

Cabinet 20 March 2018	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Debbie Jones, Corporate Director Children's Services	Classification: Unrestricted
Children's Services Improvement- progress report quarter 3	

Lead Member	Councillor Amy Whitelock Gibbs, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Originating Officer(s)	Anthony Walters, Programme Manager- Children's Services Improvement
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Community Plan Theme	A fair and prosperous community

Executive Summary

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 at least 'good' by April 2019, which is the minimum our children and families deserve. The council has now had two monitoring visits from Ofsted.

In their letter reporting findings from the most recent of these visits in December 2017, Ofsted noted that improvements have been made and sustained within children's services and that leaders and managers showed increased in-depth knowledge of strengths and areas of weakness. In particular, the way we assess referrals of children and families for social care support was identified as being timely and thresholds for help were appropriately applied, meaning that no children in the cases they sampled were at risk of immediate harm. The letter also pointed to some areas needing further improvement and we are continuing our focus on these areas through our improvement plan.

The body of this report includes commentary on progress in the four themes of our improvement plan at the end of the third quarter of our improvement programme.

Whilst we are making progress in embedding the changes that have been made in the first 9 months of our improvement programme, giving us a firm foundation for improvement, there remain significant challenges to ensuring that the service improves to meet a 'good' inspection standard and sustains this improvement. The focus in our next stage is to build on the progress made so that further improvement is achieved and sustained.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Endorse the progress made in delivering the children's services improvement programme.
2. Agree the next steps in the improvement journey which will be updated on in the next report.

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 REPORT

- 3.1 In April 2017, Ofsted published its report rating our services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the local safeguarding children board 'inadequate' overall (but with some areas requiring improvement.) Subsequently, Cabinet agreed an improvement plan on 27th June 2017 which has now been agreed by the Department for Education and Ofsted.
- 3.2 The improvement plan responds directly to the 15 recommendations identified in the Ofsted inspection report. It is an operational tool used by managers and frontline staff to drive our improvement activity which, crucially, focuses on the impact changes will have on vulnerable children. It is monitored and updated on a monthly basis by the Children's Services Improvement operational board, chaired by the Director of Children's Services, and every 2 months by our independently chaired Improvement Board. The Mayor, Chief Executive, Cabinet Member and Director of Children's Services meet fortnightly to review and address key issues and challenges. Quarterly updates are reported to Cabinet, Best Value Programme Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This third update report details progress made between October 2017 and the end of December 2017.
- 3.3 In July 2017 the Department for Education (DfE) appointed Lincolnshire and Islington councils as our Improvement Partners (IPs). The role of the IPs is to support us in our improvement journey by acting as external expert advisors. They provide regular reports on progress which are shared with the DfE. The

focus of their support is in the following areas where they have specific expertise that the council can learn from:

- Early help
- Legal support
- Workforce strategy
- Leadership and governance
- Commissioning
- Finance
- Looked after children

3.4 The council aims to achieve at least a ‘good’ rating for its Children’s Services within two years, by April 2019. This is an ambitious undertaking given the extent of failings identified in the Ofsted report and the level of change required. Our improvement plan sets out a three stage journey to achieving this aim. We are currently in the second stage of that journey, which is called ‘embedding sustained improvement’ and runs until the end of March 2018.

3.5 The table below shows overall progress in the aims that we set for this second stage. This work will ensure that the foundations put in place during stage 1 are built upon and improvement is sustained over the length of the programme:

Our aim	Progress and outcome
Workforce strategy agreed and in implementation	The first draft of our workforce strategy was agreed and an action plan is being implemented. We are in the process of refining this to ensure that our strategy effectively positions Tower Hamlets as an employer of choice for children’s social workers, with advice from Islington Council as our Improvement Partner. Workforce is regularly discussed at the Improvement Board and among the council’s leadership. Further updates on specific workforce related activity are provided under ‘Theme 1’ below.
Early Help changes implemented including commencing commissioning processes for any new services	Following a review of early help services it has been agreed that the Early Help redesign will incorporate the principles of working with troubled families in order to engage with families that have two or more of the following characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour • Children who are not attending school regularly • Children who need help: children of all ages, who need help, are identified as in need or are subject to a Child Protection Plan • Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion or young people at risk of

Our aim	Progress and outcome
	<p>worklessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families affected by domestic violence and abuse • Parents or children with a range of health problems. <p>The redesign of Early Help will take place in two phases which will support a quick implementation (phase 1) and which will provide the opportunity to embed (phase 2). Phase one redesign has now started and will be completed in May 2018.</p> <p>Arising from the new Early Help redesign children, young people and families will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered support to address needs at tiers 1 and 2. • Be provided with the support from a named Lead Professional who will build a relationship them, assess the needs of the whole family; undertake family planning and co-ordinate interventions. • Empowered to support to help themselves. <p>The Early Help service will be offered on a locality basis providing services (in the NW, NE, SW and SE of the borough). This will cement strong, local, relationships between families, staff and our partners.</p> <p>To ensure alignment with the improvements in Children’s Social Care, the Early Help redesign will offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single front door aligned to the MASH. Which will yield better planning and outcomes for children and young people • Embedded processes in place for “step down” of cases <i>from</i> Children’s Social Care; and “step up” of cases into Children’s Social Care. • A range of evidence based interventions linked to parenting support, education, employment, housing, positive activities for youth, domestic violence support, emotional health and wellbeing (pre-Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) threshold) support, adult mental health and substance misuse to name but a few.

Our aim	Progress and outcome
	<p>As part of the implementation work done to date, clearer processes have been introduced for joint working between the Early Help Hub (EHH) and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in order to create one front door, with use of Framework-i (our case management system) across the Hub and MASH to ensure that there is a more joined up approach to managing referrals between social care and early help. The organisational change process to implement phase one of our new early help model will commence in February 2018. The restructure will deliver central capacity for case management and commissioning of early help services ensuring greater consistency, effective targeting of resources to those families that need early help, and the provision of support to effectively meet need. Alongside the organisational change, processes are being redesigned, an outcomes framework is being developed, a commissioning strategy is being identified and an early help workforce plan is being put in place, so that early help professionals are equipped with the right skills to effectively support families. Implementation of this first phase will be completed in May 2018.</p> <p>The second phase of the Early Help redesign will bring together multi-disciplinary professionals in locality-based teams to better coordinate support for children and families.</p>
<p>Performance data, case audit and dip sampling is used systematically to show progress and identify areas for further improvement</p>	<p>Following the work done during stage 1 to improve performance management within the Children's Social Care service, the use of performance data, case audits and dip samples is becoming embedded as a fundamental part of the service improvement process. The detailed updates below give examples of where this is taking place to improve our support to children and their families. In their recent monitoring visit, Ofsted fed back that they could see much more use of performance information by team managers to support social workers and tackle drift and delay.</p>

3.6 The next, and final, stage on our improvement journey will be as follows:

Stage 3- Continuous improvement to a 'good' Children's Service

Between April 2018 and March 2019 we will see a stabilised workforce with permanent posts filled and turnover reduced, and continuous improvement in performance data and qualitative audits towards a good service.

This will be a challenging phase given the recruitment challenges faced by all London councils, the high volume of contacts and referrals we are experiencing, and the need to embed improvements across the whole service.

- 3.7 Our progress is being monitored by Ofsted through quarterly monitoring visits. The second of these visits took place on 12th and 13th December 2017. In their feedback letter, Ofsted said:

“In the cases sampled by inspectors, thresholds for help and protection were appropriately applied, decision-making was timely and no children were identified as being at risk of immediate harm.”

“...it is encouraging that most improvements identified by the previous visits have been sustained and, in many case, further improved. Senior leaders and elected members have an increased in-depth knowledge of their strengths and areas of weakness. They are aware of the challenges that they face to embed the positive changes that have been made, while simultaneously addressing the areas of poorer practice. They fully recognise that there is considerably more work to be undertaken to ensure that vulnerable children in Tower Hamlets experience consistently good quality help and protection from harm. Leaders and managers demonstrate considerable determination, commitment and tenacity to embed and sustain these changes.”

The full letter has been published on Ofsted’s website and can be found at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/tower-hamlets> .

- 3.8 Ofsted noted the considerable progress that had been made in the following areas:
- Application of thresholds and timely decision making in the MASH (the ‘front door’ of the service);
 - Implementation of performance management processes to ensure that staff are held to account for the quality of their practice and that children do not experience delay in getting support;
 - Improving the quality of assessments, including using the views of children to inform them;
 - Effectiveness and timeliness of child protection processes (strategy meetings and section 47 enquiries).
- 3.9 They identified further progress is needed in the following areas:
- Multi-agency case conferences need to focus more on capturing children’s voices and experience and acting upon it;

- Whilst improvements were noted in the quality of assessments, the quality of analysis is variable;
 - Oversight and challenge from child protection conference chairs and the quality of child protection plans;
 - Continuing to bring down caseloads for social workers and to increase the permanent workforce.
- 3.10 Ofsted's third monitoring visit is due to take place on 1st and 2nd May 2018. This will focus on our response to supporting young people who go missing and/or are at risk from involvement in gangs or sexual exploitation. This will require a concerted effort by children's social care, other parts of the council such as community safety and our partners including the police, schools and health.
- 3.11 On 27th June 2017, the Mayor in Cabinet approved our summary improvement plan, setting out the 10 components of a successful Children's Service and our vision of what a 'good' service will look like. To give them focus, the objectives and actions that are being implemented to achieve this vision are grouped under 4 themes that directly relate to the findings of the Ofsted inspection. This report sets out the contribution that our improvement plan and each of its themes is making towards this vision.
- 3.12 Additional capacity has been provided to the service to ensure that rapid progress can be made whilst maintaining day to day service provision. An experienced interim Divisional Director for Children's Social Care has been appointed to implement operational improvements and provide leadership in our improvement journey. A new Divisional Director post has been created and permanently recruited to which covers children's commissioning, including social care placements and early help, which further adds to capacity at senior management level. Additional capacity has also been put in place at service manager level. £5.2m of growth has been put in the Children's Services budget for 2017/18 and £4.5m has been identified thus far as the requirement to support the improvement plan. This will need to be monitored as part of the ongoing monitoring and modelling to ensure that there is a sustainable funding position for children's services now and in the future.
- 3.13 The following paragraphs set out in more detail the progress that has been made in each of the four themes of our improvement plan.

Theme 1- Leadership, Management and Governance

- 3.14 The focus in this part of the plan has been to implement a robust governance structure with a supporting performance management framework, a workforce strategy and address sufficiency issues in relation to emergency and unplanned placements. This will contribute to the following components of our vision:
- A whole council vision for excellence;
 - An outward facing organisation and culture;
 - Corporate and political support and an ambition for excellence;

- Strong member- officer relationships based on trust and constructive challenge;
- A clear 'golden thread' from the political leadership through to the frontline;
- Strong and dynamic leadership throughout the organisation;
- A permanent and stable workforce with capacity and resources;
- Strong coherent partnerships at strategic and operational level.

3.15 Governance and performance management arrangements were put in place as part of stage 1 of our improvement programme and are embedding well, as recognised by Ofsted in their monitoring visit. Political leadership and knowledge of Children's Social Care has been developed through two seminars for all Members; including a seminar specifically on child sexual exploitation; practice visits for the Mayor, Lead Member and Scrutiny Lead; spotlight sessions at Overview and Scrutiny Committee; regular discussion at Cabinet and pre-Cabinet meetings; verbal briefings by the Director for opposition Members; and fortnightly meetings between the Mayor, Lead Member, Chief Executive and Corporate Director, alternately attended by the independent Improvement Board Chair. The Mayor, Lead Member and Cabinet Member have also benefitted from training and mentoring organised by the Local Government Association.

3.16 Staff recruitment remains a challenge. As at the end of December 2017, 36% of posts across the Children's Social Care service were filled by agency staff, with the rate much higher in some teams. This is due to the competitive nature of the market in London for qualified social workers, coupled with the pressure of increased workload and the drive for improvement post Ofsted. Staff turnover has reduced, but recruitment remains a challenge. We are continuing to run a rolling recruitment campaign with our streamlined process and are continuing to work with our agency social workers to encourage them to move into permanent posts to introduce further stability in the workforce. The vacant posts in the senior management team in Children's Social Care that are currently occupied by interim staff have been recruited to and are expected to be filled by April 2018. Unfortunately, having attracted initially high levels of interest, the number of people applying for social work positions after our attendance at the national recruitment fair has been disappointingly low. We are ensuring that everyone who expressed an interest in the recruitment fair is being contacted to encourage them to pursue an application to the council. In addition, we are developing an improved 'grow your own' scheme to recruit more newly qualified workers and provide them with enhanced support so that they are able to develop their skills and provide the resources that our children and families need.

3.17 Our 'back to basics' training programme has been delivered, with good feedback from staff. We have completed a training needs analysis which has identified further development needs that is informing a programme of training for the coming months. We are continuing to provide ongoing training in specialist areas such as recognising and responding to Child Sexual

Exploitation and Domestic Abuse. This programme will ensure that the knowledge and skills of our staff are increased to address issues raised by the Ofsted inspection, whilst also supporting our staff retention strategy.

- 3.18 Sufficiency of emergency and unplanned placements remains an area of concern. Too many children experience having to move between different placements, leading to instability and disruption. Our sufficiency strategy is now being implemented to address the availability of suitable residential and foster care placements for our current cohort of looked after children. As part of this work, we have introduced new 'edge of care' services for families with older children who are likely to enter the care system where appropriate support for the family may be able to prevent this, enabling them to stay at home. This will improve outcomes for these children as well as reducing demand for care placements helping us to better manage the budget for Children's Social Care. It is too early to say whether these changes are being effective, and a strong focus remains in this area.
- 3.19 The remaining challenges relating to workforce and sufficiency of looked after children are the main focus of this theme in phase 2 of the improvement programme, as we move into implementation of the two strategies outlined above.

Theme 2- A robust model of social work practice.

- 3.20 This theme is the main 'core' of our improvement plan and focusses on improvements in practice within the Children's Social Care service. The service manages all contacts received by the council where there are concerns about a child's welfare through to statutory assessments and interventions for children. This includes the placement and support of looked after children as part of the council's corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 3.21 The theme contributes to the following components of our vision:
- A strong model of practice, with good checks and balances;
 - Clear and embedded systems, processes and data.
- 3.22 The council's approach to practice improvement includes greater clarity in practice standards ('what good looks like'), management action on compliance with standards and recording, and the systematic use of data and case audits to lift quality and consistency.
- 3.23 Our early improvements in the 'front door' of MASH and A&I have been sustained. Ofsted's second monitoring visit acknowledged that these improvements are starting to be embedded and this is also evidenced in our performance monitoring and quality assurance activity. For example, there has been significant improvement in the proportion of contacts where an initial decision is made on how to respond within 1 day (the figure for December 2017 was 74% compared to 49% in July), more assessments are being completed within 45 working days, and the proportion of contacts progressing to referral has increased indicating that partners understand thresholds for intervention and are referring children appropriately. These improvements have been achieved whilst the number of referrals being received is continuing to increase. As well as being more timely, our case auditing is showing that the quality of work is improving. This means that we can be

more certain that children are receiving appropriate and timely interventions to keep them safe.

- 3.24 Activity in the third quarter continued to focus on achieving similar improvement in the Family Support and Protection (FSP) teams, who deal with longer term casework of children who are assessed as being in need or subject to a child protection plan. All cases held by the FSP teams have now been reviewed, to ensure that the information held about them is accurate and that they are effectively managed to ensure appropriate and timely support is in place for families and that children are kept safe. Management oversight across the service has continued to improve and in December, 87.9% of cases had management oversight recorded in the last 8 weeks. In the majority of FSP teams, this figure was over 95% and targeted management action is being taken to improve performance in the remaining teams. The improvements in case management across the service have resulted in an increase in the proportion of children in need that have a plan in place from 51% in June 2017 to 78.1% at the end of December, a figure we expect to increase further as this work progresses. Approximately 92% of these children had a review of their plan within the last six months. At the same time, there has been an improving trend in the proportion of children being regularly visited by social workers.
- 3.25 The review of our early help services was concluded during stage 1 of our improvement programme. We are now implementing the findings of this review, changing the way we support families before they need help from social care services, to prevent problems from escalating and manage demand in the social care system. These changes will see the implementation of a 'single front door' and multi-disciplinary, locality-based teams to ensure that the right families receive the right support in a timely way and that resources are properly targeted to areas of need. Phase 1 of these changes will be implemented by April 2018.
- 3.26 In light of concerns about our local thresholds for social care intervention, in particular the extent to which these are well understood by partner agencies, a decision has been taken through the Local Safeguarding Children Board to adopt the Pan London child protection thresholds. This will bring us in line with most other London boroughs and help to ensure consistency. Work is progressing with partners and the new thresholds will be fully rolled out by the end of January 2018. Meanwhile, the increasing proportion of children receiving assessments and services as an outcome from referrals indicates that thresholds are becoming better understood by referring agencies.
- 3.27 Alongside this work, we have completed the first phase of engagement with staff and partners on a new model of social work practice following a decision to move away from the 'signs of safety' model, which had been poorly implemented. Feedback from staff about this change has been largely positive with a core group of social workers involved in developing the new model, rooted in relationship-based practice and family group conferencing. Planning for the next phase of development is now in progress.
- 3.28 Whilst progress has been made across this theme, and the improvements seen during the first phases of our improvement programme have been sustained and built upon, there remain significant challenges in ensuring that

social work practice is consistently robust. Although the improvements noted above are significant, and the overall trend is of improvement, performance is not yet at the level that would be expected from a 'good' service. The focus of our work over the next quarter, as articulated in our improvement plan, is to ensure that the processes put in place during stage 1 are used to support continuing and sustained improvements. The work that is ongoing as part of theme 1 to address our workforce challenges will be key to this as they begin to deliver a more stable and skilled workforce.

Theme 3- A sufficient and skilled workforce

3.29 This theme focusses on improvements in management oversight and supervision across all services, and in our management of private fostering cases which were highlighted as an area of concern by Ofsted. It contributes the following elements of our vision:

- Strong and dynamic leadership throughout the organisation;
- A strong model of practice, with good checks and balances;
- A permanent and stable workforce with capacity and resources.

3.30 As noted above, management oversight has improved and at the end of December, 87.9% of cases had received management oversight in the last 8 weeks. This is a significant improvement from 60% in April 2017. We have not yet met our 95% target, and management action to improve performance is now being targeted in teams that are impacting on this overall figure. Training for managers was being delivered as part of our 'back to basics' programme, further supporting improvements in the quality of management oversight to ensure that it supports the delivery of consistently high quality social work practice.

3.31 There is a focus now on improving our practice in relation to children who go missing, are at risk of sexual exploitation and involvement in gang related activity. We have appointed a new Missing Young Persons co-ordinator to oversee activity in this area. The initial focus has been to ensure that we have good quality data so that we have a thorough understanding of why children are going missing and are able to respond to emerging patterns. We are now working to further improve this data, improve the completion rate for return home interviews and have linked this work to our partnership wide response on child sexual exploitation and gang related activity. In relation to child sexual exploitation the use of risk screening tools in our MASH is now embedded enabling us to better identify and intervene where young people are at risk. This area of work will be the focus of Ofsted's next monitoring visit.

Theme 4- Quality Assurance and audit

3.32 This theme supports the following components in our vision:

- Clear and embedded systems, processes and data;
- A strong model of practice, with good checks and balances.

- 3.33 Our 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 under theme 2. 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.
- 3.34 As part of embedding Quality Assurance at all levels, Ofsted recommended that we take forward “Practice Week”, where senior leaders spend 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. Practice week took place over a three day period between 20th – 22nd November, with senior officers including the Chief Executive and Director of Children’s Services taking part, alongside the Mayor, lead member for Children’s Services and lead Overview and Scrutiny member for Children’s Services, the divisional director and the LSCB chair. Observations of practice included meeting student social workers, spending time with social work teams and observing professional meetings about children. ICT frustrations were observed as well as concerns around caseloads, personal development / training and the approach to compliance and communication. These observations are informing our improvement activity going forward.
- 3.35 The council has embarked on a complete replacement and upgrade of its aging IT infrastructure to provide a fast, flexible and reliable service for all service users. Over £16 million has been committed to deliver this extensive programme. Recognising that effective and reliable IT is critical for the Children’s Services Improvement journey, Children’s Services has been prioritised in the replacement and upgrade programme. Whilst this replacement programme is underway, short term actions have improved the availability and performance of IT to Children’s’ Services. This has been reported to the Children’s Services Improvement Board and will continue to be monitored at the highest level.
- 3.36 Ensuring that care leavers have up to date and reviewed pathway plans is another subject of this theme. Whilst the proportion of care leavers with a pathway plan has been maintained at 96%, the percentage that were reviewed in the last 6 months started to improve in October but still requires significant improvement. There is some concern about the quality of pathway planning and a review of our support to care leavers is now in progress, to be completed in March 2018. The voice of young people who are in or have left care has been strengthened at the Corporate Parenting Board and is helping to shape this work, including the ambition to develop a post-16 service.

Next Steps

- 3.37 Cabinet will receive a further update on progress in three months’ time. The key priorities for the next monitoring period, will be:
- Continuing work on our recruitment strategy;
 - Developing our training and development offer, including consideration of a social work academy;

- Implementing the sufficiency strategy, in particular the immediate actions to support families with older children that are at the point of entering the care system (on the 'edge of care.');
- Consolidating and building on the improvements we have made in performance and quality across the social care service;
- Implementing phase 1 of the new model for Early Help services;
- Completing implementation of the new child protection thresholds;
- Continuing development of our new model of social work practice;
- Delivering short, medium and long-term improvements to the council's ICT systems to ensure it is robust and reliable for social care staff.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 It is acknowledged that the implementation of the Children's Improvement Plan will only be achieved by Council leadership providing the financial resources required for its delivery.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Council leadership is also committed to providing one-off investment funded via Transformation Reserve to support the implementation of the improvement plan. The estimated cost of the improvement plan over 2 years is expected to be £4.2m. and would be reported to Members as part of the Council's normal budget management reporting mechanism.
- 4.4 The level of the one-off funding sought will be based on detailed assessment of the costs associated with the improvement plan and the demonstrable improvements that will be achieved as a result of the investment.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1. 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'). 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') sets out a single assessment framework for assessing local authorities during inspections conducted under section 136 of the Act. Local authorities are graded outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate in each of the areas inspected.
- 5.2. In light of the Council's rating of inadequate in 2 out of the 3 areas assessed, Ofsted's "Monitoring and re-inspection of local authority children's services

judged inadequate” guidance will apply. Ofsted will carry out a programme of monitoring activities, including quarterly monitoring visits, to report on the progress made by local authorities. Ofsted’s lead inspector will review the Inspection Improvement Plan to ensure that it reflects the recommendations contained in the inspection report. Ofsted will usually re-inspect a local authority judged inadequate at its last inspection within two years of it submitting its action plan, usually after at least four quarterly monitoring visits.

- 5.3. In respect of the recommendations contained in the report, the Council has a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness by virtue of section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This is known as its Best Value Duty.
- 5.4. 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.
- 5.5. In carrying out its functions, the Council must also comply with the public sector equality duty set out in section 149 Equality Act 2010, namely it must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 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.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Achieving a good children’s service will ensure that the council is meeting its best value obligations in this important area of service delivery.
- 7.2 The Best Value Improvement Board is part of the governance structure for the children’s services improvement plan and will be providing additional scrutiny through receiving quarterly updates on progress. This report will be formally presented at the Best Value Improvement Board.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no implications.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There is significant risk in failing to deliver a good children's service.
- 9.2 As part of our governance and programme management arrangements, risks are being identified and managed.
- 9.3 The following table shows the high level risks that have been identified, and how we are managing them through mitigating actions.

Description	Mitigation / Resolution
If the staff culture at all levels in the organisation does not change to address the problems identified by Ofsted, improvement in children's services will not be achieved.	Robust corporate governance to ensure clear ownership and accountabilities for improvement. Sustained management focus on compliance with practice standards. Robust communications with staff and partners.
If progress and improvements are not sustainable in the long term, the service may become inadequate again	Robust financial planning to ensure that the service is sufficiently resourced. Investment in workforce strategy to ensure that there is a stable and highly skilled workforce with long term plans to sustain this.
If leadership capacity and permanence are insufficient, the improvement plan may not be successfully implemented and/ or improvements may not be sustained.	Review of leadership structure to ensure capacity is sufficient. Workforce strategy to address recruitment, retention and development of leadership capacity.
If the Children's Social Care service is not sufficiently resourced in line with a high and increasing volume of casework, it will not be possible to achieve a good standard of practice	Robust financial planning as part of corporate budget processes to ensure that there is sufficient budget for current and future service need. Ensure that temporary resources are only used for one off improvement activity and that any permanent budget requirements are identified separately and planned for.
If the service response is inadequate, then children may come to significant harm.	Robust monitoring and oversight of casework. Effective performance management and quality assurance framework, and robust governance. Staff development to ensure correct skills level.
If skilled and experienced staff leave the organisation as a result of rapid change activity, then there may be capacity issues within the service and multiple changes in social workers for children and families to cope with.	Ensure that staff are supported through change. Provide effective workforce development opportunities. Recruitment and retention strategy put in place.
If new staff cannot be recruited, then there may be capacity issues and financial pressures within the service.	Recruitment and retention strategy: ensure pay and benefits are competitive and robust approach to recruitment advertising targeted in the right areas, and coupled with effective 'grow your own' scheme to develop newly qualified workers.
If there is low level compliance with the TH model of social work and statutory requirements, then children may come to significant harm.	A training programme has been put in place for all staff to ensure there is a clear understanding of the TH model of social work, and statutory requirements.

Description	Mitigation / Resolution
If the pace of progress in implementing the improvement plan is not fast enough to meet the requirements for 'good' by April 2019, then Ofsted may subject the service to additional measures and/ or intervention by commissioners.	Ensure sufficient resourcing of improvement plan; Rigorous and systematic monitoring of improvement plan; performance management and quality assurance framework
If the quality of the data is poor, then it may result in inaccurate performance monitoring and analysis, and ultimately risk to children.	Data cleansing of existing data; Implementation of robust use of child level data by team managers; data quality reports; action by managers to ensure that data entered into case management system is accurate
If the council's political leadership across all parties are not fully engaged or aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to children's services, then there may be a lack of appropriate scrutiny and accountability.	Continuing training and development for elected members. Ongoing regular meetings with the Mayor, Lead Member, Chief Executive and Corporate Director. Support for Overview & Scrutiny.
If partners are not fully engaged or aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the improvement activities, then some improvement actions may not be achieved.	Senior leadership from key partners are members of the Children's Services Improvement Board to ensure they are involved in the strategic development and oversight of their agency's involvement. The LSCB has strengthened its leadership structure and focus.
There is a risk that ICT infrastructure problems prevent access to systems and/ or management information undermining improvement progress	Contingencies are in place to access child data in the event of ICT outage. Social work staff have been prioritised for access and support as required when systems experience issues. Improvement plan in place to ensure improved reliability within 12-18 months.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Our improvement plan includes activity to improve support to children at risk of involvement in gangs or being sexually exploited.

11. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Safeguarding children is a core focus of the improvement plan.
- 11.2 The Ofsted judgement rated our local safeguarding children board 'inadequate.' Work is underway to address this finding and improve the work of the board.

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