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DATE: 8 January 2019

## EXECUTIVE

**Wednesday 16 January 2019**

**Please see the attached report marked “to follow” on the agenda.**

**5 OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES (Pages 3 - 12)**

***Copies of the documents referred to above can be obtained from***  
***<http://cde.bromley.gov.uk/>***

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Report No.  
ECHS19017

## London Borough of Bromley

### PART ONE - PUBLIC

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**Decision Maker:** EXECUTIVE

**Date:** 16 JANUARY 2019

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

**Title:** OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

**Contact Officer:** Ade Adetosoye OBE, Interim Chief Executive  
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**Chief Officer:** Ade Adetosoye OBE, Interim Chief Executive

**Ward:** All wards

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1. Reason for report

- 1.1 On 12 November 2018, the London Borough of Bromley received notice that Ofsted would complete an ILACS inspection of children's social care services in Bromley. Over three weeks, a team of seven inspectors reviewed the effectiveness of services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers. The inspectors also judged the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families and evaluated the overall effectiveness of children's services in Bromley. The inspection team gave a feedback presentation on Friday 30 November.
- 1.2 On 7 January, the Ofsted inspection report was published and formally outlined the following awarded judgments:

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

1.3 This report provides Members with:

- A summary of the key feedback for each judgment area and any identified areas for improvement
- The next steps for the completion of an improvement plan to address the recommendations identified in the report

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## 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

**The Executive is asked to:**

**i) Note the findings of the Ofsted report and the outlined plan to address the recommendations identified in the report.**

## Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact:
- 

## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
  2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Excellent Council Safe Bromley Supporting Independence
- 

## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
  2. Ongoing costs: Non-Recurring Cost
  3. Budget head/performance centre:
  4. Total current budget for this head: £
  5. Source of funding:
- 

## Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
- 

## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None:
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
- 

## Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications:
- 

## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected):
- 

## Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### 3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 On 12 November 2018, Bromley received notice that Ofsted would complete an ILACS inspection of children’s social care services in Bromley. The inspection team, comprised of seven inspectors, spent a week offsite to complete their preliminary findings and arrived on site on 19 November for two weeks.
- 3.2 During the week off site, the Council provided the inspection team with a comprehensive evidence library of local and multi-agency policies and procedures. The Council also produced the relevant performance management and data information to meet the Annex A requirements, comprising the 11 lists of child-level data and the Children’s Services Analysis Tool (ChAT), which provided a summary of key performance indicators. This evidence library also included the Council’s Self-Evaluation, which formed the basis of the Council’s annual conversation with Ofsted in October 2018. This suite of documents enabled the Ofsted inspection team to generate key lines of enquiry for review during the inspection and to inform the timetable for the two weeks on site. During this week, the lead inspector also spoke to key leadership figures in the local authority and across multi-agency partners.
- 3.3 Over the course of the inspection, inspectors reviewed the following service areas:
- Early Help
  - Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
  - Atlas
  - Emergency Duty Team
  - Referral and Assessment (RAS)
  - Safeguarding and Care Planning – East and West Teams
  - Services for electively home educated children and children missing education
  - Court Team
  - Children in care
  - Virtual school (educational services for children in care)
  - Care leavers
  - Quality assurance
- 3.4 In accordance with the ILACS inspection methodology, the focus of the inspection was case-based, with inspectors predominantly discussing cases with frontline social workers and practitioners, including practice observation and attending professional meetings. Inspectors also met with children and young people, foster carers and adoptive families.
- 3.5 Regular ‘keeping in touch’ (KIT) meetings were held with the senior management team to provide feedback, raise queries for further information or to update the daily timetable.
- 3.6 On 30 November, the Inspectors gave their final feedback presentation. Bromley were formally awarded the following judgments in the published inspection report on 7 January:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	<b>Outstanding</b>
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	<b>Good</b>
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	<b>Good</b>

Overall effectiveness	<b>Good</b>
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- 3.7 The report highlighted that since the last inspection in 2016, there has been a rapid and sustained pace of improvement to transform services for children, young people and their families in Bromley. This has been driven by a new and highly experienced senior leadership team and strong corporate support from members, which has led to vastly improved outcomes for children and families. The report notes that there is a whole-council investment in children's services and staff at every level have high aspirations for the children who receive services in Bromley.
- 3.8 Children who need help and protection receive good-quality help and support. Early help and family support services are highly effective. Workers are skilled and effective, ensuring that children are at the heart of assessments and plans. This leads to dynamic and proportionate plans, and interventions that improve outcomes.
- 3.9 Children in care receive a good service from workers and carers, who 'go the extra mile' to support their needs. They know their children well and have trusting relationships. Care leavers have access to a good range of suitable accommodation and staff are ambitious for their success.
- 3.10 There were four areas that Ofsted identified for improvement:
- The take-up of return home interviews and the effective use of information to identify and mitigate emerging risks.
  - Information provided to homeless 16- and 17-year-olds so that they understand the options available to them.
  - School attendance levels and educational progress for secondary-aged children in care.
  - The arrangements for care leavers to have access to their health history, and support to care leavers to develop emotional resilience.

3.11 Key findings in each judgment area

For each judgment, Ofsted provided detailed findings that are summarised as below:

3.12 **The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection are good**

- Children in need of help and protection in Bromley now receive a timely and effective response.
- The comprehensive early help offer is a significant strength. It provides an impressive preventative service for children and their families that successfully reduces the need for statutory intervention. The service is exceptionally well managed by a dynamic head of service. Staff are skilled, enthusiastic and child focused with a strong understanding of local need and are adept at engaging with families.
- The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) is well-established with good engagement by partner agencies. Thresholds and referral routes are well-understood, information is shared in a timely way, staff demonstrate professional curiosity and no referrals or work is missed.
- The out-of-hours service is greatly improved with increased resources and greater social work capacity to provide a more timely and effective response to children and families. Work is

effectively handed over to the day service via daily MASH meetings.

- Children in need of protection receive a timely and comprehensive analysis of risk through multi-agency strategy discussions and child protection enquiries, which include police, health and education partners.
- Direct work is a significant strength in Bromley with many different tools used to elicit children's wishes and feelings.
- Good management supervision and oversight is routine and well-embedded.
- The work of the Designated Officer is a considerable strength.
- Vulnerable adolescents receive a good service through the Atlas team and improved contextual safeguarding activity with partners.
- Good management oversight of elective home education, children missing education and better partnership working with schools.

#### What needs to improve for children who need help and protection?

- Homeless 16- and 17- year olds are provided swiftly with temporary accommodation while a social work assessment takes place. However, assessments could be more explicit about becoming looked after, meaning that young people may not always be fully aware of their options and helped to make well-informed decisions.
- Return home interviews are routinely offered to children who go missing from home or care, but take-up has stalled. However, persistent efforts are made to engage young people, and when return home interviews do take place, particularly for children at the highest risk, high-quality and important information is gained and shared.

#### **3.13 The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers are good**

- Timely and well-considered decisions are made when children need to come into care based on comprehensive, balanced and child-centred assessments.
- Social workers visit children in care very regularly and in accordance with their presenting risks and needs. Children are routinely seen alone and the direct work with them is clearly taken into account in assessments and plans.
- The Living in Care Council, composed of representatives of children in care, is well-established and supported. The LinCC is a strong advocate for children in care in Bromley. The achievements of children in care are celebrated and there is active involvement with children placed at a distance in order to encourage participation.
- Children in care live in appropriate placements, their needs are met and they develop well.
- Assessments and plans for children in care are routinely updated and reflect changes in children's circumstances.
- The quality of looked after children (LAC) reviews has improved markedly since the last inspection. Review notes are written directly to the child and demonstrate genuine warmth and care.

- Children in care and helped to improve their health. The children in care health team ensure that health assessments are comprehensive. This service includes children who live out of area and at a distance.
- Children's emotional and mental health needs are well-understood, through the dedicated worker from the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) and the Bromley Y offer.
- The Virtual School Team is effective in its work with children. Professionals adopt a range of creative strategies and approaches to ensure that individual children get the right provision and timely support when needed.
- Children receive high-quality care from their foster carers, who are assessed and supported effectively. Support for foster carers is an area of strength that is highly valued by carers, connected person carers and special guardians. This enables carers to feel prepared to take on the needs and challenges of children and young people in their care. The increased foster carer application conversion rate, from 2% to 11%, shows the ongoing work to attract a wide range of suitable carers to reflect the needs of children in care.
- Permanence planning is understood and pursued with rigour. Family finding and matching for permanence are strengths.
- Effective adoption services result in well-assessed and prepared adoptive families.
- Care leavers benefit from trusting relationships with social workers and young persons' advisers who know them well.
- The proportion of care leavers who are in education, employment or training (EET) is improving and compares positively with statistical neighbours and the national average.

#### What needs to improve for children in care and care leavers?

- For care leavers, current health needs are known and met. However, some care leavers are not aware of their health histories and do not have access to them.
- Young people are well-prepared for the practical elements of independent living. However, work with vulnerable care leavers on developing the emotional resilience needed for living alone is not as strong.
- Improved personal education plans and better tracking of post-16 young people in care enable the team members to have an accurate picture of children and young people's progress. However, attendance levels and educational progress for some secondary-aged children are not yet good.

#### **3.14 The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families is outstanding.**

- Services for children and families in Bromley have improved dramatically since the last inspection, driven by the vision, commitment and determination of senior leaders. All of the recommendations from the previous inspection have been tackled with vigour.
- There has been a significant shift in political and corporate support for children's services, underpinned by sustained investment.
- The lead member for children's services is also deputy leader of the council, a deliberate decision to ensure that children are front and centre throughout corporate and strategic planning.

- Partner engagement has been re-invigorated by the chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, who is determined and ambitious for children, and who has a proven track record in working collaboratively to improve children's services.
- The local authority is now a highly committed corporate parent. This is strengthened by co-chairing of the corporate parenting panel by members of LinCC and a corporate parenting fun day which is highly valued by children in care. The improvements since the last inspection are palpable. Children in care representatives told inspectors that one of the best things about being in care in Bromley is that 'they are known' and that there is a 'huge' difference now in how much they feel valued.
- Highly effective quality assurance arrangements drive a cycle of continuous improvement in practice and there is now a strong focus on outcomes and child-centred social work. The governance of these arrangements sits with the executive director, ensuring that there is a golden thread of accountability and knowledge which aids accurate self-assessment.
- Performance information has substantially improved since the last inspection and it can now be relied on to help leaders and managers to identify and understand important areas of risk and to prioritise actions.
- There is a sustained focus on increasing stability and capacity in the workforce. The 'Bromley promise' sets out the vision and pledge to staff about what they can expect from the organisation. Senior managers have created a culture of high challenge and high support, enabling staff to be confident in their work, and results in children experiencing good quality social work and improved outcomes.
- Senior managers and leaders actively listen to residents and service users and use feedback to improve services.
- Senior leaders have created an outward-facing organisation that embraces innovation and practice in order to enhance its work with children. Staff who spoke to inspectors are inspired by their leaders and managers and believe in Bromley's vision and ambition. This is making a profound difference to improving the lives of children in Bromley.

3.15 Following the publication of the report, notification emails were sent to:

- All Members
- All staff and senior managers
- The education partnership in Bromley
- Children's Services Improvement Governance Board Members

3.16 Due to the significant improvement of services for children and young people and in recognition of the Ofsted inspection outcome, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families Nadhim Zahawi MP wrote to the Leader of the Council on 7 January to lift the Direction issued to Bromley following the 2016 inspection. This is recognition that the Council the Council is now able to effectively safeguard and protect vulnerable children and young people from harm.

3.17 In order to address the areas identified for improvement, the Council will be required to submit a new improvement plan for children's services in Bromley to Ofsted within 70 working days of the report publication. This improvement plan will be developed in partnership with children and young people, children's social care staff, colleagues from supporting service areas, multi-agency partners and Members.

### 3.18 IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

The publication of the Ofsted inspection report has demonstrated at a local and national level that the Council is able to effectively safeguard children and young people in the borough, acting as a committed corporate parent and striving to improve their outcomes.

The report is also recognition that there are still improvements to be made to meet the needs of children and young people in Bromley, which will be robustly addressed through the development and implementation of an improvement plan.

### 4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The achievement of the Ofsted inspection outcome is in line with the key strategic priorities and values of Building a Better Bromley, the Portfolio Plan for Children, Education and Families 2018 – 2022, the Education, Care and Health Services Business Plan 2018 – 2022 and supporting strategies across each service area of children’s social care.

### 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has agreed to sustain the required funding to ensure that children’s services will continue to be effectively resourced and move forward in developing and implementing its improvement plan as part of the Council’s continuous improvement journey.

### 6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

The Council remains committed to maintaining a stable and skilled workforce with the capacity to deliver effective social work practice and sustain the Ofsted inspection outcome. The ‘Bromley Promise’ will remain as a crucial element of the Council’s workforce recruitment and retention strategy.

### 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

### 8. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

N/A

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Legal implications Procurement implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendix 1 – London Borough of Bromley Inspection of Children’s Social Care Services 19 – 30 November 2018

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