

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: OFSTED Focussed Visit to Children Young People and Families service

Committee: Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 18 July 2018

Cabinet Member: Councillor Sue McDonald (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)
Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation)

CMT Member: Alison Botham (Director of Children's Services)

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Ref:

Key Decision: No

Part: I

Purpose of the report:

This report provides feedback on the outcome of the OFSTED Focussed Visit to the Children Young People and Families service (CYPFS) which took place in May 2018.

It is provided for information and scrutiny purposes.

Corporate Plan

This report relates to the provision of services for children and young people, with a particular emphasis on children in need and safeguarding. As such, it relates to our priorities as a caring council, which keeps children, young people and adults protected, has a focus on prevention and early interventions and allows people to feel safe in Plymouth.

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

No relevant implications, other than demand management for CYPFS by maintaining appropriate thresholds for entry into the service and assessment of need and risk in order to ensure that families have the right service at the right time and that children are not brought into care inappropriately.

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

The Focussed Visit provided feedback on the quality of the work undertaken by CYPFS staff, with a particular focus on outcomes for children and young people.

The Focussed Visit report is generally very positive, which has relevance to Plymouth City Council's approach to child poverty, community safety and risk management.

An area for further development highlighted in the feedback is the use of temporary accommodation for homeless 16-17 year olds. This is a national issue and has implications for child poverty and risk management.

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

The CYPFS have drawn up an action plan in response to the Focussed Visit. This is being monitored by the Head of Service for Referrals, Assessment and Early Help and the Service Director, and progress against the plan is reported to the Safeguarding Assurance Meeting.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Not applicable

Published work / information:

Letter: Focussed Visit to Plymouth City Council Children's Services

Background papers:

None

Sign off: comment must be sought from those whose area of responsibility may be affected by the decision, as follows (insert references of Finance, Legal and Monitoring Officer reps, and of HR, Corporate Property, IT and Strat. Proc. as appropriate):

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I. Introduction

From January 2018, OFSTED inspections of Children's Services have followed a new framework, which aims to ensure that inspections are proportional, of high quality and of value to children, and follows a set of principles which-

- focusses on the things that matter most to children's lives.
- is consistent in expectations of providers.
- prioritises OFSTED's work where improvement is needed most.

Plymouth was last subject to an inspection under the Single Inspection Framework in Autumn 2014. This means that we are at the end of our three-year inspection cycle.

The new system for those local authorities like Plymouth judged to be Requiring Improvement will comprise of:

- standard or short judgement inspections every three years to evaluate local authority children's services and provide graded judgements., known as ILACS (Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services).
- focussed visits between inspections, providing a narrative report that details strengths and areas for improvement.
- local authority self-evaluation of social work practice.
- reviews of data and intelligence.
- regular engagement about these activities between Ofsted regional directors, inspectors and local authorities.

On May 1st and 2nd, Plymouth CYPFS received a two-day focussed visit, centred on the front door. For us this meant particular attention was given to the Hub and Plymouth Referral and Assessment Service (PRAS), although there was also some more limited consideration of the work with children as they passed through the Gateway and the Children's Social Work service. Specifically, inspectors considered contacts, referrals and assessments for children in need of support and protection.

Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including case discussions with social workers and managers and other professionals working in the Hub. They also reviewed our performance management arrangements, quality assurance information and children's case records.

2. Outcome

The Outcome letter was published on 25th May.

Overall, we are extremely pleased with the positive tone of the feedback. Inspectors recognised that senior leaders and members have focused on improving services for vulnerable children. They note that leaders and managers know their services well and promote the development of good social work practice.

Inspectors did not identify any child at risk of harm or for whom the local authority had not provided an appropriate service. They commented particularly on the morale and commitment of frontline

workers and the good quality direct work with children and families, and felt that we could demonstrate that children were listened to and that our assessments were good.

Headline feedback included-

-Overall, contacts and referrals are responded to promptly. However, leaders recognise this could be improved further. In order to achieve a consistently timely response for all children, senior managers are comprehensively restructuring services at the front door.

-Partnership working in the Hub results in effective decisions which safeguard children. Thresholds are applied appropriately in the Gateway team, Hub and in PRAS.

-Interventions to meet children's needs are proportionate. The response to child protection concerns is timely. However, strategy meetings to consider the risk of significant harm to children often do not include all relevant agencies.

-Performance management and management oversight are strong overall. Staff feel listened to, supported in their day-to-day practice and valued by leaders and managers.

In terms of areas for improvement, the key messages were-

-Child in need and child protection plans should clearly outline what needs to change, and should include specific attributed tasks and achievable timescales.

- Transfer of case responsibility between teams should be quicker in order to reduce delay and disruption to children and families.

- Accommodation for children requiring emergency care placements, including 16- and 17- year olds who present as homeless, should be appropriate to their needs, provide protection from potential risks and promote their well-being.

-Swift implementation of the local authority's 'Safeguarding HUB and Gateway integration project plan' is needed in order to improve the quality of management.

The management team feel this is a fair and proportionate overview, and are particularly pleased with the recognition for frontline staff. There is already a project underway to align and develop the Hub and Gateway which will address some of the points picked up by inspectors, as well as a programme of work alongside colleagues in Commissioning and Community Connections to improve outcomes for homeless young people in Plymouth. This however should be recognised as a national issue which all LAs are facing.

3. Next steps

1. Positive feedback has been shared with staff and partners to ensure we recognise and celebrate the progress they have made. We have also shared where we need to continue to improve services and our plans to deliver improvements.
2. We have created a Focussed Visit Action Plan which details a range of actions to address the points raised in the letter
3. We will continue to progress the Hub/Gateway Phase 3 implementation plan and are picking up pace over the next 3 months, with an implementation plan for a n August go live date.

4. We are working closely with colleagues in Commissioning, Community Connections and partner agencies to improve our response to homeless young people and increase sufficiency of appropriate accommodation resources.
5. We will use the outcome of the focussed visit to inform our inspection planning going forward, as we are still due a full ILACS inspection.