

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 February 2020

### CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS REPORT

#### 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<br>Children's Services   | 01572 758358<br>dgodfrey@rutland.gov.uk |
| Ward Councillors               | All  |   |

#### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. Notes the progress made by children's services in response to previous Ofsted findings and recommendations.
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 a report on the progress made by children's services since the Ofsted judgement inspection in 2016 and focused visit to children's service in March 2019.

#### 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

- 2.2 Rutland Children's Services was last inspected in November 2016 when it received a judgement of 'Requires Improvement'. A focused visit took place in March 2019 which focused on the 'front door' of children's social care and how risk was assessed at this early stage.
- 2.3 A number of recommendations were made by Ofsted as a result of these two activities which formed the basis for Rutland children's services development plan – appendix A.
- 2.4 The Ofsted annual engagement meeting for Rutland took place on 17 January 2020 and this recognised that Rutland understood its challenges and had taken action to address these. It was acknowledged that progress had not been as swift as we would wish but were confident that we had clear plans to address.
- 2.5 Our next engagement with Ofsted will be a full judgement inspection of Rutland Children's Services. This is anticipated to take place by the end of April 2020.

### **3 CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELF ASSESSMENT**

#### **3.1 Early Help**

- 3.1.1 There is now a fully integrated front door to children's services. Early Help teams are located together with children's social care teams and community safety, which enables good professional dialogue and working together to identify and put in place timely support.
- 3.1.2 We have reduced the number of children experiencing from social care and early help at same time to prevent duplication and means children don't experience too many different people in their lives. This has improved capacity within the early help service.

#### **3.2 Thresholds/Referrals**

- 3.2.1 A new thresholds document and multi agency referral form have been launched in autumn 2019. Guidance and training on the new thresholds document and 'Making a Good Referral' delivered to partners, in conjunction with a clear and concise escalation process. Partners, such as Police, schools, health, largely identify needs and make appropriate referrals to Children's Social Care, meaning that children and families receive timely interventions. This is supported by social workers holding regular sessions with partner agencies to help them understand thresholds and how to make good referrals.
- 3.2.2 Our year to date figure for re-referrals<sup>1</sup> into children's social care shows Rutland is currently at 28.9%, which is higher than our previous annual figure of 23%. Whilst the percentage figure may look high, it is important to understand that this relates to

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<sup>1</sup> A re-referral relates to children with a previous referral within 12 months of their latest referral

small numbers in Rutland which can skew the percentage figure. We review all re-referrals every month to understand whether there is anything we can do differently and have found that often it relates to only 2 or 3 families and we are assured that our decision-making is appropriate.

- 3.2.3 Multi-agency strategy discussions evidence good engagement from police, education, health and any wider partners involved with the family. Multi-agency input means that risk is identified quickly and reduced and children's circumstances improve. We want to improve these further for children where risks escalate during an assessment process to ensure these are as robust as those completed in urgent situations.
- 3.2.4 Child protection enquiries are conducted appropriately and all have clear management oversight and direction. Children and families experience child protection enquires that are thorough and lead to timely action. Children at risk of significant harm are seen promptly, and actions are taken to ensure and promote their safety.

### 3.3 Assessments and Planning

- 3.3.1 The majority of single assessments are completed within 45 days and we have improved the number of assessments which are completed much earlier than this. We acknowledge there is still further work to do to enable assessments to be completed earlier but are assured that children and families are receiving timely services.
- 3.3.2 Progress has been made on the quality of assessments but we are not yet satisfied that good quality assessments are 'business as usual' in Rutland. There is evidence of child's voice in assessment and planning, and workers use a variety of tools. The majority of assessments can evidence the child's journey and we continue to address inconsistency through focused practice learning sessions.
- 3.3.3 Our preferred model of practice, 'Signs of Safety'<sup>2</sup>, is being embedded and a new format for assessment to better incorporate Sign of Safety methodology has been introduced. This means assessments are more child and family friendly, and also replaces the need for separate social work reports to other meetings e.g. child protection conferences. Our future focus is on reviewing the format of child in need and child protection plans in line with Signs of Safety, with a view to better support the recording of plans that remain proportionate to the safeguarding risk identified. Families will have one plan instead of multiple plans ensuring continuity between early help, child in need and child protection.
- 3.3.4 Ensuring that children are placed permanently with families and carers as swiftly as possible is a key area of focus for us. Planning for this does not always take place as early as it should and we recognise we need to be thinking about permanence for a child as soon as they come into social care. When children are in our care we do much better, but there are still instances of drift. A new procedure has been implemented in January to ensure permanence planning meetings are held from an early stage and actions are rigorously followed up.

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<sup>2</sup> Signs of Safety is a strength based, safety focused approach to working with children and families. It is the preferred model of practice in Rutland.

### 3.4 Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers

- 3.4.1 There has been significant improvement in the fostering service over the last 6 months. A new fostering panel has been constituted which is more effective at scrutiny of fostering applications and challenge to the service. There has also been an improvement of in-house foster carer sufficiency and we now have a dedicated in house parent and child placement<sup>3</sup>. The next recruitment campaign is planned for March with a focus on short term placements to assist in swift reunification and placements for older children (adolescents), including supported living/lodgings.
- 3.4.2 Children looked after experience good placement stability and there is improved independent reviewing officer oversight of placements and care plans.
- 3.4.3 The education and health needs of children looked after are met by a good virtual school and improved quality and timeliness of personal education plans. There is a specific Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for Children Looked After and no child in care is on a CAMHS waiting list. There is also effective support from CAMHS for Foster Carers in the form of an advice line and support sessions.
- 3.4.4 There is a focus on improving the completion of 'Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire' (SDQ) for our looked after children in order to identify any emotional health needs. We have worked with the Looked After Children (LAC) Health team resulting in agreement for these to be completed by the LAC Nurse at the looked after health assessments. The SDQ will be scored during the appointment and any action, care plan or referral implemented by the LAC Nurse to support the young person at this time.
- 3.4.5 We are in touch with all of our care leavers and nearly all of our care leavers are in suitable accommodation. There is currently one young person who is not living in suitable accommodation and leaving care workers are supporting him to make positive choices about his living arrangements.
- 3.4.6 The number of Rutland care leavers in education, employment and training is positive - 80% of 17/18 year olds are in education, employment and training, and 70% of 19-21 years are in education, employment and training. These figures compare very favourably with the England national figures of 64% and 52% respectively. There are 4 young people who are at university and 9 in further education.
- 3.4.7 All care leavers now have an up to date pathway plan and poor practice in this area in the past has been addressed.

### 3.5 SEND

- 3.5.1 SEND Peer Review, completed in November 2019, found that Rutland has successfully integrated its SEND, Early Help and Inclusion offer, and this is making a positive difference to the experiences of, and outcomes for, children and families.

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<sup>3</sup> Parent and child placement allows a parent and child to live together in a foster placement and be given daily support to build their parenting skills. These placements are usually very expensive and at a distance from Rutland so this represents a valuable, local resource for Rutland.

- 3.5.2 The timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) is a key strength. Rutland is currently the best performing area nationally, with 100% of EHC needs assessments and plans completed within the 20-week timescale. Parents/carers and settings are happy with their experience of EHC needs assessment and the quality of EHC plans. They feel that the provision specified within these plans is benefitting children and improving outcomes.
- 3.5.3 Our early intervention support offered through our Aiming High<sup>4</sup> programme has enabled children with disabilities to have their needs met outside the statutory process. Families report they value this.

### 3.6 Impact of Leaders

- 3.6.1 Stable and effective senior management and portfolio holder ensure services continue to strive for better. Our leadership team provides clarity of vision with a relentless drive for continuous improvement, and fosters ownership and personal accountability. This is complemented by a fully permanent social care management team with our new Head of Service joining in November 2019.
- 3.6.2 We have implemented a fully revised Quality Assurance framework and guide to performance management. This is supported by revised audit tools and 'real time' performance information. More work is being done to ensure the child's experience and impact of our services are captured and learning from quality assurance activity is more effectively identified and shared.
- 3.6.3 Our audit process is collaborative and audits are completed alongside practitioners to ensure this is a learning experience and actions are agreed collaboratively. We have introduced a new moderation process for audits to ensure everyone understands what 'good' looks like for a child.
- 3.6.4 We recognise our biggest challenge is the quality of supervision and management oversight by frontline managers. We have invested in the 'Firstline' programme for managers and held supervision workshops. This is supported by revised tools to support the management task and reinforced management standards. Fortnightly performance clinics are held by the head of service and individual issues are being addressed through formal performance management processes. To enable managers to focus on doing their core tasks well, we have stripped back 'additional' roles to enable first line managers to focus on driving planning and improving quality of practice.

## 4 **CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

- 4.1 The Children's Services Development Plan is informed by our self-assessment and is reviewed every month by the leadership team to ensure actions are progressed. Monthly performance meetings interrogate children's services performance data and highlight learning from quality assurance activity feed into the development plan.

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<sup>4</sup> The Aiming High service provides support for children/young people with special educational needs or disabilities and their families in Rutland including short breaks, targeted activities, parenting courses, support groups, drop ins and access to specialist services and information

4.2 Any shortfalls in practice and lack of pace of improvement are identified quickly and action taken. However it is acknowledged there are some stubborn areas for development which have not moved forward as swiftly as we would want e.g. supervision, consistency of quality of assessments and plans, permanence planning.

4.3 Expected practice standards are clear, both to staff and managers, and there is an expectation that if these are not being met, then performance management processes are followed. Deficits identified in our independent chair service have already been addressed with improvement now being seen.

## **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 That Committee notes the progress made by children's services in response to previous Ofsted findings and recommendations, and endorses the actions planned and/or completed in relation to the areas for improvement identified.

13.2 That committee confirms 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 recommendations

15.2 Appendix B – Key Performance Indicators

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