
Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE

Date: 17 January 2024

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Contact Officer: Richard Baldwin , Director of Children's Services

Chief Officer: Richard Baldwin, Director of Children's Services

Ward: All wards

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 On 6th November 2023, Ofsted inspectors notified the London Borough of Bromley to complete a one week ILACS inspection of children's social care services in Bromley. 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 17th November.
- 1.2 On 12th January 2024, 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	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children in care	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of Care Leavers	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding

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 recommendation identified in the report.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact:
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Excellent Council Safe Bromley Supporting Independence
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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:
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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:
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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 The previous inspection of Children’s services was undertaken in November 2018 and provided an overall grade of “Good” with “Outstanding” leadership. This outcome was a significant achievement given the judgement of “Inadequate” that had been received in 2016. On this basis, the judgement of “Outstanding” in all areas allows LB Bromley to have completed the improvement journey over the past 7 seven years.

3.2 During the first (off site) week of inspection, 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 17th November, the Inspectors gave their final feedback presentation. Bromley were formally awarded the following judgments in the published inspection report on 12th January 2024:

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	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children in care	Outstanding

The experiences and progress of care leavers	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding

3.7 The report highlighted that children receive “exceptionally strong services” and the Council has “continued to strengthen and further enhance practice since the previous inspection”. This has been driven by a highly experienced senior leadership team and strong corporate support from members. The report notes that ... “Impressive strategic and operational leadership, allied with strong corporate and political commitment, has led to a shared vision and momentum for Children’s Services.”

3.8 Children who need help and protection receive high-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

3.10 There was only one area that Ofsted identified for improvement:

- The continued strengthening of practice for children experiencing increasing risks that may lead to the pre-proceedings stage of the public law outline.
- 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 Outstanding

- Services were described as “Impressive” and that services were provided at the right time with experienced and skilful practitioners.
- There is a good level of inter-agency working with good levels of integration.
- Managers have “meticulous” oversight of work and provide detailed, specific directions.
- Social Workers undertake high-quality, analytical and thoughtful assessments. Social workers in the Disabled Children’s Service respond effectively to children’s complex needs and vulnerabilities. Direct work is creative.

3.13 The experiences and progress of children in care are Outstanding

- Children in the care of Bromley receive excellent support and make good progress in their lives. Social Workers have caseloads that enable them to spend time with children and build trusting relationships.
- Decisions for children to come into care are appropriate and based on an accurate assessment of the risks they face. Extensive efforts are made to keep children safely within their families.
- Senior leaders, team managers and frontline workers fully understand children’s need for permanence.

- Children care plans are comprehensive.
- Bromley's Living in Care Council many opportunities to represent their views and they feel their views are heard.

The Experiences and Progress of Care Leavers is Outstanding

- Care leavers benefit from compassionate and sensitive staff, who are thoughtful and help them achieve their potential. They celebrate care leavers achievements big and small and build their confidence.
- Staff have manageable caseloads that enable them to undertake meaningful work with care-leavers. They advocate strongly on their behalf.
- Bromley's "Our House" provides opportunities for care leavers to meet with their peers, YPA's and partner agencies who offer advice about finances and housing options
- Bromley's local offer for care leavers is a strength. Children's services have a very strong relationship with housing services.
- Comprehensive pathway plans are co-produced with care-leavers

3.14 The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families is Outstanding.

- The report states that.... "Children in Bromley benefit from effective, high-quality services secured by a stable leadership team with a shared and ambitious vision for their future. From a strong starting position at the inspection in 2018, the quality and impact of practice have been maintained and built upon. Reaching this level of consistency across children's services is an impressive achievement. "
- Partners view the Local Authority as child-centred and responsive.
- Children's services benefit from strong political support and a commitment that is evident in the council's financial investment and growth in services for vulnerable children.
- Innovative and creative services are helping children make progress and to achieve a greater level of wellbeing.
- Management oversight of children's progress is exceptionally strong and highly consistent across the service. This is supplemented by regular, high quality supervision and practice reflection sessions.
- Social workers light up when talking about their children.
- Staff enjoy working for Bromley. They speak of highly visible and responsive leadership team and praise their operational managers, heads of practice, assistant directors and other leaders. They know their leaders, they appreciate their leaders and they feel appreciated in return. Bromley's chosen relational model is echoed in internal relationships. It is important to note the sense of care and kindness that inspectors found exists for staff.

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.

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

5. 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.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

7. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

N/A

Non-Applicable Sections:	Legal implications Procurement implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendix 1 – London Borough of Bromley Inspection of Children's Social Care Services November 2023