

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Improving Lives Select Commission
2.	Date:	11th June, 2014
3.	Title:	Ofsted Inspection readiness: children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People’s Service

5. Summary

This report provides an update to Improving Lives Select Commission on the readiness in Rotherham for Ofsted’s new inspection framework of “children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers”. It also provides members with an update on the findings from inspections that have been carried out so far across the country under the new framework

6. Recommendations

- (i) That Improving Lives Select Commission receive this paper and note the progress made in preparing for such an inspection**
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7. Proposals and Details

The Ofsted framework

Ofsted began inspecting local authority children services under their new single inspection framework on 19th November 2013. All local authorities will be inspected within a three year period. The inspection focusses on the local authority functions to help, care and protect children and young people. It includes the overall effectiveness; leadership, management and governance of services, together with key judgements on:

- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence
- Adoption performance
- The experiences and progress of care leavers

The inspection framework consists of collation of information about children in the local authority area which is known as Annex A which has to be completed within the first 36 hours following the notification of the inspection; case file audits; exploration of children's cases; test decision making; meet with children, young people, parents and carers; shadow staff; and observe practice in multi-agency meetings. Staff in the local authority will also be involved in auditing cases for Ofsted to quality assure and check.

Local authorities are notified of their inspection on a Tuesday morning, and the inspectors arrive on the following day, usually consisting of a team of about 7 inspectors.

Ofsted inspection outcomes under the new framework to date

Ofsted have inspected (or are currently inspecting) 22 Local Authorities (as at 20th May 2014).

Out of the 22 authorities, 12 have had their reports published

Overall Judgement	No of Authorities
Outstanding	none
Good	6
Requires Improvement	4
Inadequate	2

Themes from inspections nationally have found issues and concerns around the following areas

- Management Oversight from team and service managers is not always robust
- Wishes and feelings of children are not routinely recorded
- There is sometimes little or no evidence of reflective supervision taking place and recorded

- The challenge from Independent Reviewing Officers is not always robust and taken on board by managers
- Good practice is not always consistent across services
- The feedback of experiences of the service from children and families is not always captured and fed-back into service improvement
- The rich knowledge that social workers have of children is not always reflected in case files
- The assessment of risk and completion of chronologies needs to be strengthened
- Police attendance at strategy meetings is not consistent in some areas
- The identification of children's needs is not always clearly recorded in plans
- Statutory visits do not always take place in the time scale required
- Performance management is not embedded at all levels in organisations
- Thresholds are not always fully understood by partners

Directors of Children's Services involved in recent inspections have commented that the new framework is the " most detailed and exacting inspection ever".

Their comments on the inspection process include:

- It is really important that we are able to evidence everything that takes place and is robustly recorded
- Evidence any challenge at all levels that takes place
- In some cases there were 9 inspectors on site and it is often quite difficult to coordinate all these inspectors
- The inspection is 4 weeks and "a month is a long time" and causes a significant deflection from the day job for all staff
- IT infrastructure is really important and inspectors will need support to enable them to access case records
- Staff conduct during inspections is really important and a reminder to staff that an inspection is not the time to raise concerns
- The inspectors focus on quality of practice and outcomes for children.

Preparation in Rotherham

There is a significant amount of work required to plan for such an inspection, including the preparation of the material which will be required for Annex A, plans to improve outcomes for children through practice, service provision and management oversight to meet the enhanced requirements; and preparation of staff and partners who will be required to contribute.

The Annex A is the output based submission required on Wednesday Week1, (Day1).

Extensive data submissions are also required on Day 1 to allow for case file selection, a selection of these included in Appendix 2 (to be tabled).

Preparation in Rotherham has also included:

- When the inspector calls document – a plan of actions and roles particularly around the first few days of the inspection
- Deep Dive / Mock Inspection activity resulting in some required system changes, improvements around management oversight, some elements of practice (timeliness of assessments and consistent quality plans for children in need and those on a child protection plan) and the use of performance information
- Briefings on the new framework for staff, partners, elected members
- Self Assessments against the framework, currently working with Communications and Marketing to pull this into a narrative style that can be submitted to Ofsted on their arrival, note this is not a mandatory submission but good practice
- CYPS M2/M3 managers sessions, extensive sessions around the self assessment, good practice case studies, “The Rotherham Story”

Preparation work has demonstrated that the themes described in the authorities already inspected are echoed in Rotherham. This work has looked at areas of good practice and high quality work with children and young people which can be used as an example for Ofsted and as a model for practice and management. The ‘deep dive’ and performance information has resulted in improvement plans being put in place for all service areas to address inconsistency in practice. A temporary Service Manager has been recruited for the Looked After Children Service to increase capacity and manage improvement work.

A training programme for social care staff and managers, Triple A, has been running since January to ensure that all staff have the required training for up to date practice in line with the council’s expectations.

There will be an impact on the delivery of services during the inspection, as the very short notice (1 day) together with two and a half weeks inspection activity and a weeks self auditing activity (almost 4 weeks in total) will prevent some social workers and managers from carrying out everyday tasks.

8. Finance

There are no significant costs associated with this report, however there will be incidental costs once Ofsted inspectors arrive on site, including car parking costs, IT set up costs, refreshments etc.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Poor outcomes from Ofsted inspections can have wide ranging consequences and can lead to an Improvement Notice being issued and / or Government intervention. The planning currently taking place is to ensure that the service is OFSTED ready.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Ofsted’s new framework is much more rigorous than any previous framework and covers the full range of services from children’s social care, from referrals into the Contact Assessment and Referral Team (CART) right through to a young person

leaving care and looks at the journey and experiences of the child/young person throughout their involvement with children's social care.

Ofsted are also introducing Integrated Inspections from April 2015 where next year 25 local authorities will be inspected under the new framework along with Care Quality Commission (CQC) Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary (HMIC) and Prisons (HMIP). These 25 authorities will be those where there are concerns from inspectorates, previously found to be inadequate and also those who where good practice can be disseminated to other authorities.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Ofsted inspection framework for the inspection of Children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

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