

Report of:	Sue Butcher Executive Director of Children's Services
Submitted to:	Corporate Parenting Board 14 th September 2022
Subject:	Ofsted Monitoring Visit to Children's Services July 2022

Contribution to the guiding principles of the Corporate Parenting Strategy

This report relates to social work and social care practice that takes place to support and safeguard children and young people in their own homes so that they do not need to become looked after by the local authority. The guiding principles remain relevant but not in the context of the local authority being a child or young person's corporate parent.

Your Home

Supporting and safeguarding children and young people in their own homes

Your Family and Friends

Working to support families to stay together and build their networks within their extended families, with friends and within their communities.

Your Education, Your Adult life, Your Health and Wellbeing

Working to ensure that children are safe and secure in their homes with their families. This means that they are more likely to reach their educational potential and grow up to be healthy, emotionally secure and thrive in their adult life.

Your Voice and Influence

Listening to children and young people so their voices and views shape the services they receive.

Is the report confidential or does it contain exempt information?

No

What is the purpose of this report?

To provide members of the Corporate Parenting Board with an update from the Ofsted Monitoring visit that took place in July 2022.

Report Background

This monitoring visit was the fifth visit by Ofsted since the full inspection of Children's Services in November/December 2019 which judged the service as inadequate overall. (Report published Jan 2020).

The visit focused on

- The front door service that receives contacts and referrals
- Child protection enquiries,
- Early help assessments
- Step-up and step down to early help

The headline findings are as follows

Positives

- Front door services have continued to develop and improve overseen by the Improvement Board
- Robust and comprehensive quality assurance programme ensures leaders have an accurate understanding of practice and its impact on children and families
Expansion of the offer of early help support to vulnerable children
- Stronger and wider partnerships in the MACH
 - Improving the quality of information,
 - The richness of information-sharing
 - Leading to better informed decision making.

Areas needing focus

- Workforce instability and increased demand in the assessment service have slowed down throughput
- Additional pressure on some social workers' caseloads and quality of practice
- Unfinished assessments and incomplete records have led to delays and risks being fully assessed for some children

The areas needing focus will become part of the refreshed Children's Services Improvement Plan which is monitored on a six-weekly basis by the Multi-Agency Strategic Improvement Board (MASIB).

The most significant area of concern remains the recruitment and retention of experienced, permanent social workers as this affects all of the area needing focus as set out above. Colleagues from Human Resources are reporting to the next MASIB meeting on the continuing efforts to recruit and retain such staff.

Appendices

Ofsted set out their findings from this Monitoring Visit in full in a letter published on 17th August 2022. This letter and a slide deck for presentation at the Corporate Parenting Board Meeting is circulated with this covering report.

Recommendations

That the Corporate Parenting Board notes Ofsted's feedback as set out in the feedback letter dated 17th August 2022.

Why is this being recommended?

This is recommended so that members of the Corporate Parenting Board are kept fully apprised of the progress being made by Children's Services and the particular areas needing focus.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

N/A

Impact of recommended decision

No specific impact from noting the report. However the feedback letter will inform the refreshing of the Children's Services improvement plan.

Legal

N/A in the context of noting this report.

Financial

N/A in the context of noting this report

Policy Framework

N/A in the context of noting this report

Equality and Diversity

N/A in the context of noting the report

Risk

N/A in the context of noting the report

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

The Children's Services improvement plan is being refreshed and will continue to be monitored by MASIB

Background papers

None

Contact: Sue Butcher

Email: Sue_Butcher@middlesbrough.gov.uk