

## Briefing Note

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 7<sup>th</sup> January 2015

#### **Progress made since Nottingham City Council's Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers and Review of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board**

#### **Background**

In March 2014 Ofsted inspected Nottingham City Council's services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers (also known as the Single Inspection). The inspection was unannounced and lasted for four weeks; inspectors met with managers, frontline workers and partners and they sampled a large number of case files to judge the quality of safeguarding practice in the City. The inspection also included a review of the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children's Board (NCSCB).

Their main findings were that, across all elements of the inspection framework, we 'required improvement' but they found no children to be 'unsafe' in the City. The inspection did not find any areas for priority and immediate action; however key areas for improvement were identified.

See attached the joint response document which outlines more detailed feedback received from the Inspection Team.

The full Ofsted report is available here <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/nottingham>.

In response to the key findings Nottingham City Council was asked to produce an Improvement Action Plan identifying each action and detailing what will be done to address it and by whom. This Improvement Action Plan was submitted to Ofsted in August 2014.

Since the inspection Nottingham City Council has actively engaged with Ofsted and we have worked with them to pilot 'Challenge Seminars' designed to help local authorities develop their improvement plans.

Since April 2014 we have worked to put in place strong qualitative and quantitative monitoring of the Improvement Action Plan and its impact on frontline practice.

#### **Headline Progress (April-December 2014)**

- We have agreed time-limited investment to address issues identified during the inspection including Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) capacity and social work caseloads. We have recruited an additional 3 IROs and 10 additional newly qualified social workers. The newly qualified social workers are undertaking a fast-track induction in our Screening & Duty team. This

'grow your own' scheme has been praised nationally and led to the team being shortlisted as finalists for the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) Social Work Team of the Year Awards.

- We have agreed investment to enable us to procure an improved case management system. We have initiated a specific programme to enable us to procure the new IT system during 2015/16.
- We have been working to develop proposals to help us address issues around recruitment and retention of social workers by conducting exit interviews and consulting with the workforce. Initial findings and recommendations are currently being considered.
- We have revised Child in Need (CiN), Child Protection (CP) and Looked After Child (LAC) plan templates available for practitioners to ensure that they capture the views of the child and encourage social workers to develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) plans that help families understand the changes they need to make.
- Policies, procedures and strategies have been updated and rolled out to the workforce to ensure that key issues raised through the inspection are addressed.
- We have redesigned and restructured our Fostering and Adoption Services to ensure that we have the right skills mix and specialist knowledge within the teams. A new Head of Service for Children in Care has been recruited and takes up the post on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015.
- We have developed performance reports which enable us to quality assure and measure the impact of our early help services, through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).
- We have reviewed the role and structure of the Virtual School for Looked After Children to enable us to support children post-16. We have also established a Governing Body for the Virtual School to ensure that there is oversight of LAC attainment.
- Quarterly meetings have been established to ensure that senior leaders have a clear view of performance and findings from audits undertaken.

### **What next?**

- We are looking to roll out a detailed team level communications plan in early 2015 to ensure that practitioners understand what 'good' practice looks like.
- We are working to ensure our early help and specialist locality teams work more closely together to avoid unnecessary transitions between services for children and their families. This will improve service users experience, will deliver better outcomes for children and will improve the effectiveness of escalation and de-escalation through the system.