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18 June 2019

Dear Member,

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee - Wednesday, 19 June 2019

Please find enclosed the following document(s) for consideration at the meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee on Wednesday, 19 June 2019 which was unavailable when the agenda was published.

Agenda No	Item
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6.	Children First Practice Improvement Plan (Pages 3 - 10)
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The report is late due to officers ensuring the Committee receive the most up to date information.

Yours sincerely

Tony Kershaw
Director of Law and Assurance

To all members of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

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Children and Young People's Services Select Committee
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19 June 2019

Children First Practice Improvement Plan (Ofsted inspection action)
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Report by the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Law and Assurance
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Summary

<p>Following the Ofsted inspection of the County Council's Children's Social Care Services in February 2019, an 'inadequate' judgement was given in Ofsted's report published on 8 May 2019. At its meeting on 15 May, the Select Committee considered its role in plans being developed in response to the judgement.</p>
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<p>This report explains the context for the creation of a Children First Practice Improvement Plan ('the Improvement Plan'). The purpose of the Plan will be to demonstrate to the Department for Education (DfE) that the Council has an effective and deliverable plan to address the areas that need to improve. A presentation on the Improvement Plan will be made to the Committee.</p>

<p>The Committee will have the opportunity to preview the Improvement Plan before its submission in July to the DfE.</p>
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The focus for scrutiny

<p>The Select Committee is requested to</p>

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. note the process for the production and delivery of the Children First Practice Improvement Plan, the progress to date and the further actions in hand. 2. consider how it proposes to discharge its scrutiny function in relation to the delivery of the Plan. |
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its last meeting on 15 May 2019, the Committee considered the Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspection report on the Council's children's services, published on 08 May which gave an 'inadequate' judgement. Arising from the judgement, a Statutory Direction from the Department for Education (DfE), dated 4 June 2019, requires the County Council to prepare an improvement plan.
- 1.2 The Secretary of State for Education has appointed, from 4 June 2019, a Commissioner for Children's Services in West Sussex to oversee the Council's response to the Statutory Direction. The Commissioner is John Coughlan, the Chief Executive of Hampshire County Council, and its former Director of Children's Services.

2. The Improvement Plan Process

- 2.1 The purpose of the plan is to demonstrate to the DfE that the Council has an effective and deliverable action plan to address the areas that need to improve as identified in the inspection report, and to demonstrate its capability and capacity to improve children's services to a satisfactory standard.
- 2.2 The Plan is drafted for initial discussion with Ofsted and then for consideration by the Council's Improvement Board. It will then be submitted to this Committee for scrutiny preview at its meeting in July. Following scrutiny it will be approved by the Cabinet Member for submission to the DfE and Ofsted later in July. The Council must then work closely with the Commissioner on the development of the Plan, and also co-operate with him in his assessment of whether the most effective way of securing and sustaining service improvement is for operational service control to remain with the County Council. The Commissioner is expected to report his formal recommendations to the Secretary of State by 30 September 2019.
- 2.3 The performance and progress in delivering service improvements will be assessed through a sequence of quarterly Ofsted monitoring visits, that are expected to commence in Autumn 2019, as agreed between Ofsted and the Director of Children's Services. These will culminate in a re-inspection of the service, probably during 2021.

3. Areas for Improvement

- 3.1 Ofsted has identified 12 areas where the service needs to improve:
 1. The infrastructure and services to support good-quality social work practice, reducing the number of transfer points for children. Clarity regarding the expectations of the workforce, including practice guidance and procedures and the quality of staff induction and training.
 2. The quality of social work practice, to assess, support and protect children who experience neglect.
 3. The effectiveness of assessment and planning for children in private fostering arrangements and 16- and 17-year-old homeless young people.
 4. The quality of plans, particularly in relation to the focus on critical issues for families, timescales for actions and the consideration of what will happen if improvements are not achieved or concerns increase.
 5. The quality of social work recording, including the inclusion of intelligence and an analysis of the critical issues for children in return home interview records.
 6. Permanence planning for children, including the availability and use of foster-to-adopt placements, timeliness of assessments and planning for unborn babies.
 7. The quality and timeliness of life-story work.
 8. The quality and regularity of supervision, management oversight, direction and challenge, at all levels.
 9. The effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements.
 10. Staff recruitment and retention so that children experience fewer social workers.
 11. The rigour and impact of corporate parenting arrangements.
 12. The active engagement of all relevant partners to tackle weaknesses in services and improve outcomes for children.

- 3.2 This Committee has previously noted some of the actions already put in hand towards service improvement since 2018 and the Plan will build on those.

Preparing the Plan: its Structure and Rationale

- 3.3 In preparing the draft Plan, an approach has been adopted that is recognised by Ofsted and other local authorities as best practice. The Plan is structured on the 12 areas for improvement listed above, and therefore its elements can be directly linked to the Ofsted findings. Accordingly, it will be easier to evidence improvements against the weaknesses identified, and maintain transparency. The Plan comprises a clear set of actions to be achieved to a timetable. Each action is intended to deliver a specific outcome, and there will be a focus on being able to measure outcomes and determine that they have been achieved. Measures have been devised that make it clear to all stakeholders of the Plan whether or not the requisite objective has been satisfactorily achieved.
- 3.4 The comprehensive and ongoing programme of improvement set out in the Plan will take a 'What Good Looks like' approach to social work training, embedding and performance-managing practice standards and expectations, and ensuring that frontline staff have the tools and resources to achieve the best outcomes for their children. The plan preparation process has been informed by contributions from staff and managers, and to date has included 6 staff engagement sessions for this purpose. Similarly, it is intended to involve partners further as the process unfolds.
- 3.5 The Plan represents the immediate actions to be taken over the next few months, in order to achieve meaningful service recovery. This work will be underpinned by a strong and comprehensive performance framework. Accordingly this Committee will receive regular information that allows it to achieve robust scrutiny of critical performance factors.
- 3.6 Additionally to the performance management of operational delivery through the Plan, there will be an overarching strategic approach to the creation of a comprehensive Children's First Improvement Strategy, to further develop services and think creatively and innovatively to achieve the best outcomes for children in West Sussex.

Examples from the Plan

- 3.7 Examples of the kind of improvements being sought under different categories can be given as follows:

Ofsted Category 1) Infrastructure and services to support good quality social work practice

Actions	Outcomes	Evidence
Identify the right delivery model;	Will enable timely, appropriate and	Visits, assessments etc carried out to

produce new practice standards; design a new staff induction programme – involving staff in all design processes	effective interventions, minimising change of social worker; clear journey from child's point of view; clear standards in place that staff understand and adhere to. Will include: workforce strategy supporting staff development; improving key areas of practice (eg unborn children, staff supervision, voice of the child). Setting and training to new standards for identification of risk, 'what a good service looks like', etc	prescribed timescale; manageable caseloads, minimising changes to social worker; continuing wellbeing support to staff; sustained improvement in staff retention figures; audit and service user feedback evidence
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Ofsted Category 10) Staff Recruitment & Retention

Actions	Outcomes	Evidence
Pressing forward with the existing recruitment and retention initiative to ensure experienced social workers stay with West Sussex, and a strong new cohort is attracted	Staff to feel valued and supported through a period of improvement; caseloads especially for newly qualified staff will be carefully managed; staff will receive effective and supportive training and line management; overall outcome that children experience fewer different social workers	Vacancy rate to be less than 10%

Ofsted Category 11) Rigour and impact of corporate parenting

Actions	Outcomes	Evidence
Dedicated training for all corporate parents to set new standards; strengthen governance participation by involving young people on Corporate Parenting Board; strengthen education planning and	Those with corporate parenting responsibilities will have the skills and information to offer robust challenge to ensure positive outcomes for our children in care	Service user feedback, including Children in Care Council; measurable improvements in young person's engagement and attendance; education plans to be up to date; improved

virtual school arrangements; involve partners in building new operational effectiveness for children looked after	<p>The service will have representation of the voice of those in care and will have direct impact and influence to the Service and key partners</p> <p>Children who come into care will feel the LA champions their needs, and will listen, respect, and care to enable them to have the best outcomes, including those who leave our care</p>	performance on delivery of health assessments; improved data management, including missing children data
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The Future Role of the Select Committee

- 3.8 The Select Committee, at its meeting on 15 May 2019, discussed options for engagement with the various groups involved in the Improvement Plan and set expectations for its own continued monitoring of the delivery of the Plan and the outcomes of quarterly inspections. The Committee also made provision to explore how it could engage more closely with service users and front-line staff.
- 3.9 The purpose of the presentation to the Committee is to fully understand the role the Plan plays, the scope of its content and the way in which the various stakeholders in the improvement process will contribute to its implementation and monitoring.
- 3.10 It is intended that there should be a continuing dialogue with the Select Committee as the Plan process unfolds, and that its Business Planning Group could support the discussion of more detailed aspects of the Plan. It is proposed to have a fuller discussion of this subject at the Committee's meeting in July.

4. Resources

- 4.1 The full resource implications will be further clarified when the Improvement Plan is confirmed.

5. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee

- 5.1 The Select Committee will receive a presentation on the preparation of the draft Children First Practice Improvement Plan. The Committee will wish to bear in mind certain criteria that the plan to be adopted will need to fulfil:
- That all of the 12 areas for improvement are satisfactorily addressed;

- That the Plan gives a comprehensive framework for service transformation, and full expression to the County Council's aspirations for children;
- That the voice of the child is central to the Plan and the programme of transformation it represents;
- That the Plan will fully engage and command the confidence of service users, staff, partners, and the public.

5.2 The Committee will be able to consider whether these aims are met in the Plan when it sees the proposed plan at its next meeting. Members may wish to consider how its monitoring and scrutiny of the delivery of a plan of this kind should be undertaken, reflecting on previous experience in monitoring service quality and performance and identifying any different approaches that should be considered to ensure effective and verifiable impact on outcomes.

6. Consultation

6.1 Consultation is underway with Ofsted and with the Improvement Board, and thereby with the partners which make up the Board. The involvement with staff through 6 staff engagement sessions is referred to at 3.4. All these discussions will continue to feed into the development of the Plan.

7. Risk Management Implications

7.1 The effectiveness of the County Council's services for children will be driven by the satisfactory delivery of actions required for improvement. The Select Committee will play a critical role. Were the Improvement Plan not to convince the Commissioner of the County Council's ability successfully to transform services there is a risk of the Council's loss of autonomy in the delivery of children's social care services.

7.2 The Council's integrity and reputation in regard to services for children and young people will be at risk unless a good response is made to the findings of the inspection. The Select Committee's contribution to the Plan, and its commitment to a robust scrutiny of its delivery, will remain a vital component of an ultimately successful outcome.

8. Other Options Considered

8.1 None

9. Equality Duty

9.1 The public sector equality duty will be referenced in all of the work planning and the monitoring of delivery so that the Committee is able to give due regard to the needs of those with protected characteristics and to the obligation to ensure fairness and equal treatment.

10. Social Value

- 10.1 The Committee will wish to examine to what extent the future plans for Children's Services support and complement the Council's commitments to social value.

11. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 11.1 To the extent that areas of children's social care services and its work with partners in child protection have implications for reducing crime and disorder and improving the life chances of young people, this will be referenced in the work planning and in the material presented for review by the Committee.

12. Human Rights Implications

- 12.1 The Committee will wish to understand the implications of the inspection's findings and the actions identified in the Children First Practice Improvement Plan that have a bearing on the Council's overriding duty to safeguard the Human Rights of children in need. The Committee may also in due course wish to consider the value of a focus on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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