

Report to: **RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Relevant Officer: Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services

Date of Meeting: 7 February 2019

CHILDREN'S SERVICES UPDATE REPORT OF RECENT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1.0 The report provides an overview of the recent Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) Inspection Report of the Blackpool Youth Offending Service and the Ofsted Inspection of Blackpool Children's Social Care Services report. This report outlines the judgements and recommendations made by both inspectorates and the improvement plans in place.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

To review the recommendations and improvement plans in place as a result of the recent HMIP Blackpool Youth Offending Service and Ofsted Children's Social Care Services inspection reports and ensure they are robust and fit for purpose.

2.1 Reasons for recommendation(s):

Contained within the inspection reports are recommended improvements due to the inadequate judgements.

2.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

2.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.0 Council priority:

3.1 The relevant Council priority is:

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

4.0 Background information

Blackpool has been subject to two inspections since October 2018. The first was the HMIP inspection of Blackpool's Youth Offending Service, which took place in October

2018. The second was Ofsted's inspection of Blackpool's Children's Social Care Services, which took place in November/December 2018.

4.1 **Blackpool Youth Offending Team HMIP Inspection Report**

The overall Judgement of this inspection was inadequate. The full report was published on 18 December 2018. There are nine specific recommendations contained in the report. These being as follows:

4.2 **The Youth Offending Team (YOT) Manager should:**

1. Commission training to develop the staffs skills and knowledge in key areas practice.
2. Re-establish the staff's sense of pride in work of the YOT.
3. Introduce a process to ensure the timeliness and quality of AssetPlus assessments.
4. Develop a range of suitable interventions for work with children and young people

4.3 **The Director of Children's Services (DCS) should:**

5. Fully analyse the needs and profile of the children and young people subject to YOT supervision and use this to commission appropriate services.
6. Ensure Board members are able to challenge each other and the YOT manager and advocate for the YOT in their own organisations
7. Together with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, review the out of court disposals processes and commissioned services to ensure informed decision making and good information sharing for out of court disposals.

4.4 **The Youth Justice Board should:**

8. Provide further guidance and advice on completing the integrated planning and pathways document in AssetPlus.
9. Review the national policy for caretaking arrangements for children placed out of their own local authority area.

Strategic responses to the above recommendations and how the Partnership Board and Service are going to address identified areas of practice, have been communicated with HMIP on the 14 January 2019 (attached at Appendix 5(a))

4.5 The plan is a partnership plan and is jointly owned by the Blackpool Youth Offending Board partners. In addition a new Executive Board has been established to drive the improvement in line with the expected pace of change from HMIP. The Executive Board will meet monthly and be chaired by an independent chair who will be a senior member of the Youth Justice Board.

4.6 The expectation of the HMIP recommendations is that there is a joint response to improvement from all statutory partners Police, Health, Probation, Education as well as the local authority with support from the Youth Justice Board. The function of the

Executive is to provide an ownership of actions to drive the required changes.

4.7 A detailed action plan of improvement is being finalised and is to be submitted to HMIP by the 15 February 2019.

4.8 **Blackpool Children's Social Care Ofsted Inspection Report**

4.9 Ofsted provide judgements against four areas. The table below outlines these areas and the judgements received.

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Requires improvement to be good
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate

4.10 The full report was published on the 17 January 2019. It identified 12 key areas for improvement. These being as follows:

- The identification of and response to risk, particularly in relation to long-standing concerns of chronic neglect
- The response and recording of decisions in relation to contacts, thresholds and issues of consent at the front door to be clear and proportionate
- The quality of social work assessments and plans and the extent to which they reflect the child's history
- The response to children at risk of exploitation, and those young people who are homeless, and the extent to which their vulnerabilities are fully recognised and lead to responsive intervention to keep them safe
- The effectiveness of strategic partnerships to work together to improve outcomes and protect children
- Oversight of pre-proceedings work and placement-with-parent practice to address drift and delay
- The quality of decision-making, management oversight and recording of threshold decisions when children come into care
- Training needs of social workers to ensure that they are prepared for court proceedings
- The quality and impact of personal education plans for children in care, and the extent to which these children are effectively supported at all key stages
- A clearer and more consistent approach to agency decision-maker processes for approval and matching of foster carers and adopters

- The strategic and coordinated approach to providing support for care leavers to improve their outcomes, including education, employment and training
- The quality and impact of audit and performance management

A 12-week plan is being developed. This short term plan will set out how these 12 areas for improvement will be immediately addressed and ensure that the energies and resources of the authority are clearly focussed in the first three months post Inspection.

- 4.11 The plan will outline the response to each area for improvement and will have detailed outcomes with clear deadlines for actions to be completed.
- 4.12 The plan is owned by the Leader, DCS, Chief Executive and Lead Member for Children's Services who will assign the actions within it and monitor the delivery and impact. Robust monitoring will be ensured via weekly written progress updates on the plan being provided by relevant Heads of Service. Reports will also be submitted to the Improvement Board on a monthly basis
- 4.13 The membership of the improvement board will be refreshed and more senior partner members will be expected to agree a partnership commitment. Actions have already been taken which were formulated during and after the inspection following feedback on the findings. A resource review has been undertaken across services that have supported the development of the 12 week plan. This has led to the approval by Corporate Leadership Team of circa £1million of additional investment, to support the increased pace of change required to deliver the planned improvements.
- 4.14 Regular Quality Assurance Monitoring Reports will ensure Senior Leaders and Blackpool's Improvement Board have clear line of sight with regard to the quality of social work practice and management oversight, and whether this is timely and effectively improving children's outcomes.

4.15 **Intervention**

Ofsted

When a local authority children's services are judged inadequate, Ofsted carry out monitoring activity that includes an action planning visit, monitoring visits and a re-inspection. The lead inspector will inform the DCS of this at the feedback meeting for the inspection where the inadequate judgement is given.

Monitoring visits will focus on where improvement is needed the most. Inspectors will monitor and report on the local authority's progress since the inspection. Inspectors

will also check that performance in other areas has not declined since the inspection. If new concerns emerge, inspectors are likely to look at these on the monitoring visits.

Independent commissioner

Blackpool Ofsted judgement 2012 – inadequate.

Blackpool Ofsted judgement 2019 – inadequate.

This means that the local authority is deemed to be persistently failing.

The secretary of state will be appointing an independent commissioner. The presumption is that children’s services will be removed from local authority control unless there are compelling reasons not to do so. The independent commissioner will be seeking to determine the Council’s capacity and capability to improve itself and will recommend whether or not this evidence is sufficiently strong to suggest that long term sustainable improvement can be achieved should operational control remain with the council.

5.1 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

6.0 List of Appendices:

6.1 Appendix 5(a): Strategic response to recommendations of the inspection report submitted to HMIP on the 14 January 2019

Appendix 5(b): HMIP Inspection Report of Youth Offending Services

Appendix 5(c): Ofsted Inspection Report Children’s Social Care Services

7.0 Legal considerations:

7.1 There are no relevant issues to consider.

8.0 Human resources considerations:

8.1 There are no related issues.

9.0 Equalities considerations:

9.1 There are no related issues.

10.0 Financial considerations:

10.1 Financial considerations are to be noted that in the event of work not being completed the Youth Justice Board could withhold some or all of the current grant provided to service the YOT resources. Additional resource will be required in Children’s Services to improve pace of improvement.

11.0 Risk management considerations:

- 11.1 Risk issues for consideration are the potential inability of the partnership to be able to improve and implement the recommendations from HMIP in a sufficiently timely and effective manner.
There are risks related to a potential inability to recruit to the number of posts required

12.0 Ethical considerations:

- 12.1 No relevant issues.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

- 13.1 Both the Young Peoples Services Board and the Children's Services Improvement Board will oversee improvements.

14.0 Background papers:

- 14.1 None.