of the local authority to be inspected.
7. Inspectors will:
- evaluate and explore a sample of children's cases in order to judge the quality of front-line practice and management and the difference this makes to the lives of children, young people, their families and carers – this will include discussions with social work staff, including their managers and other professionals working with the child or young person;
 - test the decision-making at all stages of a child's journey: early help; referral and assessment; children in need; child protection planning;

continuing support; the decision to remove a child from home; permanence planning; placement decisions, including work to support return home; and leaving care;

- meet with children, young people, parents and carers;
- shadow staff in their day-to-day work, for example observing practice in the duty team, the work of social workers with children and families and the work of independent reviewing officers; and
- observe practice in multi-agency meetings such as child protection strategy meetings, child protection conferences, looked after children reviews and resource panels.

Current Position

8. As part of the preparation for inspection, Children's Services have undertaken a Self-Assessment against the indicators set out by Ofsted for the judgement of 'good' to 'outstanding' using a self-assessment tool. This evaluation has helped us to identify strengths in our arrangements and areas where we feel we can strengthen our arrangements in order to achieve a judgement of 'outstanding'.
9. The Self-Assessment tool is to be used as an iterative process which will be kept updated and will be brought back to the Safeguarding Sub Committee each time it meets until the City is inspected. This will serve the purpose of members having the opportunity to know and comment on our strengths and weaknesses and to have a full understanding of how we deliver services to our children and families.
10. Additionally, a 'Strength Based Learning Review' took place within the Department during week commencing 20th January 2014. This exercise took the form of two independent experts in the field of Social Care auditing our case files, meeting with our Children and Families team and talking to our young people in the same way as the Ofsted inspectors might when we are inspected, in order to identify areas for improvement and to test how well we know ourselves.
11. We believe that our real strengths lie in the fact that we have a small, stable workforce who know all of the children and families that we work with and therefore we have a detailed understanding of their issues and are able to work creatively across the Department in order to address the difficulties that they may have.
12. We have a unique approach to cases that are 'stuck' whereby we bring them to a multi-disciplinary meeting within the Department, called the 'Top 3', so that we can address whatever problems may be arising, for example housing, substance misuse, and domestic violence etc. By bringing cases to this meeting, we can use expertise from across the Department to find creative and practical solutions to the cases, and have seen some cases 'step-down' from requiring statutory intervention.

13. The Knowledge Transfer Programme that we have with Goldsmiths helps us to apply research to our practice and has added to the training and development being undertaken within the team. It is a unique model for working with higher education institutions and social care to support Continuous Professional Development/Post Qualification opportunities for Social Workers, whilst strengthening the Social Care research base for the Higher Education Institution. We have strengthened the framework that we use for early intervention, which was previously judged as 'outstanding' by Ofsted, and our staff and partners have been trained in the 'Solihull Approach' model for early intervention and engaging hard-to-engage families.
14. The thresholds for intervention are clear and understood by all partners as a result of this training. The Children and Families team, which comprises both Social Care and Early Intervention, is managed by the same team manager. This model facilitates an effective and seamless 'Step-up' to statutory intervention where necessary, or a 'Step-down' to community-based support for families.
15. In the last year, safeguarding has been improved through the creation of an Education Forum, where all of the City schools meet with the Assistant Director People and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to discuss safeguarding issues. We have been able to promote safeguarding training with them and training in relation to the LADO role. This is another area where we are unique in having such a close working relationship with independent schools.
16. Our partnership arrangements and our relationship with the voluntary and provider sector are becoming stronger, particularly since the arrival of our new Director. This has renewed a shared ownership of responsibility and accountability for improvement within the City.
17. Recognising that there is always room for improvement, we have also identified areas where we may meet the indicators of 'good' but where we can do more to strengthen our position.
18. One of the key areas for development is in relation to our Looked After Children who are all in placements outside the boundaries of the City. We need to strengthen our arrangements through the Clinical Commissioning Group for accessing health services for these young people. We also need to ensure that we work more closely with the other local authorities where these young people are placed so that they have the right access to education and housing, particularly when leaving care.
19. Some of the areas for improvement are related to processes that are currently in development and are soon to be signed off. We cannot fairly evaluate ourselves as 'good' before these processes are embedded into the day-to-day running of the service. We know, for example, that our social workers listen to our children and families and base plans on their views, but that it is not always evident how those views have informed the plans. We will be reviewing how we can better reflect these views and incorporate them into

assessments and plans while making it clear that it is the view of the child/young person or their family/carer(s).

20. The self-assessment tool draws out an action plan for us which we will be working to complete prior to the inspection. Currently, there are 15 actions although, pending feedback from the Strength Based Learning Review, the Self-Assessment will be updated to incorporate any recommendations arising from the review.

Proposals

21. It is proposed that the Assistant Director People submits regular update reports to this Committee on inspection preparation and on progress against the self-assessment action plan.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

22. The work of Children's Services and our partners supports our communities and makes the City safer.
23. Building on inspection findings helps the City to continue to provide modern, efficient and high-quality local services.

Implications

24. There are no additional financial implications in implementing the Action Plan as all costs are covered within the allocated central and local risk budgets.
25. There is a risk to the reputation of the City in not addressing the areas for development that have been identified, as they will be considered in any future inspection to safeguard children in the area.
26. It is a statutory requirement that all local authorities make effective arrangements to safeguard children.

Conclusion

27. We are confident that we deliver 'good' services to our children and families within the City; however, we are striving for continuous improvement and it is our ambition to deliver 'outstanding' services. In order to do this, we need to ensure that we deliver improvements to the current services as demonstrated in the Action Plan within the Self Assessment.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Self Assessment Spreadsheet.

Background Papers:

- Report to Community and Children's Services Committee, 20th April 2012:
Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children

Chris Pelham

Assistant Director People

T: 020 7332 1636

E: chris.pelham@cityoflondon.gov.uk