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Agenda Item

Report to CYP Select Committee 14th October 2015

Report of Corporate Director, CESC

OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS – KEY ISSUES FOR MEMBERS

Summary

This reports presents a summary of key issues that are relevant to elected members, arising from Ofsted inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

Recommendation

That members note the content of this report and consider its implications for the work of the Committee.

Background to the Inspection Framework

1. This inspection framework was implemented in November 2013. It is often called the SIF (Single Inspection Framework) as it replaced a number of separate inspection frameworks covering safeguarding, looked after children, adoption and fostering. Attached, for reference is Ofsted's current inspection framework and evaluation schedule.
2. The scope of the inspection covers children across a continuum of need, from those needing early help through to those receiving social care support and who may have a child protection plan, be looked after, or care leavers.
3. The inspection process has a strong focus on case tracking to evaluate the quality of practice and the difference this makes to children's lives – this will involve reviewing case files, testing the effectiveness of decision making at key points of a child's journey, observing practice, engaging with children, young people, parents and carers, and considering how their views are taken into account. The inspection team will also hold interviews with a range of practitioners, managers and stakeholders (including some elected members).
4. The inspection is unannounced and lasts nearly four weeks. Notice of the inspection is given on a Monday before commencing the following day with a focus in the rest of week 1 on the 'front end' contact, referral and assessment arrangements. The team are off site (but still in contact) during Week 2 whilst the LA audits 20 cases selected by the inspection team, before returning for fieldwork during weeks 3 and 4. Case tracking and case sampling during this period could cover more than 100 children and young people.
5. The inspection will result in judgements on:

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- the overall effectiveness of services and arrangements for children looked after, care leavers and children who need help and protection;
 - 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.
6. Inspectors will make their judgements on a four-point scale:
- outstanding
 - good
 - requires improvement
 - inadequate
7. **Appendix 1** provides a summary of the results of the 66 inspections for which reports have been published (as at the end of September 2015). For the 'overall effectiveness' judgement, over half (52%) of inspections have resulted in a judgement of Requires Improvement (RI), with none outstanding so far.

Leadership, Management and Governance

8. The role of elected members will impact most significantly on the judgement relating to 'Leadership, management and governance'. It can be expected that, during their fieldwork, inspectors will meet as a minimum with the Lead Member, the chair of the Scrutiny Committee, and some or all of those members who sit on the corporate parenting group (i.e MALAP - the multi-agency looked after children partnership). Inspectors may though, depending on lines of enquiry as they develop during inspection, wish to speak to other Scrutiny Committee members.
9. Members will wish to note in particular pages 27 to 30 of the attached inspection framework document – this sets out how Ofsted define the characteristics of 'good' performance for this judgement area.
10. **Appendix 2** gives a flavour of the issues which, in practice during inspections, have influenced Ofsted judgements regarding leadership, management and governance, and are more relevant to the role of elected members. This appendix provides extracts from a sample of 10 inspections during 2015, covering judgements of Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, and Inadequate for the 'Leadership, management and governance' judgement.
11. In addition to the feedback from these published inspection reports, officers have received feedback from the experience of colleagues following recent inspections within the North East region. The following section of this report summarises key learning points for elected members from inspection experience to date.

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Key Learning Points for Elected Members

12. A number of key issues are worthy of consideration by the Committee. To provide some structure for discussing these issues, they have been grouped here under some thematic headings.

13. Leadership:

- a) Need for strong cross-party political support and ambition for children and young people.
- b) Commitment to children and young people should be reflected in clear strategic prioritisation and investment.
- c) Evidence of robust challenge and oversight to inform good understanding of needs of children and families.

14. Partnerships and Governance:

- a) Importance of effective partnerships with Health and Police at strategic level.
- b) Need for strong member contribution to SLSCB; Health & Wellbeing Board; CYP Partnership; MALAP.
- c) Ensure effective working relationships across these key partnerships, to support good communication and avoid duplication.

15. Scrutiny and Challenge

- a) Need for visible and active support and challenge – avoid complacency.
- b) Understanding the needs of children and families.
- c) Knowing the views of frontline services – visiting and listening to staff.
- d) Understanding of, and involvement in, quality assurance activity

16. Corporate parenting

- a) Members to be strong and enthusiastic champions for looked after children and care leavers.
- b) Need to understand outcomes and challenges for this group.
- c) Know about our Children in Care Council – what they are involved in; how they support service development.

17. Performance Management

- a) Need for members to have robust performance information – data, performance indicators, reports from quality assurance and audit activity.
- b) Having a focus on outcomes – what difference is being made and how do you know?

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Areas for further consideration

18. Members will wish to consider how they respond to the learning points identified above. Areas for further action may include e.g:

- a) Finalising the programme of Scrutiny Committee member visits to services.
- b) Ways in which members can engage in and contribute to quality assurance activity.
- c) Developing a greater understanding of the corporate parenting role, and of the profile and needs of our looked after children, young people and care leavers.
- d) Determining any key areas for more in-depth analysis as part of the Committee's quarterly performance reports.

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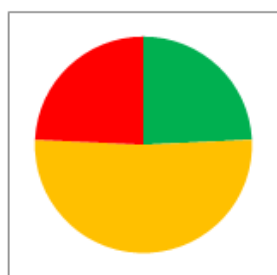
E-mail: simon.willson@stockton.gov.uk

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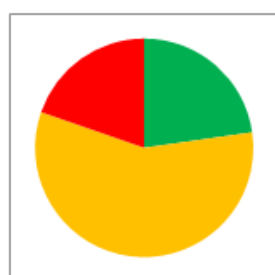
Ofsted SIF Outcomes at 28 September 2015

Appendix 1

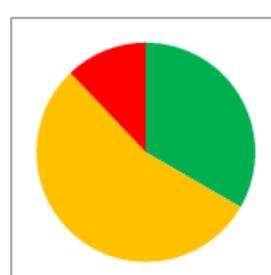
Overall Effectiveness		
Judgement	Count	%
Outstanding	0	0%
Good	16	24%
RI	34	52%
Inadequate	16	24%



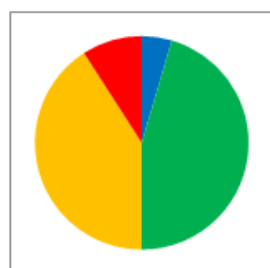
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection		
Judgement	Count	%
Outstanding	0	0%
Good	15	23%
RI	38	58%
Inadequate	13	20%



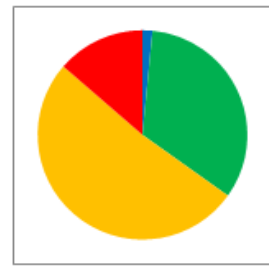
The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence		
Judgement	Count	%
Outstanding	0	0%
Good	22	33%
RI	36	55%
Inadequate	8	12%



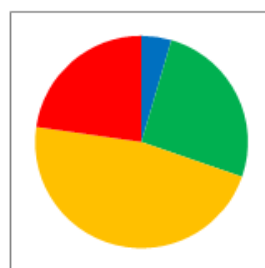
Adoption performance		
Judgement	Count	%
Outstanding	3	5%
Good	30	45%
RI	27	41%
Inadequate	6	9%



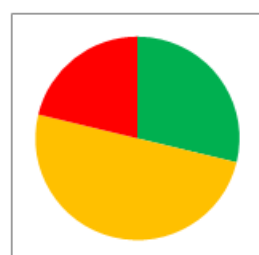
The experiences and progress of care leavers		
Judgement	Count	%
Outstanding	1	2%
Good	22	33%
RI	34	52%
Inadequate	9	14%



Leadership, management and governance		
Judgement	Count	%
Outstanding	3	5%
Good	17	26%
RI	31	47%
Inadequate	15	23%



LSCB effectiveness		
Judgement	Count	%
Outstanding	0	0%
Good	19	29%
RI	33	50%
Inadequate	14	21%



Council / Overall Grade	Leadership, Management and Governance – extracts
Leeds / Outstanding	<p>The 'Child Friendly' Leeds ambition has cross-party political support, reflected in ongoing investment in Children's Services despite the challenging financial context.</p> <p>The Local Authority has further invested in Children's Services and continues to do so.</p> <p>Scrutiny activity and oversight of Children's Services is impressive, with strong prioritisation and a comprehensive understanding of the needs of children, young people and their families. Robust challenge is achieved through a range of pertinent inquiries and a strong corporate parenting ethos that extends beyond looked after children.</p> <p>Corporate parents, supported by an experienced and committed Lead Member, take a keen interest in looked after children and are well informed about their progress through the corporate parenting board.</p>
Trafford / Outstanding	<p>Ambition and prioritisation of services for vulnerable children and their families is given the highest importance. There are many examples of innovation, hard work and determination demonstrated by elected members, officers and workers at all levels to ensure that vulnerable children and families get the best possible service.</p> <p>Corporate parenting is well established and strong. Elected members and senior leaders work together to deliver at least good outcomes for looked after children and outstanding services for care leavers. Political leaders are enthusiastic and passionate and champion the needs of looked after children across the borough.</p> <p>Monthly governance visits by the DCS, elected members and senior officers to frontline teams include meeting individual practitioners, and ensure that social worker morale and views are taken into account in service development.</p> <p>Good cross-political party priority is given to ensuring that children looked after are safe, and this is underpinned by a dedicated member for safeguarding who sits on the LSCB.</p>

Kingston upon Thames / Good	<p>Clear governance arrangements are established between a wide range of strategic bodies, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), Children’s Services Improvement Board (CSIB) and the council’s Children, Youth and Leisure (CYL) Committee, which enable close communication and avoid duplication of work.</p> <p>The corporate parenting panel (CPP) effectively engages with children looked after and care leavers, but panel members do not demonstrate a full knowledge of services and issues affecting these children and young people in Kingston upon Thames.</p> <p>Robust performance information is regularly reported to senior managers, elected members and strategic and operational boards. This enables them to intensively monitor and analyse key issues and to take prompt action to address any shortfalls.</p> <p>Senior leaders and managers, through a range of approaches, ensure that they understand the views of children, young people and families and what is happening at the front line.</p> <p>The lead member sits on the CPP and also routinely visits front line teams to gain the views of front line workers.</p> <p>The local authority has strengthened its role as corporate parent by providing training to all members. The council’s chief executive chairs the CPP to ensure it has a heightened status with elected members and senior managers.</p> <p>A notable success of the CPP has been its partnership work with housing services to increase the availability of suitable accommodation for care leavers. However, panel members, who met with inspectors, were not able to demonstrate that the panel had sufficient oversight of the work of the IRO service; the effectiveness of services to reduce risk of children who go missing from care; or the availability of employment and training opportunities for care leavers, including apprenticeships and mentoring opportunities. Improving oversight and scrutiny of these areas would further strengthen the local authority as a champion of children’s progress.</p>
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Enduring stability in the senior leadership team over the last five years, combined with strong and active involvement by elected members, have seen the county council respond very effectively to poor findings from previous inspections. A substantial financial investment, a clear focus on what is needed to be done and a determination to improve services for children and families have resulted in significant progress being made.

Political and professional leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and encourage robust challenge and oversight to support improvement in most aspects of service provision.

Senior leaders and elected members are visible and active in quality assurance activity, including audit and shadowing practitioners.

Until recently the corporate parenting panel had not had sufficient oversight of services for care leavers, but changes have been made to ensure greater scrutiny and impact as services develop.

The senior leadership team, including the Chief Executive, the Interim Director of children's Services and elected members, have detailed knowledge and understanding of the experiences of children and young people in Nottinghamshire. This is underpinned by regular reviews of data and a quality assurance process that involves senior managers and elected members in auditing, shadowing practitioners and visiting services.

Relationships between the Chief Executive and the chair of the LSCB are strong and are supported by regular meetings which include the chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee, the children's social care lead member and the principal social worker. This is an effective forum for challenge and debate, informed by elected members' direct knowledge of services and the principal social worker's dialogue with front line practitioners.

The council is responsive to children and young people who may be at risk of sexual exploitation. A strategy involving partners within the council and neighbouring authorities underpins this work. Extensive awareness training has been completed for staff including bespoke events for elected members, head teachers and school governors.

In a recent inspection in September 2014 of police child protection arrangements in Nottinghamshire by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) found some areas of weakness similar to those identified during this inspection; in particular, the police attendance at and contribution to initial child protection conferences, information-sharing and children not being seen and spoken to when responding to domestic violence referrals. Since the inspection, the council both through the senior leadership team, elected members and the Local Safeguarding Children Board have been engaging in conversation with senior officers in the police force to support improvement in these areas. An action plan and an action log are used to update members on the progress made.

The corporate parenting panel is active. However, it has not been sufficiently effective in monitoring and improving the health care needs of looked after children. It has also not provided sufficient scrutiny with regard to the care leaving service.

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Oldham / Good</p>	<p>Strategic arrangements between senior officers and elected members are good, with positive challenging arrangements between the senior leadership team, the lead members and other political leaders. There is a strongly voiced commitment to being good corporate parents and both senior officers and members understand the requirements of this role.</p> <p>Both groups ensure political leaders, including opposition members, have knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues, and that there are opportunities to challenge the services being provided to children and families.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Salford / Good</p>	<p>The local authority has effective partnerships with other agencies such as police, schools and health both at a strategic and an operational level. This includes preventative services and awareness raising on a range of risks including child sexual exploitation, gang involvement and radicalisation. As a result, children in Salford benefit from well co-ordinated multi-agency help which is improving outcomes for many.</p> <p>Appropriate governance arrangements and effective working relationships between the local authority, the LSCB and other strategic bodies such as the Children’s Trust and Health and Wellbeing Board are helping drive this improvement.</p> <p>The local authority recognises that the HWB has, until recently, been dominated by adult issues and is now in the process of developing its arrangements in respect of children’s services. Corporate parenting is well embedded across the local authority, with sustained commitment to the needs of looked after children from both elected members and senior leaders.</p> <p>Although the performance management data collected in relation to looked after children requires extending, scrutiny arrangements to effectively monitor performance across children’s services are well informed by quality assurance and audit activity. Committee members have an accurate awareness of strengths and weaknesses across Salford children’s services. The committee has contributed to city-wide strategic plans which are updated to reflect areas for improvement. For example the current update of the Salford City Plan, which is in draft form, includes increased sufficiency of fostering as a priority. The recently revised Scrutiny Committee has become increasingly proactive in gathering a comprehensive range of performance information, including learning from audits and complaints.</p> <p>The lead member and City Director have a clear understanding of issues in relation to child sexual exploitation through their enhanced scrutiny of missing and child sexual exploitation reports. Members of the Corporate Parenting Committee have met with the Borough Commander to assure themselves that work in this area is effective. The City Director has agreed funding for an independently led review of historical cases as a result of findings from the Jay report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.</p>

Stoke / RI	<p>The corporate parenting panel has historically had limited effectiveness in fulfilling its role, exacerbated by a strategy that lacks focus on key priorities and requires updating.</p> <p>The local authority struggled to provide inspectors with accurate performance management information that was outcome focused. This, combined with a lack of compliance by front-line managers with quality assurance audit processes, limits the ability of senior leaders and elected members to analyse and challenge performance.</p> <p>The local authority is a learning organisation. It actively uses external challenge and scrutiny to good effect to inform service improvements.</p> <p>The importance of corporate parenting is recognised within the authority. All 44 councillors signed the declaration of corporate parenting following the recent election. While the corporate parenting panel is constituted appropriately, its work and the corporate parenting strategy are underdeveloped.</p>
Wiltshire / RI	<p>Elected members understand their role as corporate parents and can describe their direct involvement with young people. However, strategic corporate parenting arrangements are not yet sufficiently developed, have lacked direction and clear business plans and as a result have not had sufficient impact on improving services and outcomes for children and young people cared for by the local authority. Action is being taken to address this.</p>
Cumbria / Inadequate	<p>The local authority's political leadership has prioritised and invested in children's services at a time of financial austerity. The lead member for children has not been strong enough in her scrutiny of services for looked after children.</p> <p>The local authority's political leadership has prioritised and invested in children's services at a time of financial austerity.</p> <p>Political leaders have also ensured that performance in relation to children's services is reviewed by the local authority Cabinet and scrutinised through member scrutiny arrangements.</p> <p>Leaders and managers have not been effective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements for looked after children.</p> <p>Corporate parenting by elected members is under-developed. Elected members, including the Lead Member for children, are committed and enthusiastic about promoting best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. However, their influence in terms of improving the service for looked after children has been limited, despite providing scrutiny of the performance of officers.</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Darlington / Inadequate</p>	<p>Elected members and the council’s Chief Executive have not been sufficiently challenging towards children’s services’ managers to assure themselves that children are safe. A reliance on inaccurate performance reports and upward self-reporting by senior managers means they were unaware, until this inspection, of the extent or impact of the services’ underperformance.</p> <p>A lack of rigorous scrutiny, analysis and planning means that elected members’ activities are not always aligned with service priorities for children.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Sunderland / Inadequate</p>	<p>Scrutiny by elected members lacks rigour and has had little positive impact.</p> <p>Senior managers and elected members, including at the very highest levels in the council, have not ensured that children and young people receive services that keep them safe. They do not ask the right questions or undertake the right activities to have a good enough understanding of frontline practice and have not put in place the necessary improvements. There has been a serious failure in governance and this has led to broad and deep inadequacies in services for the most vulnerable children.</p> <p>The local authority is not meeting its responsibilities as a corporate parent. The needs of children looked after and care leavers have not been adequately analysed or met.</p> <p>The local authority and partner agencies do not have a shared, up-to-date strategic plan that sets out their priorities for children, how they will be delivered and how impact will be measured.</p> <p>Political leaders do not have a strong enough grasp of children’s experiences outcomes.</p> <p>Elected members scrutiny of children’s services has not been rigorous or tenacious enough to have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>As a corporate parent, the local authority has not analysed, prioritised and planned sufficiently to improve outcomes for children looked after and care leavers. Corporate parenting board members cannot give clear evidence of how or where they have made a positive difference for children.</p>