

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

1 September 2016

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Councillor Ann McCoy

OFSTED INSPECTION OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF HELP AND PROTECTION, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS AND REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

1. Summary

Ofsted undertook a four week Inspection of Stockton-on-Tees Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers and a Review of the Effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board between 23 May 2016 to 16 June 2016. The report provides the details of the Inspection process and the key findings.

2. Recommendations

1. Cabinet are requested to note the report.
2. Cabinet are requested to agree to receive a further report outlining the progress in relation to the recommendations made.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To inform Cabinet of recommendations and actions arising from the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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DETAIL

1. In Autumn 2014, Ofsted introduced a newly revised Single Inspection Framework (SIF) for the Inspection of Children's Services. All Local Authorities will receive a SIF by November 2017.
2. The arrival of the four week Inspection is announced to a Local Authority the day before the Inspection Team arrive on site.
3. The Inspection Team comprised in total of 8 Inspectors, a Shadow Inspector, a Data Analyst and the Team was overseen by a Quality Assurance Manager.
4. The Local Authority had prepared its own Self-Assessment in advance of the Inspection and provided a number of briefing notes/case responses for Ofsted during the four weeks.
5. Ofsted also had a range of performance information already available to them prior to the Inspection, along with views from children, young people and their carers via Annual Questionnaires.
6. During the four week Inspection Ofsted examined over 250 children's files.

7. The Ofsted Judgements are divided into a number of categories:
- There is an overall Judgement for Children's Services and also Sub-Judgement. The Judgements that can be given are:
 - Inadequate
 - Requires Improvement
 - Good
 - Outstanding
 - Sub-Judgements relate to the following:
 - 1) Children who need help and protection.
 - 2) Children looked after and achieving permanence – with specific focus on adoption and the experience of care leavers.
 - 3) Leadership Management and Governance.
 - Alongside the Inspection of Children's Services, a Review of the Effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board is also undertaken – this is also given a separate Judgement.
8. Throughout the Inspection process the Ofsted Inspectors tracked or reviewed a number of specific cases, including:
- Children who were at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation
 - Children in Need of Help and Protection
 - Children Looked After placed in and out of the Local Authority
 - Children placed with Foster Carers
 - Children who have been placed in Children's Homes who are known to have run away
 - Children who have recently returned home
 - Children who have a plan for adoption
 - Children who are care leavers
 - Children receiving Early Help Services
9. During the Inspection the Local Authority was also asked to Audit a number of cases and share their findings and Judgements with Ofsted.
10. The Inspection Team undertook around 80 meetings, including meetings with:
- Partner Agencies, including Police, Health, Schools.
 - Local Authority staff
 - Representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector
 - Children, Young People and their Carers
 - Foster Carers and Adoption Carers
 - Elected Members
 - Children in Care Council Representatives
11. As the Multi-agency Children Hub went live during the Inspection, Ofsted undertook a visit to the Service in Hartlepool during the Inspection process.

12. Ofsted Inspectors also undertook a number of interviews with Children's Services practitioners and managers in order that they understood what was happening on the ground in relation to:
- Supervision and Management oversight
 - Workloads for staff
 - The availability, quality and impact of training and development
 - The impact of learning from Serious Case Reviews
 - Whether Senior Managers and Elected Members were visible and approachable
13. To date 104 Local Authorities out of 154 Authorities have been subject to the Ofsted (SIF).

MAIN JUDGEMENT FINDINGS

The overall Judgement for Services in Stockton-on-Tees was Good

SUB-JUDGEMENT FINDINGS

Experience of Progress of Children who need Help and Protection Ofsted Judgement was Good

Key Strengths

- Services to safeguard children and young people were seen by Ofsted to be Good.
- During the Inspection the Inspectors did not identify any child for whom action had not been taken to ensure their safety.
- Ofsted recognised children and families have access to effective Early Help Services, but this was not as yet leading to a reduction in the number of referrals to Social Care support.
- The Multi-agency Children's Hub was however showing early signs of positive impact in directing more professionals to help children and young people and their families with a lower threshold of need.
- There were highly effective Multi-agency arrangements for children at risk of harm and where children go missing from home or education or are at risk of being sexually exploited.
- Single Assessments were undertaken in a timely manner and the recent approach to using a specific Social Work model – Signs of Safety, was recognised as being effective.
- Allegations of abuse by professionals who work with or have contact with children were managed effectively.
- Children received Good support when identified as being in a Private Fostering arrangement.
- Children and young people were seen regularly by their Social Worker and seen alone where appropriate.

- The introduction of Operation Encompass has led to more timely and effective management of Domestic Abuse notifications from Police.
- Services and support for young people aged 16 and 17 who become homeless were very comprehensive.

The Experience and Progress of Children Looked After and Achieving Permanence Ofsted Judgement was Requires Improvement

Key Strengths

- When children and young people need to be looked after, good placements meet their needs.
- Brothers and sisters are placed together if it is in their best interest.
- Placement stability is good.
- There is good use of “staying put” arrangements.
- When children need Legal permanence, the care proceedings progress through Court in a timely way.
- When children are identified for adoption effective matching takes place and placements are well supported.
- Good arrangements are in place to monitor and improve the health and emotional needs of Looked After Children.
- Strong incisive leadership and support and challenge by the Virtual Headteacher (VHT) to schools are helping to drive improvement in pupils’ achievements and attendance.
- The participation of young people in service design is strong.
- The collective action of the Service across the Council that work with care leavers is ensuring that they are well supported to develop the skills they need to move to independence.
- Virtually all care leavers live in suitable accommodation and remain in contact with services until they are at least 21.
- More care leavers move onto Education, Employment or Training than similar groups nationally, including the proportion moving onto University.
- The work of the Independent Review Officers (IROs) is a strength.
- Children with complex needs benefit from a specialist Social Work Team.
- Educational outcomes for children looked after combined reading, writing and mathematics remain well above the average for this group, and the proportion of Key Stage 4 children looked after who gain five Good GCSEs, including English has been above that of similar pupils for two of the past three years.

- 83% of children looked after attend Good or better schools.
- Health outcomes for children looked after are good.

The Judgement for Adoption Performance is Requires Improvement

Key Strengths

- Ofsted recognised that whilst there were delays in children becoming adopted there were Good and appropriate reasons for these delays.
- There is Good evidence that every effort is made to identify the best possible match for children.
- When children do have a plan for adoption Social Workers try hard to involve and consult children at all stages of the adoption process.
- The Local Authority is tenacious in seeking adopters for older children, those with a disability and complex emotional needs.
- Adoption support plans seen were comprehensive and detailed and post adoption support, including work with birth parents was Good.
- The adoption panel is properly constituted and well managed.
- Once adoptive placements are made, these are appropriate for the majority of children and adoption breakdowns are low.

The Judgement about the Experience and Progress of Care Leavers is that it is Outstanding

Key Strengths

- The Council and its partners aspire to go beyond statutory requirements to support care leavers.
- The Local Authority is in touch with all but one of the care leavers – well above that found nationally.
- Senior leaders have high aspirations for care leavers.
- Care leavers have trusting relationships with their personal advisers and they spoke with passion about their advisers.
- The proportion of care leavers who go onto University is greater than that nationally for similar groups.
- The Multi-agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement.
- All care leavers have up to date health and dental assessments.

- Care leavers benefit from dedicated support from CAMHS, and the Leaving Care Nurse offers a number of services.
- Most care leavers move onto suitable accommodation – at 93% this is well above that found nationally.
- Liaison with Adult Services and children who transition who have disabilities is effective.
- The number of “staying put” arrangements has doubled from 8 to 16.
- Young people have a good understanding of their entitlements.
- Great attention is paid to celebrating the achievement of care leavers.

Leadership Management and Governance is Good

Key Strengths

- Political and professional leaders demonstrate determination and a commitment to keeping children and young people safe.
- Political and professional leaders take their Corporate Parenting roles seriously.
- The Local Authority knows itself well, and is prioritising on what needs to improve. Its Self-Assessment reflected almost all of the Inspection findings.
- The Lead Member for Children is instrumental in ensuring that children’s issues are a high priority across the Local Authority.
- Elected Members make it their business to know what is happening for children through detailed briefings.
- The Children and Young People Select Committee is effective in scrutinising services for children through a detailed programme of work and visits to frontline services and engagement with children and young people.
- Strong links between the Local Authority and Voluntary and Community Sectors was observed.
- Agencies work together in response to agreed priorities.
- Children are at the heart of service delivery in Stockton.
- The extent to which all Leaders and Elected Members engage with children and young people is outstanding.
- There is a strong focus on performance management.
- There is a comprehensive Quality Assurance programme.
- Workforce planning is highly effective.
- The commitment to children is evident across every layer of the Local Authority.

- Partnerships are strong, including the interface with SLSCB.
- Commissioning arrangements within the Children and Young People Joint Commissioning Group are robust and well informed.
- Employee and Social Work Surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction across the workforce – staff feel well supported and find the managers at all levels are visible and available.
- MALAP provides a strong focus on improving outcomes and achievements for children looked after and care leavers.
- Children and young people looked after are enthusiastic members of Stockton-on-Tees Children in Care Council's – Let's Take Action and Positive Activities Groups.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board Requires Improvement

Key Strengths

- The Board has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The Board has a good attendance and strong commitment from members, including 3 lay members.
- The SLSCB Sub-Groups are key strengths, especially those working across Teesside.
- The Board has been instrumental in shaping services for children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees.

Best Practice Work

- Where Ofsted Inspectors observe best and/or innovative practice in a Local Authority it should record that. These best practice services can be published on Ofsted website.
- During the four week Inspection, Ofsted identified five best practice initiatives/areas of work:
 - The Family Hub One Stop Shop, which offer Early Help Services to families on a weekend.
 - The Local Authority commitment to hearing the voice of children and young people, as a result of which children and young people's voices and experiences shape practice and service delivery.
 - Political and Professional Leadership – the Council has a good understanding of what is happening on the front line in Stockton – political and professional leaders articulate a clear ambition for children and robustly oversee practice. They take their Corporate Parenting role seriously. The Children and Young People's Committee rigorously reviews front line practice.
 - Care Leavers – There is a Corporate passion and drive to do the best for care leavers. The MALAP provides a focus for reviewing and determining the Multi-agency approach to care leavers.

- The Safer Place Guidance (promoting the safety of children in public settings), which challenged the long established practice of accepting that children as young as eight years could access services unaccompanied.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst there were 25 specific recommendations throughout the report, a number related to similar themes, which led to 10 overall recommendations.

- (1) Improve the quality of supervision across children's services, explicitly linking supervision to accountability, professional development and ensuring that the best possible outcomes for children are being pursued.
- (2) Ensure that return home interviews are offered to all children who go missing from home or care, and that each episode is analysed to inform the child's safety plan and wider strategic planning in relation to prevention and risk reduction.
- (3) Improve the quality and consistency of all children's and young people's plans, ensuring that the overall aim is clear, detailing the services or support that will be offered, and that reasonable timescales are set which reflect the child's needs and development.
- (4) The local authority should satisfy itself that all placements where children and young people are placed with connected persons and private fostering are appropriate, and that all carers are assessed under the relevant regulation.
- (5) Develop 'edge of care' services to respond in a flexible, family-friendly way to offer realistic alternatives to full-time residential or foster care.
- (6) Ensure that the care planning process for children looked after always considers adoption as a possible permanence option at the four-month review, including consideration of foster to adopt. In addition, ensure that the family-finding process begins as soon as adoption becomes the plan following a statutory review.
- (7) Ensure that the best quality legal advice is available to social workers and their managers to support effective and timely planning for children and young people.
- (8) Ensure that there are sufficient foster carers, residential placements and potential adopters to meet the needs of the children.
- (9) Ensure that when children are separated from their birth families, they have the opportunity to understand their past and move positively into the future through the provision of sensitive and timely life-story work.
- (10) Continue to challenge and monitor the attendance of Cleveland police at strategy meetings to ensure compliance with Working Together 2015. In addition, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector will act within the terms of the published information sharing protocol (agreed between all the relevant inspectorates) in sharing these findings with HMI Constabulary for it to decide what course of action is appropriate.

An Action Plan is being developed with key officers identified to lead on each recommendation. The Action Plan will form part of the Post-Inspection Action Plan which needs to be sent back to Ofsted in November 2016.

Progress on the Action Plan will be reported back to Cabinet.

The LSCB will separately develop its own Action Plan in response to their recommendations.

The National Picture

As of 5 August 2016, 104 Inspections of Children's Services have been published – there are 50 remaining Local Authorities to have their reports published by the end of 2017.

Of the 104 Inspections to date, only 27 Local Authorities have received a Good or Better overall Judgement and only three Local Authorities have received an Outstanding Judgement for Care Leavers. (Appendix 1 outlines current National Judgements as of 5 August 2016.)

The North East Position

There have now been eight Local Authorities in the North East inspected under the SIF:

- Three Local Authorities have received an overall Good Judgement.
- Three Local Authorities have received an overall Requires Improvement Judgement.
- Two Local Authorities have received an Inadequate Judgement.

No other Local Authority in the North East Region has an Outstanding Judgement for Care Leavers.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

14. None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. None

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16. None

RISK ASSESSMENT

17. Low Risk

COUNCIL PLAN, POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

18. This report contributes to the following policy principles in the council plan:
- Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention – services to safeguard children are specifically targeted at those identified as being in need of protection.
 - Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention – services to safeguard children and services to support looked after children are provided in order to ensure children are not disadvantaged as a result of their start in life by improving their outcomes so that they can go on to achieve their full potential.
 - Developing strong and healthy communities – improving outcomes for children through effective service delivery will impact on their potential quality of life in adulthood, thereby supporting the development of healthy communities.
 - Creating economic prosperity – services to safeguard children and services to support looked after children are provided in order to improve outcomes for children so that they can achieve their full potential and make a positive contribution to the local economy.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

19. For those children who are looked after, the council has a responsibility as corporate parent to ensure that their needs are appropriately met.
20. This report assists cabinet in fulfilling its responsibility as corporate parent by maintaining an overview of performance in relation to looked after children.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

21. Ofsted Report has been shared already with all Elected Members.

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Education related?

No

Background Papers

Not applicable.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

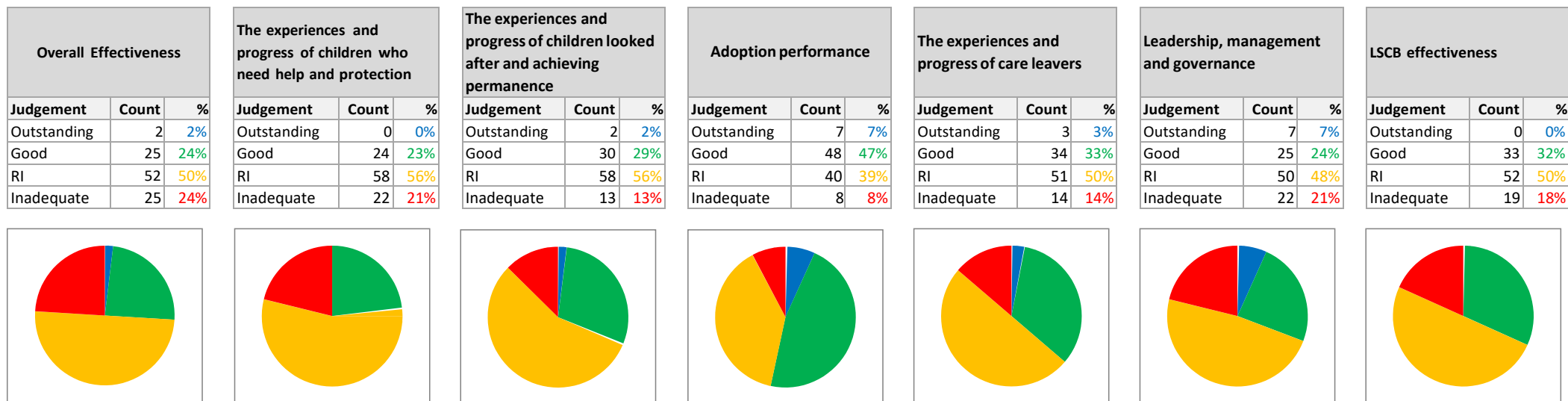
Not applicable.

Property

There are no implications for council property.

Ofsted SIF Inspection Outcomes as at 5 August 2016

104 inspections published so far



Individual LA Performance

Local Authority	Stockton
Date of Inspection	24/05/2016
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Type LA name as appears on master

