

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

SECURING IMPROVEMENTS IN THE EXPERIENCES AND PROGRESS OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND ACHIEVING PERMANENCE – SERVICE UPDATE

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out the work that is already underway and plans for further service developments for ensuring improvements are made in the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Panel is requested to consider this report and make any comments and recommendations as appropriate..

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3.1 Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Safer Communities

Carrying out the statutory role of the local authority to provide services for children in need, to safeguard them and look after children whose parents are unable to do so.

3.2 Five Year Plan Outcomes

Outcome 5: Children and young people in Slough will be healthy, resilient and have positive life chances

The establishment of the Slough Children's Services Trust aims to make Slough children's services one of the best providers of children's social care in the country, providing timely, purposeful support that brings safe, lasting and positive change.

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications specific to the recommendations in this report.

(b) Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with this report.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

In September 2015, the Secretary of State issued a Direction transferring various children's services to Slough Children's Services Trust ('the Trust'). Although the Trust performs services on behalf of Slough Borough Council, the Council retains all its legal obligations for the statutory duties.

On 30 September 2015, the Council entered into a contract with the Trust governing the provision of services by the Trust. The contract with the Trust contains various monitoring powers so that the Council can assure itself that vulnerable children in the borough are receiving the best support possible.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of an EIA in relation to this report.

5 Background

- 5.1 The four week Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers took place in November and December 2015. Services delivered by Slough Borough Council and the Slough Children's Services Trust were within the scope of the inspection. The report found the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence to be inadequate. Ofsted's summary of their findings for this section of the report published on 17 February 2016, is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 5.2 The Council and the Trust are working collaboratively and positively together to enable rapid and sustainable improvements in the experiences of children looked after. This includes a robust review of the corporate parenting arrangements within Slough. The Trust is responsible for responding to the majority of the recommendations from Ofsted as they relate to the quality of practice and experience of children in the system. An action plan from the chief executive of Slough Children's Services Trust to the director of children's services setting out the planned improvements and the progress made to date is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 5.3 Due to the timing of the scrutiny panel this action plan has not yet been scrutinised by the Slough Children's Services Trust Board, it is intended this will be undertaken at the next meeting in order to ensure the Trust's governance requirements are met.
- 5.4 The Ofsted report also noted that the *council 'has not been a good corporate parent. The Corporate Parenting Strategy lacks ambition and rigour, and the Corporate Parenting Panel has not received and scrutinised comprehensive performance information....the views of children looked after and care leavers have not been*

sought and analysed actively enough, and so they have not influenced the shape and quality of services.'

5.5 Since January 2016 and working together, the Council and the Trust have supported members of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) to:

- a) Agree a new Pledge with the Slough Children in Care Council (CCC), which is attached as **Appendix 3**. The Pledge was presented by the Children in Care Council to cabinet on 11 April and is scheduled to be presented by the Lead Member for Education and Children to Council on 19 April for endorsement.
- b) Consider best practice and alternative models of how CPP operate in authorities judged to be 'good' by Ofsted, including membership and governance.
- c) Hear the views of the Children in Care Council and their experience of how the CPP currently functions and what changes would improve this experience.
- d) Consider their response to the findings of the Ofsted inspection and what they need to do differently to ensure they have clear oversight of the experiences and progress of children looked after, in particular
 - How can we better understand and meet the needs of children looked after
 - How do we create opportunities and actively listen to the voice of the child, to enable better planning and delivery of services
 - How do we ensure that children looked after make good progress and achieve excellent educational outcomes
 - How do we provide comprehensive support for care leavers which improves their life chances and is delivered in a way which is meaningful to them
- e) Consider a revised draft corporate parenting strategy.
- f) Act as independent visitors to children's homes in Slough.

5.6 At the next CPP meeting in the new municipal year, the following will be presented for approval:

- a) A revised corporate parenting strategy with an associated action plan clearly setting out required actions with timelines and named officer and member responsibilities.
- b) A scorecard which would include quantitative and qualitative measures, so that the CPP has clear oversight of the progress being made on the delivery of the action plan.
- c) Revised terms of reference for the CPP.
- d) A forward plan constructed of themed meetings, setting out the annual work programme of the panel.

5.7 Section 11 Audits – The council has undertaken a Section 11 audit, as required by the Local Safeguarding Children Board in December 2015 – January 2016. The results are currently being analysed and an action plan developed to address issues identified.

6 Appendices

- '1' - Page 19 (Summary of the section on the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence) of the Ofsted report on the Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, published on 17th February 2016.
- '2' - Action plan from the chief executive of the Slough Children's Services Trust to the director of children's services.
- '3' - Pledge to Slough's looked after children (April 2016).