

**Children, Education & Communities  
Policy & Scrutiny Committee**

**19 September 2017**

Report of the Assistant Director for Children's Specialist Services

**Bi-Annual Safeguarding Update**

**Background**

1. At a meeting of the Committee in June 2012, Members agreed to receive a six monthly update on childrens safeguarding issues. This report updates the Committee on key local and national safeguarding developments since January 2017.

**Introduction**

**2. City of York - Childrens Safeguarding Developments**

Brief Overview

This report focuses specifically to the work of Children, Education and Communities and in particular the outcome of the comprehensive inspection undertaken by Ofsted during the review period. The report should also be read in conjunction with the published Ofsted report of this inspection.

Today's report also includes a brief summary of new service developments and a snapshot of current DBS compliance across frontline social care staff.

The voice of children in care and care leavers is included by way of a summary of the U Matter Survey 2017 findings and work to further improve the outcomes for Looked after Children and Care Leavers is described.

This report concludes by seeking the Committee's comments on the work described with some recommendations for future actions.

### 3. Outcomes and learning points from Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers.

The January 2017 scrutiny report described the comprehensive inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers. Conducted under the Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework [SIF] this inspection included eleven HMIs scrutinizing every aspect of children's services over a four week period [14th November 2016 – 8th December 2017]

Initial findings from this comprehensive inspection were initially given orally by the full team of inspectors, Ofsted's Quality Assurance Manager and Ofsted's Regional Director, North East, Yorkshire and Humber.

This feedback was presented to the Chief Executive, Lead Member, Director and Assistant Directors [CEC] and Head of Social Work Services for City of York. The Independent Chair for City of York LSCB was also present. The purpose of this initial feedback mechanism was to provide an overview of the inspection findings (including an overall judgement) and to amplify some key areas of strength and areas for development. Although very formal in tone this session provided a unique opportunity to briefly explore some of the overarching findings and for inspectors to give a first hand account of their impressions and view of the services and workforce they encountered.

#### a) Overall Outcome

The inspectors found that overall in York, services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers are Good. To put this in context see **Fig. 1**

Of the 139 completed at end of April 2017:

2 LAs [Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster] judged to be overall: Outstanding  
39 (28%) of Local Authorities were judged to be overall: Good  
63 (45%) of Local Authorities were judged to be overall: Requires Improvement  
35 (24%) of Local Authorities were judged to be overall: Inadequate

**Fig. 1**

## **b) Preparation and Self Assessment**

It seems pertinent for this report to describe the work undertaken by the Local Authority and its partners in preparation for the inspection. This process undertaken over a two year period included a programme of routine service safety and quality checks which culminated in the publication of a comprehensive 'self evaluation' document (referred to as Annex M<sup>1</sup> in the Ofsted framework). This document is a detailed and locally validated position statement of service quality and effectiveness. Although not required by Ofsted, where provided by Local Authorities the inspection teams accept this document as the basis for a shared discussion about the overall quality of services in an area. Where a local authority and Ofsted reach a high level of consensus about the accuracy of an Annex M they infer both a high level of confidence in the Local Authority's self awareness and its ability to address any areas identified as areas for development.

It is right to report that the inspection team found a high level of coherence between York's Annex M and their scrutiny of service quality and effectiveness. To this extent the Annex M has been validated as a reliable and accurate that can be considered as part of any service assurance process.

Of course documents like these can quickly become out of date and it would be wrong to rely solely or for a prolonged period of time on the Annex M as sole source of assurance about service quality and assurance.

## **c) Initial Inspection Team Feedback**

As described earlier, this oral feedback is another valuable source of insight into the quality and effectiveness of services. The summary below should be read in conjunction with the published report and only seeks to highlight or amplify issues that are not otherwise reported in the published document.

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<sup>1</sup> York's Annex M is available at: [http://www.york-ok.org.uk/Inspections/SIF%20Inspection/sif-single-inspection-framework.htm#OIT](http://www.york.ok.org.uk/Inspections/SIF%20Inspection/sif-single-inspection-framework.htm#OIT)

## Local Authority's Approach to the Inspection

### *The lead inspector described:*

- Managers across the partnership were open, honest and transparent.
- Social workers – it is not easy having an inspector sit alongside you – but they talked to the inspectors, engaged in challenging conversations and embraced the process.
- Staff were honest, transparent and “emotionally safe” – this tells us something about the culture of not only children’s social care but the council too
- Children, young people, parents and carers shared their experiences and provided valuable evidence for the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at 250 case files and spoke to parents, children, young people and professionals. They managed to “get to” the experience of children and young people.
- Thank you to the senior management team – there have been challenging conversations but they have been honest, open and reflective. There has not always been agreement, but learning has been two ways.
- Feedback from Ofsted has been taken on board and senior leaders have received it well.

d) Areas of Strength across the Service Areas (including key areas for development)

### *The Inspector for **Help and Protection** described:*

- No children are unsafe.
- Decisions and signposting are made at the Front Door – there are good partnership arrangements.

- The immediate safety of children and young people is well met.
- Early help assessments are completed in a timely way
- There is management oversight in the vast majority of cases.
- There are appropriate referrals and appropriate outcomes.
- The co-location of teams at the Front Door is effective
- Regular supervision is happening
- Children are seen alone.
- CSE risks are identified.
- Missing children receive effective support.
- There is effective follow up of CME.
- Parents, children and young people influence developments.
- Assessments for 16/17 year olds who are homeless are well structured
- Family support for domestic abuse – there are effective interventions, which are evidenced in children’s records.
- Referral pathways are managed appropriately.
- There is a quick and urgent LADO response, with appropriate decision making.

*And areas for further / continuous development.*

- Strengthening the voice of children in Early Help assessments
- Continue to improve assessment quality
- Further develop contingency plans
- Review EDT arrangements commissioned from NYCC

*The Inspector for **Adoption** described:*

- Adoption is considered at the earliest possible stage.
- Permanency is achieved for nearly all children and young people.
- Staff look for the best family as early as possible.
- The recruitment of foster carers for children with additional needs/sibling groups reflects need.
- A high priority is given to placing siblings together.
- Fostering to adopt has secured 11 children.
- Assessments are analytical.
- The level of sensitivity is noteworthy and Later life and life stories are good.
- The adoption panel chair is well qualified and independent.
- There is consistency of workers.
- The Adoption Support Fund is used to support children and young people's needs, particularly those who have experienced early trauma.

*And areas for continuous / further development:*

- Inspectors found York well placed to lead the Regional Adoption Agency

*The Inspector for **Looked After Children** described*

- Thresholds are applied appropriately.
- There are no examples of children becoming looked after unnecessarily.

- When children return home this is informed by a risk assessment.
- Legal proceedings are completed in a timely manner.
- Permanency arrangements are well-embedded in practice.
- S20 arrangements are regularly reviewed.
- There is a clear commitment to those children living with extended family.
- CSE risk assessments are being used and children and young people who are missing are reported in a timely way. When they return, the response is appropriate.
- Young people are visited within statutory minimum timescales and
- are seen alone.
- Staff have recorded a sense of the child's world.
- The educational needs of Looked After Children are well met, and the majority attend good or outstanding schools.
- The large majority of young people live in good quality placements with their brothers and sisters, where appropriate.
- Foster carers talked positively about the support and training provided for them.
- There is an Impressive commitment to independent visitor support, with evidence of relationships being sustained over long periods of time.
- There are good links with senior officers and elected members.
- The voice of children and young people in care is a real strength.
- The Sufficiency Strategy identifies future need and links to Making York Home, the new deal for foster carers, staying put and the ambition to reduce CLA numbers.

*And areas for continuous / further development:*

- Improve the arrangements for Health Assessments [IHA and RHA] - timeliness
- Increase the IRO footprint and challenge in some cases
- Clarify the commissioned emotional and mental health pathway

*The Inspector for **Care Leavers** found:*

- Young people feel safe in their tenancies.
- The Pathway Team is in contact with them.
- Transitions are smooth.
- Relationships with workers are good and workers help young people to develop key life skills.
- Young people are encouraged to stay put and EET is high.
- Those in independent living understand their rights and entitlements.

*And areas for continuous / further development:*

- Ensure / strengthen a focus on emotional and mental health needs in Pathway Plans.
- Continue the roll out of the new health passports for young people.

*The Inspector for **Leadership, Management and Governance** found:*

- There is a strong, shared corporate ownership and commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people.
- The senior management team innovates and learns.
- Aspirations have been raised.
- The YorOK Board, Safeguarding Board and Health & Wellbeing Board work well together.

- There is a commitment to put children and young people at the heart of strategy and operational services.
- York's ethos is to make a difference to children's lives.
- Voice is at the heart of what we do.
- Restructure of CSC and early help (Local Area Teams) is positive.
- York invites routine internal and external scrutiny of services – including peer reviews.
- Partnerships are strong.

*And for continuous / further development:*

- Continue to develop and strengthen role of front line managers
- Embed the revised QA processes and audit to further strengthen the quality of supervision

#### **d) Concluding Comments from Senior Ofsted Quality Assurance Manager**

*York is a good place to work and staff told us it is a nice place to work. Children and young people are engaged, heard and valued. Care leavers want to be care leavers in York*

*We can see the journey you are taking and we can see where you are going.*

*There are things to develop and you have been helpful, honest and upfront.*

*Where we have sat with social workers, we have been impressed.*

#### **e) Action Plan**

Following final moderation the written report was published on the Ofsted website on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

Every local authority inspected is then required to submit a formal action plan responding to the issues identified for further development.

No specific template is provided for this report with Ofsted preferring to allow Local Authorities to use their own action planning processes.

On 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017, City of York submitted a response to the four key areas identified and expressed across 10 recommendations.

See **Fig. 2** below - A summary of the work set out in this response includes:

Theme	Rec	Detail	Actions
Help and Protection	1	Assessment	Implementation of Integrated Theoretical Framework Embed assessment of Parental Capacity to Change – including follow up training.
	2		All CSC staff to attend safeguarding disabled children course
	4		QA Audit tool to be developed to review EDT activity (in conjunction with NYCC)
Looked After Children	3	Care Plans	IRO Service practice review focused on oversight and challenge around planning for children.
	5	Health Assessments	Rolling consent document for health assessments to be uploaded on MOSAIC which will significantly impact on delay for RHAs Health colleagues to utilise access to MOSAIC
	6	Letter before proceedings	Review template and pilot new version.
		IRO	Development and launch of MOSAIC workflow process for IRO resolution process to enable robust tracking, resolution, reporting and analysis of disputes
Care leavers	8	Health	Continue roll out of health passports Review mental health pathway for Care Leavers
Leadership, Manage. and Governance	9	Supervision	Training agreed for five recently appointed frontline managers on reflective supervision
	10	Performance data for frontline managers	New case management system was implemented – now with the development of 18 reports to support the Children Looked After and Children in Need statutory returns (this includes an enhanced 'Children and Young People In Care' snapshot report that provides additional information on health, dental and SDQ status)

**Fig 2.**

## **f) Conclusions**

The 2016 Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers provides important reassurance about the quality and effectiveness of services to children and young people in York. It is also reassuring that Ofsted's views and findings reconciled very well with the Local Authority's own self assessment as set out in the Annex M document.

Inspectors confirmed a high level of organisational self awareness and confirmed that they found work already underway for most of the issues they highlighted for further development. This picture gives confidence that the outcome of the inspection not only gives confidence about a snapshot in time but also about the organisations ability to sustain and safely further develop services in the future.

A recurring finding echoed throughout the oral and subsequent published feedback is the strength of the voice of children, young people, their parents and carers in every aspect of service delivery and development.

Leadership and governance arrangements within the local authority and across the childrens partnership were seen as robust and partnership working identified as a key strength.

Of course there is no complacency and work is ongoing to address those issues identified for improvement. However, in all of the above circumstances the Local Authority points to this very positive inspection outcome as a key assurance about the quality and effectiveness of services for children and young people in York.

## **4. Disclosure and Barring Service [DBS] Checks – Children's Social Care**

The DBS status of all CEC staff is audited on an annual basis to ensure the systems for maintaining checks and renewals is working effectively. The most recent audit considered all those members of staff (currently 491) for whom a DBS check is required.

This audit confirmed that every member of staff had a completed DBS check at their point of entry to the organisation.

Currently of the 491, 31 members of staff are due for a re-check (based on the Council's policy of 3 yearly re-checks for all staff).

The rechecking process is overseen by the Council's Human Resources department with a process of alerts where any DBS renewal is not made or is made out of timescales.

Any breaches are reported to the Directorate Management Team where remedial action is taken promptly.

## 5. Voice of Children and Young People

The voice of the child / young person has been confirmed as strength through the Ofsted inspection process. Sustaining this positive picture and especially for the most vulnerable children and young people remains a key priority for the Local Authority. In particular, understanding the experience of our looked after children who are cared for away from their home is essential if the Local Authority is to ensure they are safe, happy and thriving in their placements.

During the assurance review period the U Matter Survey 2017 was completed.

A copy of the findings from this survey compiled by the Childrens Rights Service has been included at **Appendix 1**.

This survey, repeated on a bi annual basis shows a picture of continuous growing satisfaction across the care population in relation to their;

- care placements
- the accessibility of their social worker
- the review process
- their education
- their overall experience of care

Perhaps most reassuringly 97% of those who responded confirmed positively that they had someone to talk to if they were unhappy in their placement.

It is recommended that the Committee receive a further presentation in relation to this work in due course, however, the Committee can be

reassured that as with previous survey findings the Strategic Partnership for children and Young People in Care will prepare a detailed response to the findings to ensure that the progress is sustained and those more stubborn issues are addressed.

## **6. Operational challenges and pressures in the review period**

This January 2017 review report described the implementation of a major restructure of Children's Social Care in Sept 2016.

This restructure is now fully implemented and supports the delivery of the Vision for Children's Social Care set out four years ago.

Three major developments within that restructure included:

- An immediate Response and Edge of Care Team to ensure that children (and their families) received services whilst assessments are undertaken – i.e. no delay in receiving a service where needed.
- A dedicated team to support Children in Permanent Placements which will ensure that children and young people in the care of the local authority receive a high quality, and consistent, level of support.
- A Quality Assurance Team to provide scrutiny across CSC. This includes an innovative reviewing service which will ensure that any child in receipt of a plan (CIN, CP, and Care) will have independent scrutiny of this plan. The IRO for the child will also provide continuity of scrutiny throughout the child's journey. The creation of a Group Manager post (QA) to lead this team has given much needed capacity and focus to Quality Assurance.

Children's social care continues to develop models of delivery to ensure that children and families receive the best possible service. Where ever possible this is achieved in partnership with other agencies.

A good example of this is the adoption of the Graded Care Profile, an assessment tool for neglect (a priority area for the CYSCB) which is a result of collaboration between CSC, 0-19 service and the NSPCC.

## **7. Conclusions**

This report has focussed in on the comprehensive external scrutiny by Ofsted of the effectiveness and quality of services to children and young people. This process, which included extensive self assessment, external inspection with moderated findings, helps to reassure that the overall arrangements in York are 'Good'.

This process also helped to confirm that the areas the Local Authority has identified for review or development are the right issues and resonate very closely with Ofsted's findings.

The U Matter Survey findings reassure that the voice of children looked after and care leavers is routinely canvassed and the findings of this survey reassures that the experience of these children and young people is both understood and predominantly positive and improving.

Arrangements to monitor and review the DBS status of the workforce against the Council's policy are robust and any gaps or breaches quickly identified and remedied.

A summary of developments in Childrens Social Care demonstrates real coherence between CEC's continuous improvement aspirations and service development in this area.

## **8. Recommendation**

Members are invited to:

- note the contents of this report
- continue to receive bi annual safeguarding and childrens social care service updates.

Reason

To allow Members to be fully informed on key childrens safeguarding issues in York and to support Member challenge in this area.

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**Report Approved**



06/09/17

**Report Approved**



06/09/17

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**All**



**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:** None

**Annexes:** U Matter Survey – 2017 report

### Abbreviations

ADCS – Assistant Directors, Children's Services  
CAMHS – Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services  
CCG – Clinical Commissioning Group  
CEC – Children, Education and Communities  
CSC – Children's Social Care  
DBS – Disclosure and Barring Service  
HMI – Her Majesty's Inspectors  
RAA – Regional Adoption Agency  
SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability  
TEWV – Tees, Esk, Weir Valley  
UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children