

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 June 2019

OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR PEOPLE

Strategic Aim:	Safeguarding		
Exempt Information	No		
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr D Wilby, Portfolio Holder for Lifelong Learning, Early Years, SEND, Inclusion, Safeguarding Children & Young People		
Contact Officer(s):	Dawn Godfrey, Deputy Director Children's Services	01572 758358 dgodfrey@rutland.gov.uk	
Ward Councillors	All		

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. Notes the feedback and areas for improvement from Ofsted following the focused visit on 19 and 20 March 2019.
2. Endorses the actions planned and/or completed in relation to the areas for improvement identified.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide full feedback on the outcome of the Ofsted focused visit to children's service in March 2019, and to provide details of the response to the areas for improvement identified.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 Ofsted published its new framework for inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS) in January 2018. ILACS is an inspection 'system', which comprises the following:
 - standard inspections (usually for local authorities judged requires improvement to be good)

- short inspections (for local authorities judged good or outstanding)
- focused visits
- monitoring visits
- activity outside inspection.

2.2 Focused visits evaluate an aspect of service, a theme or the experiences of a cohort of children. In Rutland inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for contacts and referrals. They also considered the effectiveness of strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries, the quality of assessments and early plans, the effectiveness of the designated officer role in investigating allegations against professionals, and support for children who are subject to or at risk of exploitation.

2.3 A focused visit is not usually followed up with an urgent inspection. Following publication of the focused visit letter setting out the areas that the local authority needs to address. The progress in these areas is reviewed by Ofsted through the local authority's self-evaluation and the annual engagement meeting until the next judgement inspection happens.

2.4 The annual engagement meeting for Rutland is scheduled for 20 June 2019.

3 OUTCOME OF FOCUSED VISIT

3.1 The findings of the focused visit by Ofsted were published on 8 May 2019. The delay in publication was due to the local elections taking place in May.

3.2 The report is broadly positive about the quality of practice and children and families experience of services in Rutland. The report also highlighted our stable, motivated and well supported workforce who unanimously felt positive about working in Rutland.

3.3 Contacts to children's social care are responded to without delay and partners are assisted by initiatives such as social workers regularly holding sessions with them to help them understand thresholds and how to make good referrals. This is resulting in better quality information being shared with children's social care and children who may need additional support or safeguarded being identified earlier.

3.4 Social workers are allocated promptly once the threshold for children's social care is met, and when children are at risk of significant harm, children are seen promptly, and actions are taken to ensure and promote their safety.

3.5 In less urgent situations though, it was identified that there were delays from a few days to up to one month before children were seen, without a clear reason or rationale for the delay being recorded. Consequently, there was delay in some children's needs being assessed and addressed.

3.6 The quality of assessments and plans is variable. Whilst some assessments identify risk appropriately and take into account the views of children, parents and information from involved professionals, others are more superficial which hinders good analysis. All assessments are completed within the statutory timescale of 45

days, but this is too long for some children and families who would benefit from a swifter assessment of their needs. This leads to similar variability in the quality of plans for some children. Contingency plans are not routinely included to enable families to know what is likely to happen should the child's circumstances not improve.

- 3.7 Ofsted recognised the priority that Rutland has given to child exploitation and the employment of a specialist exploitation worker is having positive results. Inspectors recognised the relationship-based work that this worker is undertaking with some vulnerable young people has resulted in them becoming safer and achieving improved outcomes.
- 3.8 There is an improved quality assurance framework which includes regular audit activity and this is highlighting areas of good and weaker practice. Supervision and management oversight and challenge to the quality of practice needs further development. This is a key area of focus for improvement and links to being able to demonstrate the impact our services are having on improving outcomes for children.
- 3.9 In conclusion, five key areas for improvement were identified by inspectors:
- i) The consistency and quality of assessments. This needs to include completing them within a child's timescale and having a clearer focus on the child's experiences.
 - ii) The consistency and quality of plans.
 - iii) The timeliness of children being visited who have initially been assessed as not being at immediate risk of harm but who may be in need of support.
 - iv) The level of challenge and consideration of impact and outcomes for children during supervision and other management oversight.
 - v) The impact that audits are having on individual and wider learning and on improving outcomes for children.
- 3.10 A copy of the full Ofsted focused visit letter can be found at Appendix A.

4 RESPONSE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- 4.1 Children's services have been swift in their response to the areas for improvement identified and a number of actions have already been taken. These include a new process for monitoring the progression of assessments at 10 and 20 days to make sure we are responding to need within a child's timeframe. We have also implemented a practice standard that all children will be seen within 5 days of a referral unless there is an immediate safeguarding concern.
- 4.2 Managers are clear on our practice standards and there is an expectation that supervision records will evidence that managers consistently drive plans with a focus on impact and achieving clearly defined outcomes for children in a timely way. To ensure our managers have the right skills to be able to challenge and support workers to produce high quality work, team managers have been enrolled on the

'Firstline' management training programme, with two already having completed the course. This is in addition to the ongoing support and scrutiny of service and senior managers, with a renewed rigour to quality assure practice effectively.

- 4.3 An enhanced performance framework and guidance will be in place by the end of June to ensure managers have the right tools to assist them in their performance monitoring. This will link directly with our quality assurance framework so that we can demonstrate impact and learning more effectively.
- 4.4 The focused visit development plan can be found at Appendix B.
- 4.5 The full children's services development plan reflects all of the actions in response to the focused visit areas for improvement, but also the wider Rutland self-assessment of services, including early help, SEND, inclusion and learning and skills. This will be reviewed again following the annual engagement meeting with Ofsted on 20 June 2019.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 This report is for information only and contains information already in the public domain.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 Not applicable

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 There are no legal or governance considerations.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed.

10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed as it is not deemed relevant to this report.

11 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 None identified.

12 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None identified.

13 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 As stated, the focused visit letter was published on 8 May 2019 and has informed the Rutland self-assessment of children's services.

13.2 The children's services development plan will be finalised following the annual engagement meeting on 20 June 2019, and committee may wish to consider whether and how it wants to receive updates on progress.

14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 There are no additional background papers to the report.

15 APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix A – Ofsted focused visit letter dated 8 May 2019 - <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50074940>

15.2 Appendix B - Ofsted focused visit development plan – May 2019

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.