

Improving Lives Summary Report

1.	Date of meeting:	15th January 2019
2.	Title:	Ofsted Recommendations - update
3.	Directorate:	Children & Young People's Services (CYPS)

1. Background

Ofsted carried out a re-inspection of Children's Services in November 2017 under their Single Inspection Framework.

The findings from the inspection were published on the 29th January 2018 and were:

- Services for Children and young People in Rotherham are overall **Good**
- Children in Need of Help and Protection is **Good**
- Children looked after and achieving permanence is **Requires Improvement**
- Adoption Performance is **Good**
- Experiences and progress of Care Leavers is **Outstanding**
- Leadership, management and Governance is **Good**

1.1 In the report Ofsted identified eight recommendations for improvement:

The table below provides an overview of the status of the 34 actions identified for completion against each of the 8 recommendations.

Recommendation	Actions Complete	Actions Outstanding
1. Ensure that managers provide challenging, reflective and directive supervision and, with support from independent reviewing officers (IROs) and conference chairs, address the quality of practice and planning for all children effectively.	1	2
2. Ensure that all assessments are: meaningful to children and their families; reflect the changing needs of children; and effectively evaluate cumulative risks and their impact.	0	4
3. Ensure that all plans: are clear about how children's and young people's holistic needs are to be met; have clear timescales; can be understood by families; and are always well informed by risk assessment.	0	4
4. Ensure that early permanence planning is timely and considers the full range of placement options for all children when they are unable to return to their birth families.	0	7
5. Improve the timeliness of the early help response to children, particularly those who have a disability.	3	0
6. Work with schools to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions and persistent absentees from education among children looked after.	2	4
7. Ensure that children benefit from a timely good quality Lifestory work and clearly written later life letters, to enable children to understand their experiences, life history and reason for separation from their birth families.	2	2
8. Ensure that birth parents of children who are adopted fully understand what support is available and are helped to access this	3	0

1.2 Progress against the thirty four actions that were identified to address the eight recommendations in the Ofsted report are managed in the CYPS Improvement Plan. Quarterly Service Plan Performance Clinics and the CYPS Performance Board, chaired by Cllr Watson, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services, monitor and challenge progress against the actions and approves for sign off each action including the check and challenge of evidence against the recommendations as part of a multi-agency evidence panel. The lead for the completed recommendation attends the Board and is challenged on, and must provide evidence of completion of the actions completed in respect of the recommendation. The Board has the power to approve that an action is complete; request remedial action or refer the recommendation back to the Performance Board as incomplete. This provides an additional level of assurance that actions have been completed and therefore the recommendations have been addressed. The next Evidence Challenge Board is scheduled for the 16th January 2019.

1.3 Senior Managers attended the Annual Conversation with HMI Ofsted on the 20th November 2018. This was a formal discussion which included a self-evaluation by Children's Services, where evaluation of performance was undertaken and articulated what is working well for children. This meeting discussed progress against the 8 recommendations from the previous inspection (update attached), and will inform plans for future inspection activity and focused visits of Children's Services.

2. What's Working Well?

Two of the recommendations are fully complete (6 actions in total) which are in relation to:

2.1 Recommendation 5 - Improve the timeliness of the early help response to children, particularly those who have a disability:

The standard response time for children with disabilities is now managed as part of the fortnightly performance meetings; regular meetings take place between the Early Help Disability Manager and an experienced Early Help and Family Engagement Service Manager. Signs of Safety training has been rolled out in the team and is being embedded. Performance data shows that timeliness has improved, with an upward trend predicted to continue.

2.2 Recommendation 8 - Ensure that birth parents of children who are adopted fully understand what support is available and are helped to access this:

Additional support has been put in place for birth parents whose children have been adopted. Work has also taken place with PAC UK (an independent Adoption Support Agency) which is shared on the council website, during court work and as part of the letterbox process, in addition to the Pause Programme which is engaging with women who have had children adopted.

RMBC continues to commission this support via PAC UK and the Adoption Team website has now been updated to include PAC UK and link to this service and PAC UK continue to be commissioned for families affected by adoption. In addition to this PAC UK have started a monthly drop in support session for birth parents. Birth parents that have a letterbox agreement have been contacted and sent a list of dates, venue and topics. This is being trialled 6 months to see how it goes and linking in with the work of the Pause project.

3. What are we Worried About?

6 recommendations still remain outstanding. In respect of these recommendations, 5 actions are complete, and 23 actions are in progress. A further update of the progress against the recommendations is currently underway as part of the preparation for the Independent Council Health Check which is taking place between the 6th and 8th February.

The implementation of Signs of Safety (SOS) within Liquid Logic is having an impact upon the development of key documents within the system. This is due to a delay in the readiness of the Liquid Logic Signs of Safety licensed product. In order to minimise this potential barrier we have commenced work around developing key documents to be used in the existing Liquid Logic pathway, this should then reflect our improving practice in the case record more effectively.

4. What are we going to do about it?

Further work now continues in relation to planning for the implementation of the Rotherham Family Approach in Liquid Logic which will support staff in recording and evidencing their work with families.

Planning for inspections remain a priority with preparations underway for the following key potential inspections of Children's Services:

- Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACs)
- Joint Target Area Inspection focussing on Familial Sexual Abuse – a dry run of this inspection took place with partner agencies on the 12th November. This will test our ability as a partnership, to respond to, and provide evidence against the criteria in the inspection framework.
- Special Educational Needs Local Area Inspection

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