



# Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

22 January 2020

<b>Report title</b>	Children and Young people's Social Work Self-Evaluation	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor John Reynolds Children and Young People's Service	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services	
<b>Originating service</b>	Quality and Improvement	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Louise Haughton	Principal Social Worker
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<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Children and Young People's Management Team	28.11.2019

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## Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Support the development priorities for 2019-20 as outlined within the Self-Evaluation of social work practice.
2. Consider and comment on whether the self-evaluation report answers the three questions asked by Ofsted as outlined in the main body of the report
3. Consider and comment on whether there are any important issues that are not addressed within the report findings.

## 1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the draft Annual Self-Evaluation of Children's Social Care for the panel to consider and comment upon.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 Inspecting Local Authorities Children Services is a system of inspection. Under this system, Ofsted use the intelligence and information they have to inform decisions about how best to inspect each local authority. This system includes:

- local authorities sharing an annual self-evaluation of the quality and impact of social work practice
- an annual engagement meeting between our regional representatives and the local authority to review the self-evaluation and to reflect on what is happening in the local authority and inform how they would engage with each other in future
- our local authority intelligence system (LAIS) (which brings data and information into a single record)
- focused visits that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children
- standard and short inspections where we make judgements using our four-point scale
- joint targeted area inspection (JTAI)

- 2.2 This report relates to the annual self-evaluation which was shared with Ofsted in June 2019 and included data for the financial year. Local authorities are asked to share a self-evaluation of social work practice. The self-evaluation should draw on information and documentation that already exists within local authorities and is used to monitor the quality of services provided to children, young people and their families.

- 2.3 The Self-Evaluation should answer three questions:

- What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?
- How do you know it?
- What are your plans for the next 12 months to improve?

## 3.0 Progress

- 3.1 The Self-Evaluation of social work practice presents an improving picture of practice across both the Child in Need/Child Protection Service and the Children and Young People in Care Service.

- 3.2 The service has continued to manage demand well. At the end of March 2019 there were 624 children and young people in care, 328 children who had a child protection plan and 906 children who had a Child in Need Plan. These number have reduced to 588 Children and young people in care, 258 Children who have a child protection plan, 844 Children who have a child in need plan.

- 3.3 There are a whole range of workstreams that contribute to the management of demand, these include; an effective Early Help Service, an effective Specialist Support Service for children who are at risk of entering care, effective management of thresholds in the MASH and at admissions to care. As well as this the service works hard to ensure work with children is progressed in a timely manner through good planning and, regular reviews of the work being undertaken within the service are completed by service managers to ensure children are receiving the right support, at the right level.
- 3.4 Quality assurance activity has continued to show an improving picture of frontline social work practice with more audits being judged as good in each Practice Week.
- 3.5 Recruitment and retention is a key area of improvement, Turnover of social workers was 11% in September 2019 which is below the regional and national average. The West Midlands rate is 15.9%.
- 3.6 There has been a steady increase in the number of children in need who are seen within 5 days of their referral. In September 77.5% of these children were seen within the 5-day timescale compared with 55.3% in March 2019. This is an area that was highlighted as a concern in the previous inspection and the improving picture means that children in need are now receiving a timelier response.
- 3.7 Within Children and Young People in Care there are a number of good news stories, the first is that there are now more children in local authority placements than those placed with independent fostering agencies. This means that more children are being supported to remain local and able to access the support offered by Children and Young People in care Services easily.
- 3.8 Improving placement stability remains a key priority. Stability is now in line with statistical neighbours and national averages, but stronger performance is required. At September 2019, 71% of children in care had been in the same placement for two years and the percentage of children with three or more placements in the past 12 months had decreased from 15% to 10%.
- 3.9 It is excellent that there are currently 31 young people attending university which is 18% of the cohort.
- 3.10 The self-evaluation demonstrates that progress has been made against most of the key priorities and Ofsted recommendations outlined in the 2018-2019 self-evaluation. There is however still more to be done and key priorities are outlined below. The Children and Young People's service also has a detailed strategic plan that outlines work to be undertaken in 2019-20 that will further strengthen the quality and impact of the Councils work with Children, Young People and their families:
- Continuing to Improve workforce retention in order to provide children with greater consistency and establish a skilled and knowledgeable workforce who are fully equipped to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.

- There will be a continued focus on the quality of practice delivered through a Practice improvement action plan. This includes improving assessment analysis and planning, improving the quality of direct work to strengthen the voice of the child and ensuring restorative practice is imbedded within supervision which will promote a focus on the impact of interventions on the lived experience of children and explicitly provide opportunity for critical reflection.
- Embedding 'Practice Weeks' to ensure senior managers have a clear reflection of the quality of frontline practice and continue to use dip sampling both within practice week and in addition too.
- Implementing a single child's record system through Platform for Care, this will bring together recording systems for early intervention and statutory social work and enable practitioners to record the experience and journey of the child well.
- Implementing Wolverhampton's new arrangements for the Safeguarding Partnership.
- Review of governance structures relating to Contextual Safeguarding.
- Implementation of House Project for Care Leavers.
- Improving placement stability through a number of actions including embedding and extending the 'Fostering Families United' approach (a model that enables fostering families to intensively support each other).
- Embedding the Regional Adoption Agency.
- Continuing to embed Restorative Practice across Children's Services.
- The inclusion and support team are leading a project (Culture of Belonging) designed to help schools support greater inclusion and reduce permanent exclusions.

#### **4.0 Questions for Scrutiny to consider**

- 4.1 Comment on whether Scrutiny Panel considers the self-evaluation answers the three questions asked by Ofsted as outlined in the main body of the report
- 4.2 Comment on whether Scrutiny Panel is assured that the Children and Young people's Service knows itself well.
- 4.3 Comment on whether Scrutiny Panel considers there are any important issues that are not addressed within the Self-Evaluation.

#### **5.0 Financial implications**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.  
[MK/17012020/C]

#### **6.0 Legal implications**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications  
[TC/17012020/V]

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

7.1 Social workers provide support to the whole community including the full range of diverse groups. Excellent quality social work practice will be more attuned to the equality issues experienced by individuals, families and communities. High quality social work will more competently deploy required skill in the practice situation. This annual Self-Evaluation demonstrates the quality of practice being provided to all groups that are supported by statutory services.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

8.1 There are no environmental implications

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

9.1 There are no human resources implications

## **10.0 Corporate landlord implications**

10.1 There are no corporate landlord implications