

**Report to:** **CABINET**

**Date:** 19 September 2018

**Executive Member / Reporting Officer:** Councillor Oliver Ryan – Executive Member lead for Children and Families  
James Thomas – Outgoing Interim Director of Children’s Services  
Richard Hancock – Director of Children’s Services (DCS)

**Subject:** **OFSTED MONITORING VISIT REPORT**

**Report Summary:** Ofsted’s sixth monitoring visit was carried out on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> August and the full letter with their findings is attached.

This monitoring visit and the resulting letter does not judge our overall progress but is focused upon our services to Looked After Children. It follows the previous two monitoring visits at which Ofsted commented upon “the early signs of success” in January with a focus upon the Hub and Duty, and an accelerated pace of improvement and positive outcomes for children in April with a focus upon Early Help.

Ofsted note that there has been progress for Looked After Children since the 2016 inspection judged these services to be Requires Improvement (whilst the overall judgement was Inadequate) but that the pace has been slow since that time. We accept that conclusion and the lack of any substantive progress in 2017, but note that Ofsted recognise the actions taken in 2018 which for the Looked After Children service have included putting in place a completely new management team to drive improvement at the pace we require.

Ofsted again commend our self-assessment and that we know our own strengths and weaknesses well, and so are able to target the areas needing significant improvement. There remains too much variability in the quality of assessment and planning, in the delivery of life story work and evidence of management oversight. It is positive that Ofsted again found that all children were appropriately safeguarded, that all were appropriately in care and that we have significantly strengthened our corporate parenting. Ofsted correctly recognise that Social Work recruitment and retention remains the biggest challenge to our ongoing improvement.

The next monitoring visit will be carried out on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> November and will be focused upon the Hub and Duty Teams. This is expected to be our last monitoring visit before full re-inspection in 2019.

**Recommendations:** Cabinet is asked to note the content of the report.

**Links to the Corporate Plan:** The Corporate Plan outlines the priorities for improving the borough of Tameside including the quality of life for children and families, particularly those who are most vulnerable and in need of help. The Improvement Board provides specific governance over the effective delivery of the Improvement Plan by the DCS and the Children’s Social Care service.

**Financial Implications:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from Ofsted Monitoring Visit Report, however, it must be noted that the Council continues to face significant financial pressures within Children's Services, with the number of children in care continuing to increase. The 2017/18 outturn showed a £8.6m overspend against available resources and the 2018/19 Children's Services budget has been balanced by the application of £12.5m of one off reserves. The action plan and required improvements in quality will ensure that the right decisions are made at the right time and facilitate a reduction in spend to within the available resources, although, it is likely to take a significant period of time.

**Legal Implications:**

It is important that there is effective governance and oversight of service delivery in particular given the additional resources being provided to the service to ensure value for money being achieved.

All councillors and senior officers are corporate parents and the role brings with it significant responsibility.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that a corporate parent means that they should:

- ✓ act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
- ✓ encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them
- ✓ make sure they have access to services
- ✓ make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work
- ✓ prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

As corporate parents, it's our responsibility to make sure that the council is meeting these duties towards children in care and care leavers. The LGIU have issued some useful guidance at

<https://www.local.gov.uk/corporate-parenting-resource-pack>

**Risk Management:**

A failure to have appropriate challenge and oversight of the improvement process creates a risk to the effectiveness and quality of safeguarding services provided to children in Tameside in need of help and protection.

**Access to Information :**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer James Thomas:



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