

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	30 August 2017
Executive Member/Reporting Officer	Councillor Jim Fitzpatrick – First Deputy (Performance and Finance) Stephanie Butterworth – Director of Children’s and Adults
Subject:	UPDATE ON CHILDREN’S SERVICES INSPECTION
Report Summary:	The report updates Cabinet on the progress to date following the Ofsted Inspection in September 2016.
Recommendations:	Cabinet is asked to NOTE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the contents of the attached letters from Ofsted in relation to the Ofsted monitoring visits of March and June 2017. • Support provided and progress of the delivery of the 12 week action plan.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	<p>The Cabinet are reminded to note that the Children’s Services Improvement Plan is supported by additional investment included within the 2017/18 Council Budget Report approved by the Council on 28 February 2017. Recurrent budget provision of £6 million is within the Children’s service budget from 1 April 2017 to support the additional demands on service provision together with investment previously approved by the Executive Cabinet on 14 December 2016. This investment included the family group conferencing, edge of care and care to success initiatives.</p> <p>Cabinet is also reminded to note that an additional non-recurrent sum of £6 million is also included within the service budget over the medium term to facilitate service improvement initiatives. These improvements include a review of service provision pathways and the associated business processes and system infrastructure together with additional capacity to improve the development of the service workforce.</p> <p>Investment at these levels is clearly not sustainable in the context of declining Council resources. It is therefore essential that the service identifies how expenditure can be reduced over the medium to longer term.</p>
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	Tameside Children’s Service need to continue to develop and implement the improvement programme to ensure that the necessary improvements are made. Failure to do so will result in risk to children and families of poor outcomes and unsatisfactory quality of life with the subsequent reputational risk that poses to Tameside Council and partners. As set out in ‘Putting Children First’ all local authorities that are rated inadequate by Ofsted for their children’s services go into intervention. Failure to respond effectively could lead to escalation of the intervention.
Risk Management:	The Improvement plan seeks to mitigate the risks inherent.

Access to Information :

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer Stephanie Butterworth by:



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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report summarised the update on the progress, it also details the findings of the monitoring visit of June. The letter from this monitoring visit – attached at **Appendix 1** – was published on the Ofsted website on 6 July 2017.
- 1.2 During each monitoring visit Ofsted focus on a specific area, as clearly it is not possible for them to inspect the whole service over a period of one and half days. At this monitoring visit the inspectors reviewed the progress made, with a particular but narrow focus on assessment work in the safeguarding and duty teams.
- 1.3 Ofsted considered a range of evidence, including electronic case records of four children and a further sample of approximately 10 cases, some supervision files and notes, and observation and discussion with six social workers, two team managers and senior managers.

2.0 PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2.1 Whilst challenges remain in the improvement process improvement work has been continuing at pace across the service. The section below highlights some of the key achievements and progress since Ofsted's inspection report was first published in December 2016:
 - Creation of Improvement Board with an Independent Chair and full membership from across the whole system, including DfE. This Board tests the progress against the Improvement Plan and the responsibilities of all partners.
 - Improvements to hub acknowledged in 1st monitoring visit (letter attached at **Appendix 2**); including timely decisions, appropriate application of thresholds, and the elimination of backlogs within the hub. Further improvements include:
 - An Independent Reviewing Officer is now located in the Hub to support Child Protection processes;
 - Appointment of education link officer for the hub serve as a point of contact for schools and other educational settings.
 - Joint work with schools, e.g. Droylsden Academy, to share understanding and response to children and young people in need of support.
 - Ofsted acknowledge progress on the use of performance data including:
 - Improved scrutiny of performance data and a clearer understanding of service provision;
 - Improved identification of areas of concern and better understanding of many areas of performance.
 - “Getting to Good” monthly development meetings – focusing on the actions that need to be undertaken to achieve a ‘good’ Ofsted rating.
 - Governance Visits are now well established and providing crucial feedback and strengthening management oversight.
 - Dedicated time for teams to work outside the office on specific tasks that support service improvement.
 - Introduced the role of Consultant Social Worker alongside Head of Service for Quality. The consultant Social Worker role is focused initially on supporting and developing Newly Qualified Social Workers on Assisted and Supported Year in Employment.

- In duty and safeguarding teams there has been an increase in the number of social workers from 82 to 117 enabling the creation of a 4th team and increased capacity to respond to demand. The rolling recruitment process is continuing to support a continued increase in numbers to meet demand, reduce reliance on agency staff and increase workforce stability. The recruitment of appropriately qualified and skilled staff will reduce the average caseloads to an acceptable level.
- Research in Practice working with Tameside to support practice development of children's social workers through the delivery of a three day practice development programme focused on three topic areas: Understanding the Child's World, Critical thinking in assessment and assessing and enabling parental capacity.
- Launch of Neglect Strategy and promotion of the Graded Care Profile – June 6 2017.
- Early Help attachment Service offering training to all social workers and surgeries with the Looked After Children psychologist on a monthly basis from July.
- Early Years Provider Development Team has seen the uptake of 2 year funding for child care provision increase from just over 50% to 97% for the spring term.
- Children's homes have had inspections by Ofsted and achieved positive results:
 - Boyd's Walk – "Outstanding with sustained effectiveness"
 - Clough Fold – "Good with improved effectiveness"
- Innovative use of social media and residential settings including: residential settings using Social Media and other tools such as Facebook and Survey Monkey to communication with Young People in a manner they are comfortable with. This includes weekly positives, house rules resources and weekly activities.

3.0 TWELVE WEEK ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 In response to the findings from the second Ofsted monitoring visit a 12 week action plan has been developed. This sets out a planned escalation to our improvement work, to build on the progress made to date and to accelerate our improvement journey. The 12 week action plan is attached at **Appendix 3**. Cabinet will note that we are half-way through the 12 week period with significant progress having been made.
- 3.2 The action plan does not replace the existing improvement plan rather it draws out a number of specific actions to be delivered over the next 12 weeks (July – September 2017) that will ensure progress against, and achievement of, the most time critical elements of the improvement plan – that will have greatest immediate impact. There is a key focus on ensuring compliance, continuing recruitment of appropriately skilled staff which in turn will impact on the caseload numbers and continuing the work on improving quality to remove variance.
- 3.3 This set of deliverables will be actively monitored for direct impact on practice improvement on a fortnightly basis (using an agreed set of key metrics) with a view to it having a direct and measurable impact on the quality of social work practice by September 2017.
- 3.4 Whilst significant challenges remain monitoring show an improving trajectory in a number of areas. These include:
- Key weekly compliance indicators show that performance has begun to recover with an improving trajectory on timeliness indicators. Provisional monthly data for July 2017 shows the proportion of Child and Family Assessments completed within 46 working days at the highest level since May 2016 (77% July 17, 79% May 16).

- Looked After Children with current Personal Education Plan recovering from 28.75% at Q3 2016/17 to 60% at quarter 1 and 67% in July 17 (provisional data)
- Looked After Children with Statutory Visits up to date 86% in July 17 increased from 81% at quarter 4 16/17.
- In the context of a 105% increase in the number of referrals meeting the Threshold for social care in 16/17 compared to 15/16, overall caseload levels have reduced with the proportion of social work staff with caseloads over 25 decreasing by 8% to 28% between 6 December 16 and 2 August 17.
- Staff turnover has reduced increasing stability of the services being delivered to children and families. Recruitment activity focused on reducing reliance on agency staff is beginning to impact positively on the numbers of permanent employees in the workforce.
- Threshold guidance revised and relaunched by Tameside Safeguarding Children Boards, multi-agency training sessions have been taking place to support understand and application of thresholds across the system.
- Data and intelligence review underway with learning used to inform ongoing development of future 12 week plans.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Implementation of the 12 week action plan has commenced from the beginning of July and will be monitored on a weekly basis by the Director of Children's Services (DCS). This includes significant data points which are monitored on a daily or weekly basis as necessary, for example caseload information, compliance with statutory timescales and recruitment data.
- 4.2 The six-monthly update meeting with Department for Education Advisors took place on 11 July 2017.
- 4.3 Ofsted have advised that the next monitoring visit will be on 12 and 13 September 2017.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 As set out on the front of the report.

6.0 APPENDICES

- 6.1 The following appendices are attached.
 - **Appendix 1** – second monitoring visit letter from Ofsted.
 - **Appendix 2** – first monitoring visit letter from Ofsted.
 - **Appendix 3** – 12 week action plan.