

6 March 2014	ITEM: 7
Corporate Parenting Committee	
Report on actions arising from the Mock Ofsted Inspection	
Report of: James Waud, Strategic Lead, YOS, Adolescent Services, Troubled Families	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Accountable Head of Service: Barbara Foster, Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes	
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services	
This report is: Public	
Purpose of Report: To provide the Corporate Parenting Committee with information in respect to the findings from the mock inspection.	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides information in respect of the mock Ofsted inspection of Child in Need and Child Protection cases held within Thurrock's Children's Social Care.

There are a number of key findings which are summarised in the Action plan attached.

Whilst these do not directly relate to LAC the effective implementation of them may well impact on the numbers of children and young people becoming Looked After and the numbers successfully returned home. The successful implementation of the Early Offer of Help should also have an impact on this area.

This report and its contents are written from an officer prospective.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1.1 That the contents of the report be noted.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

2.1. In order to obtain an objective view about the progress made since the last Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After services in 2012, Barbara Foster, Head of Service for Children's Social Care, commissioned a Strengths-based Learning Review (SLR) to be conducted in collaboration with four operational managers and two external experts.

- 2.2. The Strengths-based Learning approach to evaluating the impact of services is in line with the new *Working Together to Safeguard Children* guidelines (2013), which stipulate that:
- 2.3. *“There should be a culture of continuous learning and improvement across the organisations that work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, identifying opportunities to draw on what works and promote good practice.”*
- 2.4. The Learning Review was intended to assist in providing an independent collaborative analysis of strengths and areas for continued attention.
- 2.5. The review was informed by the revised evaluation and grade descriptors published by Ofsted in November 2013. However, the review did not include meetings with the wider range of professionals, children and young people, carers and parents that Ofsted will conduct in order to triangulate information and reach conclusions.

It is hoped that this methodology and the learning left behind will be of future value when completing the social care aspect of local self-assessments and service reviews.

- 2.6. Whilst the inspection looked primarily at safeguarding and the front door, it did look at a limited number of cases of LAC and spoke with staff. The principal findings are as stated below:-
- 2.7. *“Decisions about accommodating children and young people are made at a senior level. There was evidence of good direct work with children and Social Workers knew them well. Looked After Children generally lived in stable placements and their care plans were reviewed regularly. The IROs provided challenge, raising alerts when necessary with senior managers if they felt a care plan was not in the child’s interests. It was of concern that the IROs were not always meeting children prior to their first review. Advocacy and independent visitors are available through an independently commissioned service. There is an in-house contact service which provides supervised contact when needed”*
- 2.8. However it should be noted that the new Ofsted grade descriptors for Looked after Children and those leaving care are extremely comprehensive and far reaching and not able to come fully within the scope of this comparatively limited mock inspection.
- 2.9. A separate action plan taking all those grade descriptors into account is presently being compiled and will be the subject of a future report.
- 2.10. Apart from the specifics identified in the action plan attached the mock inspection identified five overarching principles to be applied at every stage. These were:-

a) Emphasise our child – centred focus and evidence our knowledge of children’s journey’s and their voices

b) Build a questioning culture

c) Challenge any unacceptable provision for children and young people and build continuous improvement

d) Influence stake-holders (including elected members) across all the children’s workforce

c) Strengthen Commissioning work

3. PERFORMANCE:

3.1. In the last Ofsted inspection in 2012 Thurrock’s performance in respect of looked after Children was adjudged as “Good”. However, we will not be judged on the same criteria in the next inspection and it is therefore crucial that we meet the expectations of the new framework in full in order to maintain a grading of “good” or, preferably “outstanding”

3.2 However, there are particular judgements that Ofsted will make in respect of governance and I have included some of the key ones below:-

3.3. Leadership, management and governance are likely to be judged good if:

- Local authority senior managers, leaders and elected members discharge their individual and collective statutory responsibilities. There are clear lines of accountability and governance with a clear distinction between political, strategic and operational roles. Leaders, including elected members and managers, have a comprehensive and current knowledge of what is happening at the ‘front line’ and how well children and young people are helped, cared for and protected.

Outstanding

- Leadership, management and governance are likely to be outstanding if, in addition to meeting the requirements of a ‘good’ judgement, there is evidence that leaders (both professional and political) and managers are inspirational, confident, ambitious and influential in changing the lives of local children, young people and families, including children who are looked after and those who have left or who are leaving care. They innovate and generate creative ideas to sustain the highest-quality services, including early help services, for all children and young people. They know their strengths and weaknesses well and can provide evidence of improvement over a sustained period of time. Professional relationships between the local authority and partner organisations are mature and well developed. Accountabilities are embedded and result in confident, regular evaluation and improvement of the quality of help, care and protection that is provided.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

5.1 N/A

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
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None at present.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
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There are no legal implications arising at present.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
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None at present.

6.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

N/A

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Over the next weeks and months we will be producing action plans based on the findings of the mock inspection, the last Ofsted Inspection in 2012 and the new grade descriptors. We are aiming for a grade of “outstanding” and members will play a key role in this aspiration.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- Framework evaluation schedule for the inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers
- Reviews of Local Safeguarding Children Boards
- Strengths-Based Learning Review of Children's Social Care

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Mock Inspection Action Plan

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