

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Ofsted Single Inspection: report and draft improvement plan
Committee: Cabinet
Date: 13 January 2015
Cabinet Member: Councillor McDonald
CMT Member: Carole Burgoyne (Strategic Director for People)
Author: Giles Perritt, Assistant Chief Executive
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Ref:
Key Decision: No
Part: I

Purpose of the report:

Plymouth City Council was subject to an Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers in October and November 2014. At the same time, a review of the effectiveness of the Plymouth Safeguarding Board was undertaken.

The Council is required to prepare and publish a written statement of the action it intends to take in response to the report within 70 working days of receiving it.

Cabinet are asked to note the contents of the appended Ofsted report and approve the approach being taken to preparation of the improvement plan, which is also appended.

The single inspection framework was introduced in November 2013 and is different from previous inspection arrangements, both in the rigour with which the inspection is undertaken and in terms of the standards against which services are judged.

Plymouth City Council was previously inspected under a different framework in 2010, when services were judged to be good. Ofsted have been clear that they have significantly 'raised the bar' since the previous framework for inspection of child protection and looked after children's services. Under the new framework, the previous 'Adequate/Satisfactory' judgement has been replaced with a 'Requires improvement to be good' rating.

The Ofsted report's overall conclusion is that the City Council's services for vulnerable children are now judged as 'Requiring improvement to be good'. Ofsted found a range of strengths in Plymouth's services for vulnerable children, including:

- The voice of the child and young person is kept at the centre of all work. This is demonstrated at both strategic planning and commissioning levels and in direct front line practice
- The workforce are skilled, committed and passionate about working in Plymouth, despite high workloads they are positive about the support they experience from their managers and each other
- Family Group Conferences are used to support families and prevent children from coming into care. During 2013–14 these conferences prevented 108 children from entering care by helping extended families to make safe, alternative plans for them
- Care proceedings in Plymouth are concluded in an average of 24.4 weeks, which is a good performance and helps reduce uncertainty for the child
- The Council has a higher than average number of children leaving care through adoption than the England average (In 2013–14, the total was 40)

- The Council has a strong partnership with the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- A range of innovative work supports children and their families. This includes highly effective psychological interventions in the Parent and Child Assessment Team and the Family Intervention Project (FIP).
- The Children with Disabilities Team and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Service demonstrate good quality, child-focused work.
- Corporate parenting is well embedded across the authority, with a strong commitment to the needs of looked after children from elected members and senior leaders.
- A clear professional development framework is in place for newly qualified social workers during their assessed and supported year in employment, and for staff in their second and third years after qualification.
- The targeted youth support team provides a high level of support to young people aged 11 and over.

The inspectors also acknowledged the pressures the service is under including an increase in demand for services in the past 12 months. Since April 2013 this has resulted in a 19.5 per cent increase in the number of children needing assessment, a 24.7 per cent increase in the number of children and young people subject to a child protection plan and a 6.8 per cent increase in the number of looked after children.

Key areas that the Council needs to improve on include:

- Reducing high caseloads carried by social workers
- Improving management oversight
- Improving IT systems so they can deliver accurate and timely data
- Improving working practises between our partners

For the first time, the Ofsted inspection also looked at the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and judged that this too 'requires improvement to be good'.

Some of the key areas the board will focus on include:

- Ensuring sufficient evaluation of multi-agency training
- Encouraging more schools to engage in safeguarding audits in order to ensure that they are fully effective.
- Making sure that all data is sufficiently comprehensive or accurate in providing information on safeguarding issues, trends and activity.

The Council already has plans in place to address the majority of the areas for improvement highlighted by Ofsted in the report, and the Strategic Director for People will itemise these in the written statement of the action that the Council intends to take in response to the report, which will be published within the time limit set out in the regulations.

The Brilliant Co-operative Council Corporate Plan 2013/14 -2016/17:

Services to vulnerable children are underpinned by the Council's values of Democracy, Responsibility, Fairness and Partnership as set out in the Corporate Plan. Specifically, the Caring Plymouth objective and outcomes set out the approach to improving services in this area.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land:

None arising directly from this report. Implications arising from the implementation of specific actions in the improvement plan will be the subject of separate decisions where appropriate.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

None arising directly from this report. Implications arising from the implementation of specific actions in the improvement plan will be the subject of separate decisions where appropriate.

Equality and Diversity:

Where appropriate, impact assessments will be undertaken to support the implementation of elements of the improvement plan.

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

1. That Cabinet notes the contents of the Ofsted report of the 2014 inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board.
 2. That Cabinet endorses the attached draft improvement plan as a basis for the Council's written response to the report and delegates responsibility to provide a written response to the report to the Strategic Director for People.
 3. That Cabinet requests the support of the Ambitious Plymouth overview and scrutiny panel in ensuring the effective delivery of the improvement plan, once finalised.
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Alternative options considered and rejected:

The Council's response to the publication of the report is prescribed by The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007

Published work / information:

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070305103505/opsi.gov.uk/si/si2007/uksi_20070462_en

[Inspection handbook: inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, Ofsted, 2013.](#)

Background papers:

None

Sign off:

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Originating SMT Member: G Perritt													