

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Review the Post Ofsted Improvement Plan</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 January 2024
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific;
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Adherence to our revised Improvement Plan will support the Directorate to improve the delivery of its social care services in a long-term and sustainable manner. This will in turn, improve outcomes for children and young people across the Borough.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That our latest Improvement Plan format is reviewed and acknowledged by the Committee, and that any comments or feedback are presented to the lead officer as needed.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

### **Context**

In March 2023, Ofsted inspected Wokingham Borough Council under the *Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services* inspection framework, which is more commonly known as ILACS.

By way of context, these inspections focus on the local authority's arrangements to help and protect children; the experiences and progress of children in care; the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after (including adoption); the experiences and progress of care leavers; the effectiveness of leaders and managers; and the quality of professional practice. (More detail on the ILACS framework can be found [here](#).)

Committee members will recall that Wokingham's March ILACS inspection report (which can be found in full [here](#)) resulted in five core areas for improvement being identified.

These were as follows:

- The timeliness of assessments of children's needs.
- The quality, clarity and timeliness of child-in-need, child protection and pathway plans.
- The quality and impact of frontline supervision and management oversight at all levels.
- The timeliness, accuracy and accessibility of children's records.
- The response to children who are vulnerable to exploitation.

Shortly after the inspection, the directorate formulated a comprehensive Improvement Plan, in order to monitor, scrutinise and drive improvement activity against these five priority areas. This plan has since been kept under regular review via a monthly Improvement Board, which is Chaired by the DCS and our Lead Member. In order to update members on our work in this area, a version of the document was presented to the O&S Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2023.

## Recent Developments

In the 6-month period following an ILACS inspection, all local authorities have the option of meeting with their Lead Inspector to discuss the progress that is being made against their improvement plan. With the intention of maintaining a continued sense of open and constructive dialogue with our inspectorate, Wokingham Children's Services were keen to agree to this offer, and a meeting with our lead inspector (Tom Anthony HMI) was organised for the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

The outcome of this meeting was very positive, with Tom complimenting the targeted and purposeful nature of our plan, and the progress that was being made against its key objectives. His concluding remarks were to "continue on the path" that we had set upon, and to maintain the momentum that we had achieved so far.

In response to this feedback, over the course of November we took the opportunity to review the structure and focus of our improvement plan document. The thinking behind the review was two-fold. Firstly, many of the initial actions that we had set ourselves in March 2023 were completed. As such, reviewing these at length at a monthly Improvement Board was becomingly increasingly inefficient. Secondly, and as a consequence of the above, the focus of our improvement work was shifting towards measuring impact, and ensuring we sustained our improvement going forward.

During the December Improvement Board, a revised structure of the plan was presented and agreed. The latest version of the document is attached to this report for the committee's reference.

The revised structure is now as follows:

- 1) **A summary page for each improvement area:** to ensure that we keep in mind the focus and ownership of our work, as well as what Ofsted specifically said about it in their last inspection, and what our long-term ambitions are in response.
- 2) **A concise summary of activity completed:** to ensure we maintain an accurate record of what has been achieved, which we can then also use as evidence in future inspections if required.
- 3) **A concise overview of activity that is yet to be completed or is still planned:** to ensure we remain focused and driven in achieving the remaining elements of our original post-March plan, and so the Improvement Board can hold lead officers to account on their progress as required.
- 4) **More dedicated space to consider the evidence of impact:** This will include latest findings from our quality assurance programme (including audits and dip sampling work), alongside any performance data that can support our wider understanding of progress.

As with our previous presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September, this report is being submitted in the interests of transparency, and to assure members that targeted actions continue to be taken in order to deliver sustained improvement in the delivery of children's social care in Wokingham.



CS Improvement Plan  
- Extract (19.12.23).pd

## Background

See report summary above

## Analysis of Issues

See report summary above

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

#### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

N/A

#### Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

N/A

#### Public Sector Equality Duty

Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

#### Climate Emergency – ***This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030***

Please state clearly what the impact of the decision being made would be on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

#### Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

--

<b>List of Background Papers</b>

<b>Contact</b> Adam Davis, Marc Gammon	<b>Service</b> Social Care and Early Help
<b>Telephone No</b> Tel: 0118 974 6128,	<b>Email</b> adam.davis@wokingham.gov.uk, marc.gammon@wokingham.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank