

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 8th February 2018

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PART I **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

FOURTH OFSTED MONITORING VISIT (SEPTEMBER 2017)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Education and Children's Services (ECS) Scrutiny Panel on the findings of the 4th Ofsted monitoring visit, which took place on 20-21st September 2017.
- 1.2 The 4th monitoring visit focused on progress made since the full inspection in 2015, with a focus on our court/legal processes for bringing children and young people into care.
- 1.3 The letter from the 5th Ofsted monitoring visit, which took place on 10-11th January 2018, will be published on 9th February 2018 so will not be available for discussion at this meeting.

2. Recommendation

That the Panel note the findings of the 4th monitoring visit and subsequent actions taken to address the findings.

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

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

The work of SCST supports the following priority of the Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy:

1. Protecting vulnerable children

3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes

The work of SCST supports the following outcome of the Five Year Plan:

1. Our children and young people will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives.

4. **Other Implications**

a) Financial

There are no financial implications of the information in this report.

b) Risk Management

There are no risk management implications to the information in this report.

c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications to the information in this report.

d) Equalities Impact Assessment

The compilation of this report has not necessitated an Equalities Impact Assessment.

5. **Supporting Information**

Focus of monitoring visit

5.1 The monitoring visit looked at the following themes:

- The timeliness and effectiveness of the pre-proceedings processes and of care proceedings, and how these affect children's plans for permanence.
- The role of Slough's corporate parenting board, the 'joint parenting panel', in listening to children looked after and improving their experiences.
- The response to children looked after who go missing.
- The quality and consistency of social work relationships with children.
- The effectiveness of planning for children who return home from care.

Summary of findings

Management oversight and supervision

5.2 Ofsted found an improvement in the level and process of supervision. It was recognised that there still needed to be more focus in these discussions; in particular, where hub discussions identified issues, these need to be followed up in an individual supervision to ensure that action was taken, and the follow up hub discussion then needed to effectively challenge any lack of progress.

Planning

5.3 Plans were in place, with a range of tools to assist with assessing needs. However, assessments needed to be completed in a more consistent way, as they did not always lead to effective, joined up planning. In addition, recording did not always effectively support planning. These are areas that should be followed up through more effective supervision.

Independent Reviewing Officers/Challenge

5.4 There was evidence of active challenge being made, and the footprint of the Independent Review Officers (IROs) was much more evident. The next stage of this was to ensure that interventions by the IROs were having the required impact.

Missing/CSE

- 5.5 Progress had been made in supporting children and young people who go missing with a clear policy and process in place. However, there still needed to be an improvement in the quality of return home interviews, as there were missed opportunities to capture intelligence, and the impact of information/intelligence gained from return home interviews was not always clear.
- 5.6 CSE practice was mixed, with some positive work noted, however SEMRAC (Sexual Exploitation Missing Risk Assessment Conference) discussions and outcomes needed to be more evident within individuals' case files.

Edge of Care – Rehabilitation Home

- 5.7 There was a mixed picture in terms of the quality of practice regarding edge of care support, and there needed to be consistent practice ensuring that a formal plan was in place where children were being rehabilitated home.

Public Law Outline (PLO)

- 5.8 Inspectors saw evidence of increasing numbers of pre-proceedings and were pleased to see the increase in the use of PLO following their findings during the 3rd monitoring visit. However, they questioned whether it was being used in all the right cases, suggesting that in some cases where PLO was not initiated, it could have mitigated later delays once in formal proceedings.

Legal

- 5.9 Ofsted commented that the contractual relationship with our legal provider required improvement.

Corporate Parenting and Voice of the Child

- 5.10 The introduction of a themed approach to Joint Parenting Panel discussions was seen as beneficial, along with the Panel's positive steps to strengthen the voice of the child in their discussions through proposals for a Reach Out! scrutiny panel approach.
- 5.11 The developments in Reach Out! had produced a lively, engaged and vocal group of children and young people, and they could clearly see how they impacted on service developments. They were keen to strengthen their interaction with councillors and senior managers, and the new scrutiny panel proposals were seen as a good move to address this.

Health

- 5.12 Communication between health and children's social care was found to have clearly improved. Work was being done to implement an effective notification system, and issues such as challenges regarding health assessment notifications were quickly discussed and improvements in processes identified.

Significant action taken in response to 4th monitoring visit findings

Management oversight and supervision

- 5.13 Following on from the recognition that compliance had improved, the Trust, working in partnership with Essex County Council as an improvement partner, has:

- reviewed its processes for performance monitoring and implemented some significant changes to its performance framework in order to strengthen frontline management accountability for performance in individual service areas; and
- implemented a new double loop audit programme which provides more detailed information on the quality of practice in key areas of work such as case recording.

5.14 There has also been a continued focus on the strengthening of management oversight through supervision, with weekly monitoring data made available for discussion with frontline managers. This has shown a more detailed level of challenge, accountability and support within the system.

PLO and Legal

5.15 There has been a significant investment in strengthening the Trust's use of PLO, with processes to improve the early identification of cases that require attention and ensuring that legal information and direction is clear, appropriate and up to date. In addition, regular Legal Surgeries are held, attended by social workers, providing legal advice within a structured forum, chaired by the Trust's Director of Operations; these are formally minuted, enabling improved oversight from senior management and clear recording on case files to evidence decision making.

Missing/CSE

5.16 Discussions have taken place with both Slough Borough Council and NYAS, the two providers for return home interviews (RHI), to strengthen the analysis of intelligence gathered during RHI and how this is being used to reduce the risks of a reoccurrence of the missing episode.

Edge of Care – Rehabilitation Home

5.17 Many of the same services that had been developed for preventing children from coming into care also support rehabilitation home from care. The Trust is working closely with community-based family support services, children's centres, CAMHS, ENGAGE, Young People's Service, as well as its own Family Group Conferences and Youth Offending Team to support children, young people and their families in order to enable safe rehabilitation home from care.

6. Comments of Other Committees

This report has not been taken by any other Committee of Slough Borough Council.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The key concerns from the last inspection and issues raised during previous monitoring visits have been, or are being, addressed.

7.2 There has been progress since the Inspection in 2015, particularly with corporate parenting, the IRO service and the prioritisation of permanence; the child's voice is clearer, and Reach Out! was clearly making a difference, as seen in the quality of information being provided from their views.

7.3 Ofsted commented there had still not been sufficient improvement in all areas; the Trust has taken significant steps since the 4th monitoring visit to address the

speed at which improvements are being made in partnership with Essex County Council as an improvement partner.

7.4 It was important that the inspectors recognised that we know our strengths and weaknesses, as demonstrated with their agreement with our audits. Therefore, we will be able to address those areas where improvements still need to be made.

8. **Appendices Attached**

'A' - Monitoring visit of SCST (20th October 2017)