

Overview & Scrutiny Committee 24 June 2019	
Report of: Debbie Jones, Corporate Director Children and Culture	Classification: Unrestricted
Children's Services Improvement- Quarterly Progress Report (Quarter 4 -2018/19)	

Lead Member	Councillor Danny Hassell, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Young People
Originating Officer(s)	Richard Baldwin Divisional Director for Children's Social Care & Jonathan Solomons, Strategy & Policy Manager, Children & Culture
Wards affected	All wards
Community Plan Theme	A fair and prosperous community

Recommendations:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the report and comment on the report and progress for Quarter 4.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Corporate and political leadership of the Children's Services improvement agenda is a critical part of ensuring its success. Consideration of this report in Cabinet will support this leadership and help to facilitate public scrutiny of progress.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 There are no alternative options to consider.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 This report provides an update on progress in delivering improvements to Children's Services in response to the report published by Ofsted in April 2017 which rated our services 'inadequate'. The Council's Improvement plan aims to achieve a standard of 'good' in summer 2019, when it is likely to be next

inspected. This is a bold aspiration but we believe the minimum our children and families deserve.

- 3.2 We have now completed all of the six monitoring visits that Ofsted had scheduled to monitor our improvement journey.
- 3.3 The most recent monitoring visit took place in March 2019, this visit focused on the Assessment and Intervention Service and Family Support and Protection Service. The outcome of this visit was broadly positive with Ofsted highlighting a number of areas for us to focus on in as we move towards our imminent re-inspection.
- 3.4 The letter was published in April 2019 and highlighted a number of areas of strength across the services. These included a positive comment about the overall improvement journey and that children who are at risk are responded to quickly.
- 3.5 We also welcomed the London Borough of Bexley for a 5 day “Learning and Improvement Visit”. This visit took place in April 2019 following a request from the Department for Education. This visit consisted of eight senior staff from the LB Bexley including their Director of Children’s Services. This visit also focused on leadership and involved meetings between Service Managers and their counterparts from Bexley.
- 3.6 Now that all of the monitoring visits are completed, we are expecting the inspection to take place imminently. While there is a window of six months following the last visit, Ofsted do not inspect in August and it is our expectation that this will take place prior to the school summer holidays.

PROGRESS UPDATE

- 3.7 **Staff Recruitment and Retention-**
Our Year One targets are on track
 - Target 1 – recruit 35 NQSW – 34 to date (on target)
 - Target 2 – convert 6 agency workers to permanent – 10 to date (target met and exceeded)
 - Target 3 – recruit 14 experienced SWs – 16 to date (target met and exceeded)
 - Turnover target of 15% - currently 9.9% (target met and exceeded)
 - Total vacancies target of 93 – currently 65 (target met and exceeded)
 - Total vacancies % of 35% - currently 25% (target met and exceeded)
- 3.8 The number of agency workers as a percentage of total establishment (including posts over establishment) has slightly reduced to 33.1 from 33.6%.

3.9 **Workforce Stability**

Workforce stability overall has improved throughout 2018 and into 2019. The annual turnover figure has reduced from 11.6% in December 2018 to 11% at the end of January 2019.

Sickness absence has reduced from 10.26 days per FTE in April to 8.54 days per FTE in December 2018. This is an increase by 0.13 days per FTE compared to 8.41 days in November 2018 (latest figures are two months in arrears); however it is still significantly lower than the Council's average.

The breakdown of sickness absence by Service area is as follows:

Level 3 – Service	Average FTE Days Lost	Average FTE Days Lost	Average FTE Days Lost
	End March 2018	End of Jan 2019	End of Feb 2019
Assessment & Early Intervention	18.69	9.65	8.50
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	5.51	11.51	11.70
Children Looked After & Leaving Care	13.58	13.05	12.79
Children's Resources	11.62	7.49	7.42
CWD AND CAMHS	4.44	8.07	8.29
Family Support & Protection	5.44	5.64	4.40
TOTALS	10.26	9.05	8.63
Council Average FTE days lost	10.97	10.94	10.86

Based on the top point of PO3, the daily cost (including on-costs) of employing a social worker is c. £205.00. If sickness is reduced by one day per FTE per annum, this equates to an additional 210 days worked per annum (total cost c. £43K). Whilst this is not a cashable saving, some savings could be achieved by not backfilling the gaps with agency staff.

3.10 **Social Work Academy** The academy has now recruited all of the ASYE's planned for 2018/19. We have recently been working on the plans for the recruitment of the 2019/20 cohort. We have agreed to recruit 20 ASYE's for this financial year. This is on the basis that our recruitment of experienced staff over the past 9 months has proved to have been more successful than previously anticipated. This means that we are anticipating to recruit 30 experienced staff in 2019/20, allowing for a greater overall range and mix of skills, as well as being able to make a greater impact on reducing our reliance on agency social workers.

- 3.11 **Restorative Practice** We are now in the second phase of developing our Restorative Practice model. This phase of the development has a clear focus on assisting staff to gain confidence in using restorative techniques on a day to day basis with families and within teams. This process is being supported through continued workshop training and being followed up individually or in team/group sessions. The diagram below sets out the strategic process for this.
- 3.12 As part of the strengthening of phase two of the implementation of our Restorative Practice approach, we continue to work closely with our Improvement Partners at Leeds City Council. Central to our plans in phase two is utilising the skills of our front-line managers to affect change and act as “culture carriers”. We recently held a workshop involving front-line managers from Leeds and our own staff. The workshop focused on how this group of managers can strengthen Restorative Practice on a day to day basis.
- 3.13 We have also engaged an external trainer to assist managers and staff to strengthen everyday ways of using the Restorative approach to assist practice, planning and supervision. The trainer will be running a series of “Action Learning Sets” to help us develop this aspect of the new approach.
- 3.14 **Neglect** From our discussion with Ofsted inspectors and from analysing the key themes and recommendations of recent ILACS inspections of other Local Authorities, we can be reasonably confident our inspection will contain a strong emphasis on how we manage cases where “neglect” is a key concern.
- 3.15 In order to fully prepare for this we have already begun work to ensure that staff and partner staff have additional training in recognising neglect, and are provided with tools and resources that will assist them to further strengthen the existing work we provide in relation to this.
- 3.16 We have also recently launched a pilot project in conjunction with colleagues within the Early Help Service to provide an “Integrated Offer” for families at risk of neglect. This work will link dedicated Social Workers, Children’s Centres and schools together to address neglect concerns at an early stage of identification. The pilot starts with the cluster of schools in the north-east of the borough and will then be rolled out into other areas.
- 3.17 We have launched a new Neglect Tool and are working closely with its author to embed a greater understanding and focus on how we identify and address neglect within the families that we work with. During their most recent visit, Ofsted confirmed that the use of this tool was appropriate and should be utilised in all neglect cases. For the first time in a long period, the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans under the category of Neglect is larger than Emotional Abuse which reflects national and regional trends.
- 3.18 New practice guidance has been written which was formally launched at an event with staff on 28 May.
- 3.19 **Initial Health Assessments** Every Looked after Child must have an initial health assessment to understand their health/ medical needs which is undertaken by a registered medical practitioner at the initial stage of coming into care, then at specified interval depending on the child's age.

- 3.20 The previous Ofsted monitoring visit highlighted the poor performance of Initial Health Assessments which at the point of the visit were 22% within timescale. Following on from the close work with partners in the CCG and at Bart's Trust to improve performance, demonstrable progress has been made. We have continued to focus on this and ensure that children have these very important health assessments as soon as possible. Recent performance indicates that improvement has been sustained with a figure of 93.8% in February and 87.5% in March. Early indications of April performance confirm that this performance has been maintained.
- 3.21 **Audit Culture** The quality assurance and audit programme was fully launched in August 2017 and we are continuing to use audit activity systematically to inform our improvement activity. Ofsted commented in their second monitoring visit that the use of audit was becoming more embedded although they felt that some improvement was needed in its effectiveness to support the improvement journey. In addition to the full audit schedule, dip sampling continues to take place to support the understanding of social work delivery for children.
- 3.22 We have continued to audit between 35-45 cases per month, and March and April have seen further rounds of audit activity. These audits are now firmly embedded within the overall management activity which is positive in terms of ensuring that all aspects of the improvement journey become embedded within "business as usual" for Children's Services post inspection.
- 3.23 **Practice Week** As part of embedding Quality Assurance Tower Hamlets' most recent practice week took place during the week commencing Monday 20 May 2019, where senior leaders spent time with frontline social workers reviewing cases and shadowing their work with children and families in order to better understand their day to day experience. Initial feedback from senior managers, councillors and service users is [To be added post-Practice Week].
- 3.24 **Care Leavers/Through Care Service** The new Through-Care Service launched on 1 April 2019. Staff from KitKat Terrace moved into Mulberry Place in November 2018 and the benefits of developing closer links with both CLA teams and the Virtual School are already being seen in the development of new Personal Education Plan reports for Care-Leavers, and smoother transfers of young people between the two parts of the service.
- 3.25 We have identified the social workers and managers who will move across from the CLA Team and they have been in place since 1 April 2019.
- 3.26 The process of over-seeing these changes is being managed by a Task and Finish group made up of front-line managers and staff, which has been positive in modelling a restorative and inclusive approach to change.
- 3.27 **Ofsted monitoring visit in March 2019** Ofsted visited for their final monitoring visit on 19 & 20 March 2019. The focus of the visit was in respect to our Assessment and Intervention Teams and Family Support and Protection. The choice of these teams was deliberate in mirroring one of our early visits which enabled a direct comparison and better understanding of our journey. The letter outlined that "effective action taken by leaders and managers following the

previous inspection and subsequent monitoring visits has led to suitable improvements in the quality of social work practice for children in need of help and protection. Children at risk of immediate harm are responded to quickly.” The letter also highlights some areas that we need to focus on prior to our re-inspection.

- 3.28 The letter also stated that “The AI teams are well established and effective. Management oversight and direction are clear and purposeful in most cases. Risks and protective factors for children and young people are identified and analysed. Assessments actively involve partner agency input and carefully consider family history, including cultural and diverse needs. Inspectors found evidence of effective and imaginative multi-agency direct work, for example effective safety planning in response to young people who are both victims and perpetrators of knife crime.”
- 3.29 Ofsted also commented that “Managers are not complacent about the quality of practice. A child in need summit chaired by heads of service adds additional scrutiny. Evaluation of child protection plans by child protection chairs every six weeks is a recent positive development and is intended to ensure that plans are progressed speedily within the child’s timeframe.”
- 3.30 There was positive feedback about the role of senior leaders stating “Senior leaders show a strong commitment to continued service improvement, and there is evidence of proactive learning from a range of external sources. Staff have access to a comprehensive package of multi-agency training and professional development opportunities. A well-structured pathway is in place for newly qualified social workers to access the assessed and supported year in employment. Constant progress in workforce planning is reducing staff turnover, and manageable caseloads provide social workers with the opportunities to build trusting relationships with children. This approach has created an environment in which social workers feel listened to and supported to develop their skills and knowledge. Staff enjoy working in Tower Hamlets and more agency social workers are applying for permanent positions.”
- 3.31 During the verbal feedback, inspectors pointed out a number of areas for us to focus on in the lead up to our re-inspection. These included ensuring that all cases have up to date accessible case summaries, that all children have single assessments that have been updated within the last six months (or 12 months for Looked after Children) and that management oversight has clear timescales that can be measured. All of these actions have been prioritised and are being implemented. These are monitored on a weekly basis by the Divisional Director and Service Manager Team.
- 3.32 **Bexley Learning and Improvement Review** The Learning and Improvement Review took place between 10 and 15 April. It was undertaken by eight staff from Bexley with one additional from Essex. During the visit, they undertook a number of activities with staff including a number of detailed meetings with senior staff and a “performance board” for all service and team managers. They also undertook a number of case audits with social workers across the various services from the front door right through to fostering and adoption. A draft report

has been received which includes a number of strengths as well as areas for development. We will be carefully considering the report and making decisions about how best to implement the recommendations.

- 3.33 We have now received Bexley's final report which contains a number of strengths and areas for development. These largely support our own assessment of where we are and we will be considering carefully how to ensure that we address their recommendations.
- 3.34 We are now expecting our re-inspection imminently and are preparing for it to be called at any time. We are preparing all of the documents that will be required to be uploaded once the inspection is called and we have also worked very hard to ensure that our data lists can be provided within the timescales required.
- 3.35 One of the key documents that we will have to provide is our most recent self-assessment. A significant amount of work has gone into getting this ready and an updated document will be provided to Ofsted once the inspection is called.
- 3.36 We continue to speak with other local authorities to support our own preparations and continue to receive support from Leeds City Council and LB Islington.
- 3.37 We are also preparing for forthcoming inspections from HMIP in respect to Youth Justice and Ofsted/CQC in respect to SEND. Both of these inspections are likely to take place in the near future following our Social Care inspection.
- 3.38 **Performance measures – see KPI Table below on 3.54**

For the majority of indicators performance at the end of 2018/19 was either sustained or improved compared with the end of Q3 and with the 2017/18 outturns. The latest data for April shows a decrease in performance in certain areas that is being targeted through the performance surgeries and by managers. However for a number of indicators including the timeliness of response to contacts and child protection reviews performance remains strong. There was a slight increase in the number of children in need and for those subject to child protection plans. However the number of children in care continues to be stable indicating a good understanding of thresholds.

Performance table- Summary overview of key performance indicators APRIL 2019

Children's Social Care Highlight Indicators															
This report provides summary overview of KPIs linked to child-centred performance management data being used in support of performance improvement across CSC															
Performance measure title and reference		Performance from previous financial year	Performance for current period (either snapshot, YTD or rolling year depending on measure) - plus last six monthly performance outturns (where available)										Agreed targets (using corporate minimum/upper model)		Trend line for last 6 months performance
Ref	Performance Measure	2017/18	Current Performance										Target		Trend
			Num	Denom	Current	Period	Six Month Trend						Min	Upper	
							Nov 18	Dec 18	Jan 19	Feb 19	Mar 19	Apr 19			
Management Oversight															
1.1	% cases with Management Oversight recorded in past 8 weeks	96%	2,908	3,067	94.8%	Snapshot	96.8%	91.1%	96.7%	97.8%	95.1%	94.8%	90%	95%	
Cohorts															
1.2	Number of CIN (exc. LAC, CP, Care Leavers)	1,034	n/a	n/a	1,039	Snapshot	999	1,097	1,084	1,020	981	1,039			
1.3	Number of children subject to CPP	292	n/a	n/a	314	Snapshot	269	258	274	304	282	314			
1.4	Number of LAC	290	n/a	n/a	331	Snapshot	353	335	338	335	329	331			
Front door / assessment															
2.1	% of contacts completed within 1 day	62.3%	1,129	1,144	98.7%	YTD	97.5%	97.0%	97.2%	97.0%	92.9%	98.7%	90%	95%	
2.10	% of assessments completed within 45 working days	72.7%	577	638	90.4%	YTD	92.2%	75.3%	87.7%	88.9%	89.9%	90.4%	90%	95%	
Plans															
3.1	% of children in need with CIN Plan completed	86.1%	898	1,039	86.4%	Snapshot	88.0%	83.3%	86.5%	89.2%	90.2%	86.4%	85%	90%	
Visits															
3.3a	% of CIN children visited within the past four weeks	83.7%	859	1,039	82.7%	Snapshot	81.5%	78.5%	86.5%	87.3%	87.8%	82.7%	85%	90%	
4.6	% children on a child protection plan receiving a visit within the past four weeks	94.9%	290	314	92.4%	Snapshot	95.5%	93.8%	96.7%	94.4%	93.3%	92.4%	92%	95%	
5.10	% of LAC Single Assessments not yet completed or out of the one year timescale		17	331	5.1%	Snapshot	0.6%	3.9%	4.1%	3.0%	4.3%	5.1%	10%	5%	
5.11	% of CLA with visits in last 6 weeks	90.9%	148	151	98.0%	Snapshot	90.7%	94.0%	98.8%	94.0%	97.0%	97.0%	90%	95%	
Reviews															
3.2	% of children with CIN Plan with reviews within last 3 months	93.8%	812	898	90.4%	Snapshot	91.8%	87.0%	92.3%	91.4%	88.9%	90.4%	85%	90%	
4.7	% of CP reviews carried out within statutory timescales	96.3%	193	193	100.0%	Snapshot	99.5%	99.4%	99.5%	99.5%	99.4%	100.0%	96.5%	98.5%	
5.18	CLA cases which were reviewed within required timescales	81.1%	314	322	97.5%	Rolling Year	91.3%	98.8%	98.7%	97.2%	95.4%	97.5%	95%	100%	
Care Leavers															
6.1	% care leavers "in touch" (17,18,19,20,21 yr. olds with activity updated within last year)	96.8%	236	252	93.7%	Snapshot	93.4%	88.7%	97.3%	92.8%	97.9%	93.7%	90%	95%	
6.2	% care leavers EET	67.6%	173	252	68.7%	Snapshot	65.1%	62.7%	69.0%	66.3%	71.4%	68.7%	65%	75%	
6.30	% care leavers in suitable accommodation	91.0%	215	252	85.3%	Snapshot	87.8%	82.0%	91.9%	87.5%	89.6%	85.3%	85%	90%	
Audit Activity															
11.13	Overall audit quality score (lower is better)		64	29	2.2	Snapshot	2.4	-	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.2	2	1	

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Ensuring that we are providing good services to vulnerable children and their families will ensure that some of our most disadvantaged children are effectively supported to maximise their life chances.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Safeguarding children is a core focus of the improvement plan.
- 5.2 The Ofsted judgement rated our local safeguarding children board 'inadequate.' Work is underway to address this finding and improve the work of the board.
- 5.3 Work is ongoing to develop new safeguarding arrangements consistent with new regulations as set out in *Working Together 2018*.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 Significant additional resources have already been identified as part of the 2017 2020 MTFS; in particular total additional growth of £5.2m addressing pressure in a range of areas, most of which feature in the improvement plan.
- 6.2 Additional one-off investment funding via the Council's Transformation Reserve is being used to support the implementation of the Children's Services (CS) improvement plan. The estimated cost of this plan for Children's Social Care over 2 years was £4.2m. An additional £0.5m has been approved by the Corporate Director of Resources to fund expenditure on CS Improvement within the Governance Division. Therefore a total of £4.7m has been approved to fund CS Improvements from the Transformation Reserve.
- 6.3 A total of £3.7m has been spent within Children's Social Care over 2 years (£1.9m in 2017/18 and £1.8m in 2018/19). In addition, Governance incurred £0.5m expenditure in 2018/19 relating to CS Improvement. Over 2 years a total of £4.2m has been funded from the Transformation reserve.
- 6.4 It is estimated that the £0.5m balance of the £4.7m allocated from the Transformation reserve for CS Improvements, will be spent within Children's Social Care leading up to the final Ofsted inspection in 2019/20. The Transformation Reserve totaled £8.4m at the end of 2018/19.
- 6.5 The level of one-off funding is based on a detailed assessment of the costs associated with the improvement plan and the improvements that will be achieved as a result of the investment have also been identified and are regularly monitored.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The framework for Ofsted inspections of Children’s Services is set out in sections 135-142 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 (‘the Act’) and associated Employment and Education Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007 (‘the Regulations’). Tower Hamlets was inspected in January 2017 under Ofsted’s “Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Reviews of Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards” (‘the SIF’), and assessed as being inadequate.
- 7.2 In light of Tower Hamlets’ improved performance during monitoring visits, Ofsted will re-inspect under the ILACS framework, “Framework, evaluation criteria and inspector guidance for the inspections of local authority children’s services”, introduced in November 2017. If the outcome of the subsequent re-inspection is better than inadequate, the Council will then follow the pathway for local authorities which either require improvement, or are graded good.
- 7.3 The recommendations that the Mayor in Cabinet should endorse the progress made in delivering the children’s services improvement programme and agree the next steps in the improvement journey, are consistent with the Council’s duty to secure continuous improvement in its functions. Failure to make the necessary improvements to children’s services could result in the Secretary of State appointing a Children’s Services Commissioner or removing service control from the Council.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- NONE

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents: N/A