

1 February 2017		ITEM: 9
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Ofsted Inspection Action Plan		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: To review Action Plan	
Report of: Andrew Carter, Head of Children's Social Care		
Accountable Head of Service: Andrew Carter, Children's Social Care (CATO)		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This covering report provides an update on the Ofsted Inspection Action Plan. A copy of the updated action plan is attached to this report.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Children's Overview and Scrutiny consider the current progress and direction of travel in completing the required actions.**
- 1.2 That Children's Overview and Scrutiny receive assurance that action plan will deliver the required improvement.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 All local authorities in England are inspected under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) within a three-year period. The Children's Safeguarding Board is inspected at the same time. The Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers took place between 22.2.16 – 17.3.16.
- 2.2 In response to the recommendations of the Ofsted Report the department has completed a detailed action plan. The action plan is attached to this report as Appendix 2.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Services to children, young people and families in Thurrock were judged to 'Require Improvement' by Ofsted. The inspectors stated in their report that 'children and young people were found to be safe in Thurrock during this

inspection, with none identified who were at immediate risk of significant harm without plans and services being in place to reduce these risks and to meet their needs’.

- 3.2 Ofsted has made 16 recommendations in relation to practice improvements that are required in Thurrock. Key areas of concern included:
- The instability of the social care workforce. The service was dependent on a high proportion of agency social workers, although it was acknowledged that a range of creative ideas had been implemented to improve recruitment;
 - The service for children looked after was not consistent and too many children became looked after on an emergency basis;
 - More needed to be done to increase the number of in-house foster carers as too many children and young people were placed out of the borough;
 - Management oversight needed to be improved and frontline staff had to be supervised regularly to improve the quality of practice;
 - The organisation’s use of management information and quality assurance was poor and this impedes improvement; and
 - Training for all social workers to ensure permanence work with children starts earlier and that delay is avoided.
- 3.3 The draft Action Plan to address the recommendations made by Ofsted has previously been presented to Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Corporate Parenting Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 3.4 A final copy of the Action Plan has been shared with Ofsted.
- 3.5 An improvement Board was established and has been meeting regularly to ensure that all of the recommendations and other areas for improvement have been implemented. The Board is chaired by the Corporate Director of Children’s Services. The Portfolio Holders for Children and Adults and Education and Health will provide an additional layer of oversight and challenge through by monitoring progress against the action plan on a monthly basis.
- 3.6 Ofsted is currently consulting on a new inspection framework where it is proposed that those authorities who were judged Requires Improvement will receive another inspection within three years. In addition, it is anticipated that new modular inspections will be undertaken in the next year. These inspections are carried out over 2-3 days to test whether authorities are making the requisite progress with their improvement plans. Furthermore, social care departments will be expected to submit an annual self- evaluation to Ofsted which must evidence improvement. While this is discretionary, failure to do so could trigger a full inspection of the service.
- 3.7 Effective progress is being made across all areas of the plan and additional input is being provided to address those areas that require this to remain on track.

4. Consultation

N/A

5. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

The completed action plan will allow the council to meet and improve upon its core statutory functions in the delivery of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager

There are no immediate financial implications for the authority arising out of the action plan.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsay Marks**
Principal Solicitor, Children's Safeguarding

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide services to children in need of help and protection, failure to effectively do so could lead to legal challenges and reputational damage. The Local Authority is required to provide clear evidence of how it is implementing the inspection recommendations.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development and Equalities Manager

The local authority and its partners must ensure that a range of services and provision is in place to protect children from all backgrounds. In implementing the action plan the authority must ensure that improvements are made for children and young people from all backgrounds and that none are directly or in-directly discriminated against.

6.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

N/A

- 7. Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

Ofsted Single Framework Inspection Report dated 24.5.16

- 8. Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1 - Ofsted Single Inspection Report & Local Authority Action Plan – Final.

Report Author:

Andrew Carter

Head of Service

Children's Social Care