

Report to Children & Young People's Scrutiny Commission

From: Sarah Wright, Director of Children & Families Service (CFS)
Subject: Ofsted Focused Visit Update
Date: 24th June 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Commission on the outcome of the Ofsted Focused Visit, the development of the Action Plan in response to the findings, and an overview of the activity that has taken place to date.
- 1.2 The Report also includes the next steps planned for the continued development of the service, our ongoing self-evaluation process and preparations for the upcoming full inspection.

2. Focused Visit Outcome

- 2.1 Ofsted carried out their focused visit in Hackney on the theme of *children in need and those subject to a child protection plan* on 5th and 6th February 2019. This consisted of 2 inspectors on site for these days. CFS child-level data, management information and a list of all cases audited in the last 6 months was provided to inspectors in advance of their arrival. Inspectors chose 6 recently audited cases for a 'deep-dive' and case file documentation was shared with them on these selected cases.
- 2.2 During the 2-day focused visit inspectors primarily spent time with front-line practitioners discussing and reviewing cases. A total of 41 cases were discussed with front-line staff and inspectors viewed an additional 17 case files on Mosaic (the case recording system).
- 2.3 Inspectors provided initial verbal feedback at the end of the visit and an outcomes letter was published on Monday 4th March 2019.

Inspectors identified the following areas as being in need of swift and decisive priority action:

- The timeliness and effectiveness of social work practice and interventions to safeguard children from harm
- The quality and effectiveness of managerial oversight and supervision to ensure that children's circumstances improve within their timeframe.

- 2.4 Inspectors also identified the following areas of practice as being in need of improvement:

- Children's daily lived experiences to be central to all work
- The application of thresholds to protect children on child in need plans when risks escalate or children's circumstances do not improve within children's timeframes
- Performance data regarding the timeliness and impact of social work practice to improve children's circumstances
- Plans to be more specific and detailed about what needs to change and by when

- The greater consideration of men, including abusive partners in risk assessments

2.5 The Service was required to submit a draft action plan to Ofsted addressing the two areas identified for priority action and the other areas for development included in the outcomes letter. The Plan (Appendix A) was submitted to Ofsted on Friday 29th March 2019, the inspectorate have since confirmed that they feel the content is appropriate to meet the recommendations that they made.

3. Post Visit Action Plan (Appendix A)

- 3.1 All CFS staff have been invited to contribute to the shaping of the action plan with sessions arranged for staff to share thoughts and ideas about what our priorities are and how we should seek to deliver them in a timely fashion. These discussions were shared at the Children and Families Management Group meetings and developed into clear actions and outcomes.
- 3.2 The detailed Action Plan is underpinned by a Project Management approach to implementation, monitoring and assurance, to ensure robust arrangements that give us the capacity to confidently report back to key stakeholders against Ofsted's findings.

4. Delivery & Progress To Date

Engagement

- 4.1 Following publication of the feedback letter Senior Leaders within the service immediately conducted a number of staff engagement sessions. This was to ensure key messages were delivered face to face, and staff were given the opportunity to hear the feedback in context. The sessions also supported staff to reflect on what the findings meant for them and the whole service and to develop a positive practitioner response as key stakeholders in the collaborative design of our response and next steps. These engagement sessions have included:
- Senior Leadership facilitated service and team meetings with those areas directly engaged with the focussed visit.
 - Whole service briefing session facilitated by the Chief Executive, Group Director and Director Children and Families Services.
 - Head of Service drop in 1:1 sessions with staff.
 - Head of Service briefings to individual Management Teams - outside of those areas directly engaged with the visit.
 - Facilitated Leadership Discussions at whole service management forum.
 - Lead Member engagement session with practitioners.

Delivery Arrangements

- 4.2 The delivery structure for the action plan project includes a number of Task & Finish Groups, all chaired by a Head of Service. Each group comprises of at least one representative from each service area, and where relevant additional support colleagues, i.e. Business Support, Data Analysis, ICT. These are:

- **Performance, Systems & Data Task and Finish Group** - responsible for delivering the data and reporting aspects of the Action Plan, and the improved data and reporting functionality required to support successful delivery for full inspection.
- **Practice Development Task and Finish Group** - responsible for developing and delivering the frontline practice development aspects of the Action Plan. Additionally, the group will support any new areas for development identified as part of self-evaluation and preparation for full inspection
- **Management Oversight Task & Finish Group** - responsible for developing and delivering the quality assurance and supervisory framework aspects of the Action Plan. Additionally, the group will support any new areas for development identified as part of self-evaluation and preparation for full inspection

Progress

- 4.3 Activity to deliver the necessary developments in response to the Focused Visit commenced prior to the publication and submission of the Action Plan. Additional management and development capacity was agreed and put in place across the service. This included refocusing Systemic Leads, Service Manager and Project Management who had been leading on the Partners in Practice activity to focus on internal development, and additional Service Management capacity in the Family Intervention and Support Service (FISS) and Corporate Parenting Service.
- 4.4 One of the primary issues raised by the Inspection team was that in some instances children were remaining subject to Child in Need Plans for a disproportionate length of time, and that in some cases they would expect to have seen more timely decision making to escalate or de-escalate matters. Immediately following the visit FISS Service Management undertook a review of all children's cases which had been open to the service for over 18 months, with a subsequent review of those open over 9 months being completed more recently (175 cases). We are assured that the majority are being managed at the right level, or have appropriate plans in place to escalate or de-escalate, and managers are continuing to robustly monitor these cases to ensure planned activity takes place promptly.
- 4.5 In addition to the auditing activity the Head of Service for the FISS has established a monthly Progress and Tracking Meeting which is embedding routine oversight of children's cases to ensure effective and appropriate progression. This activity entails Senior Managers (Service Manager and Head of Service) reviewing all cases after 9, 12 and 15 months with social work units.
- 4.6 The ability of the service to robustly performance manage children's cases has been improved by the accelerated implementation of the new Data Performance System - 'Qlikview.' The Service had recognised the availability of performance data as a significant area for development and the new system was already in development at the time of the focused visit. Additional ICT capacity has been agreed to bring forward full implementation and the system is already being used to provide live data to all managers across the service on timescales for case review, and critical statutory indicators such as visits to young people, and the recording of management oversight. The availability of this data has been greatly welcomed by managers at all levels.

Some recent technical issues have arisen in this system which colleagues in ICT are supporting the service to correct.

- 4.7 In addition to the above the service has delivered a wide range of development activities as part of the Plan, including:
- A series of development sessions for Consultant Social Workers and Service Managers focused on - goal oriented, outcome focused practice that places the child and the child's developmental timeframes at the centre of our plans.
 - Planning documents have been updated for Child Protection Plans, and Child In Need Plans to support the focus on outcome oriented planning.
 - New practice guidance on understanding and assessing 'parental capacity to change has been developed and distributed
 - The Case Work Audit Tool has been revised to place greater emphasis on evidence of the child's lived experience.
 - Development Session have been held with the Independent Chairs within the Safeguarding and Reviewing Team on their role in driving and challenging goal oriented practice.
 - Measures have been put in place to ensure that all case discussions begin with a review and reflection on the child's lived experience, how this is explicitly informing risk analysis and actions within the continuing intervention, and that this discussion is clearly recorded and evident on all case files.
 - A number of training sessions have been delivered across all service areas on the use of the new performance and data management system.
 - 'Best Practice' resources have been developed across all areas of our work to ensure staff have access to good practice examples and to promote ongoing peer learning.
 - A new safeguarding agreement template and safety plan templates for work with perpetrators and victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse have been developed with associated practice guidance.
 - A pilot is underway with the co-location of Domestic Abuse and Intervention Service (DAIS) Intervention Officer within CIN Teams and at the Front Door to provide early intervention and engagement with families where domestic abuse is an identified issue.
 - 'Practice Standards' for each area of service are being developed to clarify basic expectations around timescales and quality of work. These will be used both to support practitioners to understand what is expected of them and to measure performance against within the quality assurance framework.
 - A revised Hackney Wellbeing Framework (equivalent to a threshold document) has been distributed to support understanding across the service and partner agencies of the appropriate level of support relevant to children's needs in the context of their family life. This document also references the relevance of contextual safeguarding risks emanating from peer group relationships, schools and local neighbourhoods.

Self Evaluation

- 4.8 Alongside our development activity, work is also underway to complete a thorough self-evaluation and continuous development plan across all areas of the Children and Families Service in preparation for a full inspection. The detailed self-evaluation will be completed according to the ILACS Ofsted Inspection Framework Evaluation Criteria and will incorporate learning from

recent inspections and focused visits elsewhere in the country. The self-evaluation is aligned to the three critical questions within the ILACs Framework:

- What do we know about the quality of practice?
- How do we know it?
- What will we be doing to improve over the next 12 months?

Next Steps

4.9 In addition to the work being undertaken to embed the changes and developments already delivered there are a number of specific pieces of work currently in progress, which include:

- Working with colleagues from neighbouring authorities on the development of our Case Audit Moderation processes.
- Visiting partner authorities to explore good practice examples and identify learning opportunities.
- Progressing a joint working protocol between the FISS Service and Legal Service colleagues to clarify shared expectations and develop an increasingly effective working relationship. The protocol will ensure timely and proportionate responses to safeguard children where legal intervention may be necessary, and enhance the relationship between the local authority, the Courts and CAFCASS. Measures have also been put in place for the co-location of the Duty Solicitor with Social Work Units and for more routine meetings with our linked Judge.
- Delivering a refreshed vision and values statement for the service.
- Embedding a series of 'critical questions' within practice that all internal and partner agency staff should focus on and be able to answer in relation to families engaged with social care from referral through to permanence planning. These are:
 - How does the child feel, what do they want, and what is day-to-day life like for them?
 - Is the immediate safety of the child assured?
 - What needs to change for us to be less worried, and are changes happening quickly enough?
 - What would life be like for the child in the long-term if things do not change?
 - Are we putting the right interventions in place to support the change we need to see?
 - What needs to happen if things do not change?
- Following discussion with the Professional Adviser to the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children's Board, a series of events are being planned to bring together leaders, managers and practitioners from across the partnership which will focus on delivering and embedding the critical questions above, through:
 - Re-launching the Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework, understanding our thresholds and how to use the critical questions approach.
 - Launching the new partnership safeguarding arrangements.
 - Developing multi-agency practice in the key areas of goal oriented practice and the focus on the child's lived experience.
 - Consideration of how we promote respectful, confident and professional challenge across the partnership. Ensuring children's situations improve and change occurs in line with appropriate timescales or matters are escalated promptly, through the appropriate application of thresholds.

Inspection Readiness

- 4.10 Alongside the delivery of the post-visit action plan the service is also putting arrangements in place to prepare for the pending full inspection of the service. Service managers have mapped out the timetable and logistical activity required to deliver the inspection once notification is received.
- 4.11 A detailed review of the 'Annex A' evidence file is being undertaken to ensure that all appropriate policies and procedures are up to date and consistent with the changes being made across the service.
- 4.12 Service area management teams have established local arrangements to ensure they are tracking the timely completion of key activities and ensuring accuracy of data and performance recording within their areas. This is being overseen by the newly instituted fortnightly Practice and Performance Oversight Group (PPOG) chaired by the Director. The PPOG meeting reviews all key CFS performance indicators and provides both collective accountability and challenge for improvement.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 In conclusion the service has responded proactively to the focused visit outcome, embracing this as an opportunity to ensure we are achieving continuous development both in our delivery and in outcomes for children, young people and families. Over the coming months we will be continuing to deliver improvements and to gather evidence on the impact of changes made. We will also be actively preparing for a full inspection so that we are to confidently demonstrate the high quality work our practitioners deliver to children and families.