

**Report To:** COUNCIL

**Date:** 14 June 2022

**Cabinet Lead** Cllr Bill Fairfoull - Deputy Leader & Lead Member for Children

**Reporting Officer:** Ali Stathers-Tracey - Director Children's Services

**Subject:** **PUBLICATION OF OFSTED FOCUSSED VISIT & TAMESIDE RESPONSE**

**Report Summary:** This report sets out the letter published on 6 June 2022 (**Appendix A**) from the Ofsted Focussed Visit.

This report sets out our response and immediate action to swiftly address the priority actions issued to Tameside Council and our statutory partners GMP and NHS providers.

### **Background**

The previous inspection of Children's Services was an assurance visit in May 2021. Tameside was last formally rated as requiring improvement to be good in 2019.

Ofsted notified the Council on 19 April 2022 that it was coming to undertake a focussed visit of our integrated front door arrangements for children under the statutory ILACS framework.

Following an intensive week of preparation and two days on site, the Inspectors gave us feedback to say that, although children are safe and some aspects of services have improved; since their previous assurance visit in May 21. that they found that the pace of implementing the required improvements has been too slow meaning that some children were living with risk longer than they should.

These findings have resulted in the Council and our partners being issued with two priority actions for improvement, they are:

- (i) Political and corporate leaders' understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and for this to be underpinned by a well-informed self-assessment and improvement plan that will drive and monitor practice improvement effectively.
- (ii) Timely interventions to assess and reduce risk to children, including multi-agency strategy meetings and the allocation of a social worker to see children.

In addition to being required to respond to the urgent and immediate recommendations from Ofsted, the DFE advise us that they are considering issuing Tameside with a formal Improvement Notice to be in place for 12 months. This notice brings additional support and advice from an appointed improvement adviser who will work with us to offer assurance to Ministers that we are on track to deliver our agreed improvement action plan.

**Recommendations:** The Council accepts all of the recommendations and findings of the Inspectors and moves swiftly to put in to place and implement a plan to address areas that require a new focus based on an honest, detailed self-assessment, detailed action plan and revised improvement board that is chaired by an independent children's expert:

1. The Council acknowledges the challenges of delivering at

pace to improve services for children under previous leadership arrangements, including the impact of changes in Senior Officers for Children's Social Care during 2021-22.

2. The Director of Children's drive forward the recruitment and refined structures of a completely refreshed Leadership team for the social care system already initiated under the new Director of Children's Services.
3. The Council and its statutory partners commission a peer review of the effectiveness of Children's Safeguarding Partnership arrangements working with Stockport as our partner in practice. The review findings to report to the Children and Families scrutiny committee by autumn 2022.
4. The Council tasks the newly created Children and Families scrutiny committee to hold the Lead member for Children and DCS to account for progress of the improvement plan and improvement board on a quarterly basis.
5. The Council & Children and Families scrutiny committee to receive assurance from the Corporate Parenting Board that the whole Council and all partners work relentlessly to maximise opportunities for children and young people, including care leavers accommodation choice, work opportunities and inclusive education and training opportunities.
6. The Council endorses the draft transformational plan to move Children's delivery teams in to revised office accommodation in the four localities that better meets the needs of the children and families that we support and directly supports front line workers and managers.
7. The Council endorses the working draft response to Ofsted as set out in this report and the Improvement Plan attached at **Appendix B**), which is draft as it requires consultation with all partner agencies and stakeholders including Scrutiny and approval by Ofsted.

**Corporate Plan:**

To achieve our priorities:

- Very best start in life where children are ready to learn and encouraged to thrive and develop
- Aspiration and hope through learning and moving with confidence from childhood to adulthood
- Resilient families and supportive networks to protect and grow our young people

**Policy Implications:**

In line with policy and intended to strengthen approach and ensure robust challenge and holding to account of all stakeholders.

**Financial Implications:**

**(Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

In recognition of the priority that the Council has placed on achieving improvements in Children's Services, significant additional resources have been allocated to the Directorate over the last few years.

More recently, in response to the Ofsted Focussed Visit in May 2021, additional non-recurrent funding of £966K was approved from the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Reserve. This additional two year investment was provided to increase capacity to deliver service improvements.

In March 2022 additional non-recurrent funding of £250K was approved from the Council's MTFS Reserve to appoint a team of managed Social Workers for six months.

This report does not detail any additional expenditure and resources that are required to implement improvements and address the priority actions. If additional resources are to be required a further report will be brought to members detailing the request for decision making. Any request for non-recurrent funding will need to be approved from one-off reserves. Any request for recurrent funding will need to be financed from within the Council's approved budget. In order to ensure that the Council continues to set a legal budget and a financially sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan, any additional investment will need to be financed from an increase in savings and efficiencies elsewhere.

**Legal Implications:**  
**(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

Organisations that have good governance use clear decision-making processes, behave openly by reporting on their activities, actively engage with their stakeholders, effectively manage the risks they face, and take responsibility for controlling and protecting their assets, including their reputation. Each of these areas of governance activity contributes to an organisations success. This reports sets out how that is intended to be achieved with the clear aim of improving Children's outcomes foremost; noting that the Council has had to face unprecedented demand and costs particularly over covid reflecting that our communities are struggling. The experiences of children and families most in contact with our services are heavily shaped by family poverty, housing & energy cost stress as well as poor access to early support from all partner agencies be it police, health, council etc. arising from years of public service austerity. The children's social care system is hugely underfunded. Energy & food poverty are a key issue for families in need at the moment, worsened by Covid together with the increasing cost of living generally with inflation at nearly 10%. The impact of this is wide reaching, from affecting children's health and education, to undermining their confidence to build and sustain relationships. The unprecedented demand and costs we are facing is reflected in a number of national reports including [Independent review of children's social care - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-childrens-social-care) published on the 23 May 2022, which Government responded to on the same day.


**Risk Management:**

A full assessment of risks associated with the improvement plan for children will be developed and presented to the improvement board including a refreshed self-assessment of the quality of provision.

**Access to Information:**

<b>Appendix A</b>	Ofsted letter published on 6 June 2022
<b>Appendix B</b>	Working draft response to Ofsted

Further information can be obtained by contacting Ali Stathers-Tracey, Director of Children's Services

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