

SCRUTINY PANEL

4 May 2017

OFSTED NEXT STEPS ACTION PLAN

Report of the Director for People

Strategic Aim:	Safeguarding	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr R Foster, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People (Safeguarding)	
Contact Officer(s):	Rebecca Wilshire, Head of Children's Social Care	01572 758258 rwilshire@rutland.gov.uk
Ward Councillors	All	

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel:

1. Note the Next Steps Action plan for 'getting to good' and comment on its suitability for addressing the Ofsted inspection recommendations and supporting Rutland County Council to get to good.
2. Consider how the panel may provide future oversight and scrutiny of the plan's delivery.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Following an inspection of Rutland's children's services by Ofsted, Rutland County Council is required to produce and submit an action plan to Ofsted.
- 1.2 The following report provides panel with an opportunity to review this Ofsted inspection action plan.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 Rutland's children's services were inspected by Ofsted under the Single Inspection Framework from 15th November to 8th December 2016.
- 2.2 In a final report published (13th February 2017) Ofsted noted a number of strengths within the service, some of which were as follows:
 - a) There were no children in Rutland who were considered to be at immediate risk of harm

- b) Staff act quickly to keep children safe when people tell them that they are worried about a child
- c) When children and families have emerging problems, Rutland's early help services provide a wide range of responsive interventions, preventing some families from needing more formal, statutory involvement with children's social care
- d) The early help service uses positive ways of working with families to intervene and support children effectively
- e) Social workers know about children's lives and families get the right help and support when they are having difficulties
- f) Social workers, teachers, police officers, foster carers and others work well together to keep children safe if they are at risk of sexual exploitation
- g) The right decisions are made by social workers when children cannot live at home
- h) Social workers place children with people who can look after them well and help them to do well in education and enjoy hobbies.
- i) When children can no longer live at home, social workers work hard to find the right families
- j) Social workers and other professionals work well together to look at plans to help improve children's lives
- k) Services for children who leave care in Rutland was considered 'Good'
- l) Young people leaving care receive a good service from staff who know them well
- m) Staff keep in touch and support care leavers to live independently, stay in education or find a job. They also help them to keep healthy and find somewhere to live where they feel safe
- n) Managers and Council leaders are determined to employ the 'right' staff to provide good services and new social workers and managers are making improvements
- o) Managers and leaders want to improve services further

2.3 However Ofsted concluded that a number of improvements were required before children's services in Rutland could be rated as 'Good'. The Ofsted report outlined 17 recommendations, which are as follows:

- a) Ensure that senior leaders have access to comprehensive, high-quality performance management information in order to understand frontline practice and fully hold senior managers to account.
- b) Ensure that all staff receive regular good-quality supervision, with an appropriate balance of critical challenge, case direction and opportunities for reflection.
- c) Ensure that assessments and plans actively consider all risks to children, including emerging and new risks as circumstances for children change. Improve social workers' understanding of neglect and the impact on children.

- d) Improve the quality of assessments and plans across the service by ensuring that they are informed by children's wishes and feelings, involve the views of men and fathers, consider diversity and historical factors, which are specific to individual children's needs, and have explicit outcome-based actions.
- e) Ensure that personal education plans are completed for all children looked after, and that they include a thorough assessment of needs and set targets for improvement.
- f) Review and strengthen management and panel oversight of the fostering service to ensure that there is effective challenge of the quality of practice. In particular, ensure that foster carer assessments and investigations of allegations and concerns are thorough and robust, contain all relevant information and are completed in a timely way.
- g) Ensure that the corporate parenting board is effective in driving improvements and monitoring outcomes for children looked after and care leavers. Increase opportunities for children looked after and care leavers to participate in decision-making and service development and for their achievements to be celebrated.
- h) Improve social work practice by ensuring that social workers visit children regularly, in line with the children's plans or statutory guidance, and take account of their feelings and wishes when making plans for the children. The frequency and quality of visits should be monitored by managers.
- i) Increase the effectiveness of management oversight across the service, ensuring that the rationale for decisions and actions set is clear. Managers, child protection chairs and IROs in core groups, reviews and key meetings should actively challenge drift and delay, and support the progress of plans and the reduction of risk.
- j) When children go missing, ensure that social workers and managers fully understand the risks and vulnerabilities of the young people and take appropriate action. Ensure that the information gathered during return-home interviews is used to reduce risk and inform individual planning and broader service needs.
- k) Develop and implement a robust sufficiency strategy, which informs the provision of services and, in particular, the recruitment of foster carers, for children looked after now and in the future.
- l) Review the service level agreement with the neighbouring local authority, which delivers adoption services on behalf of Rutland County Council. Ensure that services are sufficient and of good quality to meet all needs of children, families and adopters prior to and beyond the making of an adoption order.
- m) Ensure that birth parents have access to support from someone independent of their child's social worker when adoption is being considered.
- n) Ensure that all options for achieving permanence for children are given proper consideration, including, when appropriate, parallel planning and foster to adopt.

- o) Improve the quality of information which children have access to, both now and in the future, such as child permanence reports and later-life letters. Ensure that all children in permanent placements receive life-story work.
- p) Ensure that children have timely access to health services, including specialist provision.
- q) Increase the extent to which workers consider the long-term arrangements when placing children looked after with foster carers, so that more are able to stay put when they become 18 years old.

The attached plan (appendix 1) has considered the action needed to address all these recommendations, and outlines how this will be achieved, how it will be measured and timescales for completion.

3 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Ofsted Next Steps Action Plan outlines and addresses the 17 recommendations which Ofsted noted in their report.
- 3.2 The Action Plan notes the 17 recommendations, along with outcomes to each recommendation, how it will be measured and the objectives, followed by the action required and timescale for completion.
- 3.3 There are a number of actions which have already been completed and the rest are on track for completion, all of which are identified through rag rating (green and amber).
- 3.4 We do believe that the actions will fully address the recommendations and enable us to 'get to good' over the next 6-12 months.
- 3.5 Recommendations pull out the key issues arising from Ofsted.

4 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 4.1 None

5 APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix A – The Ofsted Next Steps Action Plan

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