

Item No. 6.	Classification: Open	Date: 26 February 2019	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Ofsted Progress Report Ofsted Focused Visit January 2019	
Ward(s) or groups affected:			
From:		Director of Children and Families	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the corporate parenting committee note the contents of the Ofsted letter following the focused visit on 15 and 16 January 2019 (Appendix 1).
2. That the corporate parenting committee note the evidence of consistent progress and improvement with services for children in care since the last inspection in March 2017 under the single inspection framework.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. Ofsted implemented a new inspection framework for children's services in January 2018. This is known as ILACS, Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services. As an authority with an existing "good" judgement, Southwark can expect to have a short inspection and two focused visits over a three year period. There is also a possibility that a focused visit could be replaced by a joint targeted area inspection. This focused visit is the first that Southwark has experienced under the ILACS framework.
4. Focused visits do not generate a graded judgement but a narrative letter that details findings, outlines strengths, areas for development and impact on outcomes for children and young people that the improvements make.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Ofsted found that "children in care in Southwark receive effective support that helps many of them to achieve good outcomes". Social worker's know "their children very well and talk about them with genuine warmth and care". In an intense two days of inspection activity it is good that Inspectors were left with this clear impression of our commitment to our young people.

6. They acknowledged the positive impact of our access to resources team (ART) which has made a real and visible difference to the experience, outcomes and stability of children in our care. The quality of visits to children and the efforts made to maintain and promote family contact and life story work were highlighted as evidence of excellent practice with both contact and life story work being commended within the inspection. Health including child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and support for our children living out of borough and at distance all featured positively.
7. An area of particular scrutiny in any inspection is the work on missing and child sexual exploitation (CSE) and again inspectors were happy that all the protective and diversionary activity that would be expected is clearly present and effective. The focused visit touched on children with disability in our evolving all-age disability service and found a similar level of service and engagement with young people there. Short breaks and good transitions arrangements to adult care were managed well. Colleagues in other parts of the service and in health, education and youth offending services (YOS) helped to provide the fullest picture of the support provided to young people and this enabled inspectors to really take on board the extent of the “wrap-around” that supports children and their placements.
8. There were areas for improvement in the quality and timeliness of permanence planning and a general need to improve recording that would underpin the strengths that social workers, independent reviewing officer’s (IRO’s) and managers noted in their conversations with inspectors, but which were not always evident in the level of detail on file. The lead inspector gave constructive and helpful feedback on some of our processes and systems, notably around the use of consistent templates for recording visits and how we can use audit activity to better benchmark progress. We are always open to considering what Ofsted inspectors suggest as they see a real diversity of practice across many different councils, and some of these suggestions may positively strengthen our offer to children and families, and support our work.
9. Ofsted found “evident progress in addressing the areas for improvement” from 2017 underpinned by a “culture of continuous learning”. The council continued “to show drive and determination in sustaining and improving outcomes for children in care”. Overall, the letter outlines a strong and effective service that responds to our children well with no areas for immediate action.
10. As a good rated authority Southwark can expect a one week short inspection and a further focused visit or joint targeted area inspections (JTAI) in the 2019-21 inspection cycle. A short inspection will generate a graded judgement on the existing four point scale. Forthcoming Ofsted activity will centre on the annual conversation scheduled for May supported by the self-evaluation of social work practice.

Policy implications

11. None

Community impact statement

12. The decision to note this report has been judged to have no or a very small impact on local people and communities. Children in mostly come from communities in Southwark and as such the progress of services for children in care has a small positive impact on those communities.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Children's Services Focused Visit	Ofsted Published Report	N/a
https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80514		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Letter from Ofsted February 2019

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Alasdair Smith, Director, Children & Families	
Report Author	Tom Stevenson, Assistant Director, Quality and Performance	
Version	Final	
Dated	14 February 2019	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	14 February 2019	