

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

**EXECUTIVE REPORT**

**Report Title : Development and Implementation of a Post Ofsted Action Plan Single Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children: Looked After and Care Leavers.**

**Executive Member for Children’s Social Care : Councillor Mike Carr  
Executive Director, Wellbeing Care & Learning: Richenda Broad**

**Date : 10 May 2016**

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**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To inform the Executive about the development and implementation of the Post OfSTED Improvement Plan (PIAP) devised in response to the key recommendations made by the OfSTED team that conducted the inspection of the LA arrangements for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. To note and agree the PIAP that has been developed following the inspection of the Local Authorities arrangements for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

**IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?**

3. It is over the financial threshold (£150,000)   
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards   
Non Key

**DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE**

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is  
Non-urgent   
Urgent report

If urgent please give full reasons

## BACKGROUND

5. Between 23 November 2015 and 17 December Ofsted inspected Middlesbrough Council under the inspection framework of 'Inspection of children who need help and protection, children looked after and care leavers'. The overall result of that inspection was that Children's services in Middlesbrough require improvement to be good. The inspection looked at different areas of service delivery and graded them as follows ;

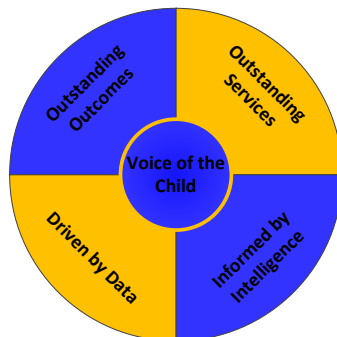
|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Children who need help and protection          | Requires Improvement |
| Children looked after and achieving permanence | Requires Improvement |
| 2.1 Adoption performance                       | Good                 |
| 2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers   | Good                 |
| Leadership and Management                      | Requires Improvement |

6. The final report was published on the OfSTED website on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016. The verbal feedback, and the final report have been used to inform the PIAP. We are asked to return our written action plan to the Ofsted inspection support team within 90 working days of receiving the final version of the inspection report.
7. Inspectors were very positive about much of what they saw in Middlesbrough.
8. In particular they noted that children and young people in Middlesbrough are kept safe by the work of the local authority and when children are at immediate risk of significant harm, social workers respond quickly and effectively. They were impressed by the immediate implementation of the recommendations from the Early Help Peer Review that reported in September 2015. They acknowledged that Middlesbrough Council was having to identify savings but that significant additional funding had been identified to further develop the early help offer. They found that the assessments undertaken by social workers were generally good and that decisions for children to become looked after are appropriate and effective support packages are being used to try to keep children at home with their families when this is achievable and in their best interests
9. The inspectors recognised that Middlesbrough had been successful at retaining and recruiting staff, with a relatively stable workforce and that social workers had manageable caseloads. They recognised the effective multi-agency working across Middlesbrough when young people are at risk of sexual exploitation, radicalisation or female genital mutilation, to ensure that they are protected. The inspectors reported that children and young people's views are well considered on an individual basis, and they saw some good examples of how the Children in Care Council influences practice.
10. The inspectors singled out Corporate parenting as a strength in Middlesbrough noting the clear commitment from the council to children and young people. They were impressed by the quality of commissioning of good and innovative support for children's emotional well-being from early help services through to services for care leavers who have access to a dedicated CAMHS therapist co-located within the Pathways team.

11. The inspectors found that the fostering service is effective and is helping to ensure that there is an appropriate range of placements for children and young people. They reported that foster carers speak positively of the support that they receive. They were particularly impressed by Adoption work in Middlesbrough, viewing it as a strong service with the local authority committed to pursuing adoption for all children who could benefit, including those for whom it is hard to find an adoptive placement.
12. The report identified the following 16 recommendations for improvement
  - i. Ensure that all children and young people receive the right services without delay and that their progress is tracked by strengthening management oversight, supervision and recording.
  - ii. Ensure that managers review the progress of assessments within timescales that match individual children and young people's circumstances and needs.
  - iii. Improve performance management and quality assurance systems, including data quality, to effectively monitor and improve the quality of services.
  - iv. Work with partner agencies to build a stronger strategic vision of the shared priorities for children's safeguarding and social care needs, particularly for early help services.
  - v. Engage with partner agencies to increase the number and quality of early help assessments completed and to ensure that a full range of agencies are taking on the role of lead professional.
  - vi. Ensure that the independent reviewing officer service is adequately staffed to provide a consistently effective service to children and young people, including the timely circulation of minutes from review meetings.
  - vii. Support improved outcomes for children looked after by ensuring that care plans contain sufficient detail, clear actions and timescales.
  - viii. Improve the systems for progressing cases in a timely way following adoption process meetings, so that they are effective in all cases and that the reasons for matching decisions are clearly recorded.
  - ix. Develop systems to improve the participation of children and young people, including in child protection case conferences and how their views are collated and used to improve services.
  - x. Strengthen the provision and use of return home interviews to ensure that individual children and young people are safeguarded and that patterns of risk are better understood and addressed, particularly where they relate to child sexual exploitation.
  - xi. Further develop work with Middlesbrough's diverse communities, particularly asylum seekers, to better understand and meet the needs of these children and young people.
  - xii. Make sure that children looked after receive statutory visits within expected timescales to more effectively monitor progress.

- xiii. Help social workers understand the historical context and risk factors for the children and families they are working with by making better use of chronologies.
  - xiv. Improve the attainment levels of all children looked after, but particularly those of secondary school age, by improving attendance and better supporting the transition between primary and secondary school.
  - xv. Sharpen the focus of personal education plans on addressing the specific actions that children looked after and their teachers need to take to improve progress, as well as on setting out in detail how the school will use the pupil premium to improve behaviour, attendance and attainment.
  - xvi. Further increase the numbers of care leavers securing sustainable education, training and employment by maintaining and improving existing good partnership work with education and training providers.
13. The full report and areas for improvement have been shared with social work staff at two workshops and partners through the Local Safeguarding Board. The PIAP is currently in a draft version until it is submitted to OFSTED. The format of the PIAP is unlikely to change while the contact continues to be refined and cross checked to ensure that all the areas for improvement are reflected in it.
14. The PIAP is a service improvement plan. As many of the recommendations can be clustered together, the PIAP is based on 5 key principles and 8 Strategic outcomes.

The 5 Key Principles are



15. Strategic Priorities are:
- I. To deliver high quality timely services, assessments and plans that meet the needs of children and young people and are effectively recorded to reflect all key decisions and evidence management oversight
  - II. For performance data to be used across the service to inform practice and service improvement
  - III. Provision of effective early help and safeguarding services through a shared multi-agency strategic vision and delivery particularly of early help services.
  - IV. To ensure sufficient capacity to within all services, in particularly the IRO service to meet statutory duties.
  - V. The voice of children and young people is evident in their personal plans, they are supported to participate in plans and their views are drawn together to inform and shape service provision.

- VI. All young people have a return interview following an episode of being missing and this information informs their personal plans. The information from return interviews is collated to identify themes and risks and informs service provision and delivery.
  - VII. To ensure that the needs of all children are met.
  - VIII. To ensure that children in care receive high quality education that is tailored to their needs and they are supported to attain and achieve to their full potential and aspirations.
16. The full report and areas for improvement have been shared with social work staff at two workshops and partners through the Local Safeguarding Board.
  17. A draft will also be sent to the HMI Inspector who led Middlesbrough's inspection inviting comment.
  18. The draft action plan is attached.

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IA)**

19. An IA is not applicable to this decision as the recommendation is simply to note and agree the PIAP which will be examined by Ofsted in line with statutory requirements. Improving the achievement levels of pupils in Middlesbrough will undoubtedly bring positive benefits for all sections of the community.

## **OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT**

20. An option appraisal is not appropriate to this report, as the Local Authority is required to develop and implement the plan to address the issues identified by Ofsted.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS**

21. **Financial** – There are additional funding requirements specifically around the additional capacity for the Independent Reviewing Officers. All the other activity in the plan will be funding via existing budgets.
22. **Ward Implications** – There are no specific ward implications arising from the improvement plan; however, a rise in attainment will benefit the whole town.
23. **Legal Implications** – Implementation of the plan will be considered by the Inspection OfSTED team to determine if this plan meets their requirements.

## **SCRUTINY CONSULTATION**

24. Children and Young People's Scrutiny have not yet had the opportunity to comment on this plan and it is anticipated that a report on the PIAP will be presented to Scrutiny in the new meeting cycle.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

25. The Executive is recommended to note and agree the format and content of the PIAP and receive further updates reviewing the progress of its implementation.

## **REASONS**

26. To ensure that improvements in safeguarding and children's care services are secured and that this improves the outcomes for children, young people and their families in Middlesbrough.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There were no background papers.

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