

Report No.
ED12032

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: Executive

Date: 12 September 2012

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: **OUTCOME OF OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

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Chief Officer: Kay Weiss, Assistant Director (Safeguarding and Social Care)

Ward: All

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 Between 9 to 18 July 2012 Bromley was the subject of an unannounced inspection by Ofsted of local authority arrangements for the protection of children.
 - 1.2 This report provides an outline of the inspection methodology and outcomes and the plan for addressing the actions required by Ofsted by November 2012.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **Members are asked to consider the contents of this report and offer comments.**

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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Financial

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

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

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement: Education and Inspections Act 2006
 2. Call-in: Applicable Not Applicable: Further Details
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected):
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Ward Councillor Views

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

3. COMMENTARY

Background

- 3.1 Between 9 to 18 July 2012 Bromley was the subject of an unannounced inspection by Ofsted of local authority arrangements for the protection of children.
- 3.2 This was under a new inspection framework that was introduced in April this year. The framework was developed as a result of the Munro Review of Child Protection which was published in May 2011. The Munro Review proposed that inspections of child protection services should be conducted on an unannounced basis in order to minimise the bureaucratic burden. It also recommended that the inspection framework methodology should examine the effectiveness of the contributions of all local services, including health, education, police, probation and the justice system, putting the experiences of children, young people and their families at the heart of the inspection system.
- 3.3 The Government accepted the recommendations of the Munro review including the need for a change of the inspection methodology. The Government announced that the new full multi agency unannounced inspection framework proposed by Munro would be implemented from April 2013.
- 3.4 In the interim the Government confirmed its intention to undertake single agency Ofsted inspections from April 2012 to March 2013 for the inspection of local authority child protection services alone which would effectively incorporate the annual unannounced inspection of contract and referral (which had taken place in Bromley in April 2011). This interim framework would only be in place until April 2013.
- 3.5 The new inspection sets a more robust benchmark in the assessment of child protection services by examining evidence of the impact of the help given to children and their families. It looks at key aspects of a child's journey through the child protection system, focusing on the experiences of the child or young person, and the effectiveness of the help and protection that they are offered.

The Bromley Inspection

- 3.6 Bromley is only the third authority in the country, and the first in London, to be inspected under the new framework. It is not expected that all authorities will receive an inspection under this framework. The only other authority with a published report to date was deemed inadequate.
- 3.7 The lead inspector arrived on site with 10 minutes notice. The full inspection team consisted of 5 inspectors. In all the team scrutinised 74 case files, observed practice and attended a range of meetings alongside social workers and their managers. They discussed the help and protection given to children and young people with social workers, managers and other professionals including members of the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB). Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors analysed performance data, reports and management information used to inform work with children and young people.
- 3.8 The inspection was a snap shot of practice in the here and now and did not take account of any future plans for improvements to the service.

- 3.9 The evaluation schedule for the inspection is comprised of judgements against four areas:
- Overall effectiveness, including areas for development.
 - The effectiveness of the help and protection provided to children, young people, and their families and carers.
 - The quality of practice.
 - Leadership and governance.
- 3.10 Judgements are rated outstanding, good, adequate or inadequate. Bromley was judged to be adequate against all four areas.
- 3.11 The positive aspects of service outlined by the inspectors included:
- There is clear strategic vision and leadership in place that has made some significant improvements to practice and service delivery.
 - Thresholds are clear and understood by a full range of agencies.
 - When children become the subject of a child protection plan good multi-agency involvement continues with regular and well attended meetings.
 - Children are safe and the response to children at risk of harm is appropriate.
 - Children are seen and their views sought.
 - There is evidence of regular supervision of social workers and recording is up to date.
 - The early intervention service is good and is offered in a timely and focused way.
 - The common assessment framework is working well.
- 3.12 However, less robust areas included that:
- Although some very good examples of assessments were seen, the overall quality was too variable and some did not focus sufficiently on risk or fully consider the child's ethnicity, culture, religion, language or disability.
 - Plans for children are not sufficiently outcome focused to monitor progress and ensure that parents are clear about what needs to change for their children to be effectively protected.
 - The work of partners does not routinely focus on the experiences of the child and whether interventions are improving outcomes for them.
 - The Teenage and Parent Support Service (TAPPS) is not well coordinated and the impact of support given is not effectively measured or evaluated.
 - While arrangements around child protection cases were robust there was more concern that lower threshold cases, particularly those involving neglect, were not effectively managed.
- 3.13 In general the conclusion was that the authority had compliance in all areas examined. The challenge for the authority was seen as moving from a compliance culture to one where social work interventions are consistently producing and recording measurable improvements in outcomes for children.

Areas for improvement

3.14 The inspection report was published on 17 August and gives a list of areas for improvement either immediately, within 3 months or within 6 months as detailed below. See Appendix 2.

Immediately:

- Children's social care should review all open child in need cases that have not yet been escalated into safeguarding processes, including those held in Teenager and Parent Support Service (TAPSS), to satisfy themselves that suitably robust plans are in place.
- Ensure effective consideration is given to a child or young person's ethnicity, culture, religion, language and disability in assessments so as to inform planning.

Within three months:

- Ensure child in need and child protection plans are robust, comprehensive, specific, have clear timescales, allow for the evaluation of progress and are shared effectively with parents.
- Take action to ensure that risk is explicitly addressed in assessments, plans, reports, meetings and discussions with parents in child protection cases and cases where potential risks are beginning to emerge.
- Ensure that interventions with families actively consider the experience of the child.
- Ensure that work undertaken in TAPSS is driven by a plan with specific and measurable objectives.

Within six months:

- Develop a performance management framework that effectively ensures that managers have a consistent focus on driving improvement in the quality of practice.
- Ensure that the voice of the children, young people and parents effectively influences service improvement.
- Ensure that suitable arrangements, including the use of advocates, are developed to enable young people to routinely attend and contribute to case conferences.

3.15 A detailed plan has been developed to take forward those actions required immediate or within 3 months and is shown as appendix 1.

3.16 It would appear that in the light of the Munro Review the Ofsted framework for inspection has been significantly strengthened. An article in 'Community Care' on 12 July reported that five of the 24 local authorities whose safeguarding and looked-after children's services have been inspected by Ofsted in the past four months, under the pre-existing inspection framework, have shown some level of inadequacy and some Council leaders believe the bar for inspections has been significantly raised.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Building a Better Bromley outlines the Council's commitment to safeguarding children at risk.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The responsibility to provide services for children in need is a statutory responsibility under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. In addition section 47 of the Act places a requirement on the local authority to safeguard children at risk of significant harm.
- 5.2 Section 135 Education and Inspections Act 2006 empowers Ofsted to conduct inspections of Local Authority children functions.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Financial/Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children. London Borough of Bromley. Ofsted – published 17 August 2012