

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET – 17 NOVEMBER 2016

COUNCIL – 24 NOVEMBER 2016

ENSURING CHILDREN ARE FULLY PROTECTED IN TELFORD AND WREKIN – GETTING TO GOOD

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S & ADULT SERVICES AND INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF THE TELFORD & WREKIN SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR PAUL WATLING

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

1.1. The report is in response to the following motions agreed at the Full Council Meeting on 22 September 2016, agenda item 11. That the Council:

- *Present a comprehensive plan at the November Full Council Meeting demonstrating a clear commitment to the improvement of Children's Services and detail exactly how the Administration intends to raise all Children's Services in the Borough to a minimum standard of 'Good'.*
- *Present details of measures the current Administration will now introduce to ensure that vulnerable children in the Borough are fully protected in future and precisely how it will tackle the serious problems currently facing the Borough.*

1.2. To present a draft action plan in line with recommendations from the Ofsted Single Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet:

- 2.1. Endorses the measures to ensure that children in the Borough are fully protected;
- 2.2. Delegates the power to approve the final action plan to the Director of Children's and Adult Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
- 2.3. Endorses the cost of implementing the action plan (£255k) which will be met initially from a combination of service one offs and the Corporate contingency in 2016/17 and will be built into the budget for 2017/18 and ongoing.

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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| COMMUNITY IMPACT | Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-operative Council priorities? | |
| | Yes | Put our children and young people first. Protect and support our vulnerable children and adults |
| | Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people? | |
| | Yes | Children Young people Parents of children and young people |
| TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE | As per attached action plan | |
| FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT | Yes | <p>There are both one off and ongoing costs associated with the actions detailed within the plan shown in Appendix 3. Some capacity issues are being dealt with as part of the Business Support restructure process.</p> <p>The expected ongoing full year budget requirement to support the staffing requirements identified within the Ofsted Action Plan is £200k with one off costs, being met by the service, to support training and other initiatives being £55k. In 2016/17 any part year staffing costs will be funded from the Council's contingency which will be included within the Financial Management report going to Cabinet on 8th December 2016.</p> <p>The ongoing revenue requirement for future years has been reflected within the 2017/18 medium term budget strategy process.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">TAS 27.10.16</p> |
| LEGAL ISSUES | Yes | <p>The Ofsted inspection of the Council's children's services functions was carried out under Section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.</p> <p>The Ofsted written report from the inspection was provided to the Council and to the Secretary of State.</p> <p>Under Section 137, the Council must prepare a written statement of the action which it proposes to take in the light of the report, and the period within which it</p> |

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| | | <p>proposes to take that action.</p> <p>Under Regulation 2 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007 the Council must publish the Ofsted report within 30 working days by sending a copy of the report to each of the partners specified in the Regulations and to at least one newspaper circulating in the area of the Council and to at least one radio station serving the area; and make a copy of the report available for inspection free of charge at the offices of the Council; and supply a copy of the report to a member of the public on demand on payment of a reasonable fee.</p> <p>Under Regulation 3 the Council must within 70 working days of receiving the report publish a written statement of action which it proposes to take in the light of the report (a “written statement”) by sending a copy of the written statement to the Chief Inspector, and the Secretary of State; sending a copy of the written statement to the partners to whom a copy of the report was sent by virtue of Regulation 2 making a copy of the written statement available for inspection free of charge at the offices of the Council; and supplying a copy of the written statement to a member of the public on demand on payment of a reasonable fee.</p> <p>In addition, Ofsted reviewed the Local Safeguarding Children Board under Section 15A of the Children Act 2004.</p> <p>Ofsted has provided a combined report under its powers to do so under Section 152 of Education and Inspections Act 2006. <i>KF 28.10.2016</i></p> |
| OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES | No | N/A |
| IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS | No | <i>Borough-wide impact</i> |

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

4.1 Background information

- 4.1.1 The Council has always had an organisational priority of protecting vulnerable children and adults within the Borough.
- 4.1.2 The Council ensures that it provides the right help and interventions at the right time for children and families through a variety of ways and with a culture of continuous learning and investment it strives to ensure that this is achieved in an effective and efficient manner.
- 4.1.3 The Council has, and continues to, work in partnership with other agencies to ensure that children in the Borough are fully protected. This relationship is enhanced and supported by the Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board (TWSCB), which provides focussed and effective challenge to the Council and other agencies as well as supporting the Council in its improvement agenda.
- 4.1.4 In the last year the Council has reviewed some key aspects of how children's services operate and implemented plans to improve the services provided.

4.2 Single Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers (SIF) arrangements

- 4.2.1 The Single Inspection Framework (SIF) began in November 2013. This was a major change in scope from previous inspection frameworks, as it covers the whole of children's social care plus a review of Local Safeguarding Children Board. There was also a major change in focus, with inspections focussing on the child's journey and outcomes, and on practice rather than on processes. In addition, there was a major change in scale as the previous one or two week inspections with notice were replaced by month long inspections with 24 hours notice.
- 4.2.2 All SIFs were due to be completed within 3 years, but the timescale has been extended by a year to end December 2017.
- 4.2.3 A consultation ended on 09 September 2016 regarding the future of social care inspections, with proposals for a more proportionate inspection regime to be in place once all authorities have been inspected under the current framework.

4.3 National Context

- 4.3.1 116 of the 153 Local Authorities in England have been inspected under SIF and 110 of those reports have been published.
- 4.3.2 Of the 110, 2% (2) were judged to be 'outstanding', 25% (28) 'good', 49% (54) 'requires improvement' and 24% (26) 'inadequate'.

4.4 Telford & Wrekin SIF

- 4.4.1 The Telford & Wrekin Council's SIF took place between 13 June and 7 July 2016, and the report published on 26 August 2016 (a copy is provided in Appendix 1).

- 4.4.2 The overall grading was that *"Children's Services in Telford and Wrekin require improvement to be good"*. Out of the five judgement areas, two were found to be good already (adoption performance and experiences and progress of care leavers). This is the second best performance out of the 9 West Midlands local authorities who have been inspected so far.
- 4.4.3 We were pleased that the inspection recognised the improvements we have made in the quality of services and in the outcomes that children are achieving, commenting that *"the director of children's services and his senior team provide strong leadership, both within the local authority and across the partnership of agencies. They have made important improvements to the quality of services and to the outcomes that children achieve."* There is also a clear recognition in the report that progress has been helped by *"effective political backing and the hands-on support of the managing director"*.
- 4.4.4 Verbal feedback received from the inspection team was that they could see that significant improvements had been made, and that the Council should *'keep doing what you are doing'* to achieve consistently good services. They found the Council to be self aware, and the findings from the inspection reflected the strengths and areas for improvement identified in the 'Where We Are' self assessment document. The Council also received positive feedback about staff being committed and well motivated, and saying they feel well supported by management at all levels.
- 4.4.5 On 25 October 2016, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department recognised the improvements that had been made. The Under-Secretary cited the positive feedback from Ofsted and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) regarding the commitment and approach by Telford & Wrekin Council and West Mercia Police to CSE and improving outcomes for children who are at risk of harm.

4.5 Inspection Report

- 4.5.1 The feedback identified in the previous section is reflected in the executive summary of the Inspection Report, which clearly states that *"children and young people are kept safe by the work of the local authority"* and acknowledges the improvements the Council has made since the previous inspection in June 2012. The report states that *'the DCS and senior leaders are focused and energetic. They largely know what improvements need to be made and understand what is happening on the front line. There are many plans in place to support these improvements across the entire service'*.
- 4.5.2 The Report also states that Family Connect provides *"an effective single point of contact and a swift response to risk"*, and that the thresholds for intervention *"are appropriate, well understood and well embedded in practice"*. They noted that *"as a consequence, there are very few contacts that result in no further action"*.
- 4.5.3 In terms of the Council's response to tackling CSE and the role of partners, Ofsted reported that:
- *"Work with children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation is very strong. The local authority has been a champion for tackling this issue. It provides leadership to partner agencies, with who this work is well co-ordinated. Work to protect children who go missing from home or care is thorough and improving."*
 - *"There is a strong commitment from the local authority and its partners to tackle child sexual exploitation. A dedicated children abused through exploitation team provides good quality risk assessments, planning and interventions. Although relatively small, the team also reviews progress and updates plans effectively."*

Consequently, young people receive comprehensive and well-coordinated services that make a positive difference.”

- 4.5.4 The Council's approach to continuous improvement was recognised by Ofsted and reflected the learning from local case reviews, for example Child B Serious Case Review and the reviews completed following the successful 'Operation Chalice' response to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- 4.5.5 As would be expected from an inspection, areas for improvement were also identified, alongside recommendations for action to be taken in order to achieve 'Good'. One area was that of chronic risk¹, where inspectors found that “*chronic risks are not always identified or responded to as quickly and, as a result, some children experience delay in receiving help or coming into care*”. However, there is also an acknowledgement that the Council was already working to improve practice (this approach can be seen in the increases over the past year in the number of children in care and made subject to child protection plans).
- 4.5.6 Another area for improvement was identified as the quality of management oversight and scrutiny, including Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) scrutiny, and IRO caseloads were identified as significantly above statutory guidance (reflecting the rise in the number of CiC and children subject to child protection plans).
- 4.5.7 In terms of leadership and management, the key areas for improvement were the case direction and oversight of first line managers, particularly in cases where there are chronic risks, and insufficient scrutiny and drive from the Independent Reviewing Officer service.
- 4.5.8 The 11 recommendations are included in Appendix 2; this is a large reduction on the 34 recommendations from our previous inspection in 2012.
- 4.5.9 It should be noted that there were no recommendations made to further improve the Council's work on CSE. However, the Council and the TWSCB already have an action plan in place to continue to improve the work in this area for example:
- Raising awareness to prevent CSE in educational establishments, agencies, and communities, and if identified, refer appropriately to Family Connect and the Police; and
 - Mapping the multi-agency support which is available for young people and victims as they journey through the CSE Pathway, including further improvements in support services including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS); and Sexual Health Services for victims, survivors and their families.
 - Engaging with the newly formed National [CSE Response Unit](#) if appropriate and to offer peer support to local authorities where CSE arrangements are not as strong as within this Borough.

4.6 Review of the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board (TWSCB)

- 4.6.1 At the same time as the SIF, there was a review of the effectiveness of the TWSCB, which was judged to be 'good' and identified 5 recommendations for improvement (please refer to Appendix 2 for full details).

¹ Chronic risks are those that last for a long time or are constantly recurring, such as risks from neglect, domestic abuse or where parents' parenting ability is affected by alcohol or substance misuse or mental health issues.

- 4.6.2 The Report was particularly positive about the TWSCB's work at engaging with and listening to children. Team Safeguarding Voice® (children's safeguarding board in schools) has been in place since 2012 within Holmer Lake Primary School, and is in the process of being rolled out to all schools in the Borough, with 30 schools signed up so far. This method was highly commended by Edward Timpson, Minister for State for Vulnerable Children and Families in 2015 during a visit to the school. In 2016 the Ofsted inspectors also commended this approach and stated that the initiative "*is successfully raising awareness about safeguarding issues. It also provides a good process for consulting with young people, for example about the early help strategy and the recent review of child sexual exploitation*".
- 4.6.3 As highlighted in the Ofsted SIF Inspection Report (August 2016), the TWSCB's four thematic sub-groups continue to drive improvement in those areas; which includes CSE. The TWSCB and Telford & Wrekin Council is, and has been, actively working to reduce the risk of CSE to children and young people since 2009 and is supported by a comprehensive action plan which is monitored by the TWSCB (as noted in 4.5.9).

4.7 Next Steps

- 4.7.1 The Council is now required to develop a post inspection action plan and submit it to Ofsted by 05 December 2016. The Council will receive support from Ofsted in developing this at an improvement planning seminar to be held on 16 November 2016. A copy of the first draft of the action plan is attached at Appendix 3. The plan highlights that some additional resource will be required in order to achieve the necessary improvements, and these are covered in the financial impact section of this report.
- 4.7.2 Whilst welcoming the very positive comments from Ofsted regarding the work around CSE, the Council continues to support the work of the dedicated CSE Team by agreeing funding for 3 additional posts (1 Senior Social Worker and 2 CSE Practitioners). This will enable the team to have the capacity to proactively be involved in education and raising awareness of CSE with children, families and professionals within the Borough.
- 4.7.3 The Council's improvement plan will be monitored internally by the Senior Leadership Team but will also be monitored, scrutinised and challenged by Senior Management Team, the TWSCB, the Council's Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and by Ofsted through routine monitoring visit and annual reviews.

5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As noted above.

6 PREVIOUS MINUTES

Cabinet – 21 July 2016 – Agenda Item 4.0

Full Council – 22 September 2016 – Agenda Item 11.0

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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