



Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

CABINET

Subject Heading:

17th July 2024

Starting Well Ofsted Improvement Plan

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Oscar Ford

SLT Lead:

Tara Geere - Director of Starting Well

Report Author and contact details:

Sophie Ambler

Project Manager, Starting Well

Policy context:

This report pertains to the delivery of Ofsted Improvement Plan, following the publication of our Ofsted report in February 2024 and the subsequent statutory improvement notice issued in March 2024

Financial summary:

The plan is costed at £5.011m, with £0.671m provided by DfE Improvement Grant leaving £4.3m costs to Havering

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

Significant effect on two or more Wards

When should this matter be reviewed?

Every six months whilst in intervention.

Reviewing OSC:

Children and Learning

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

X People - Things that matter for residents

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place.

SUMMARY

Havering's Children's Services most recent Ofsted report was published on 16th February 2024. This followed a two-week standard Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services visit that took place between the 4 and 22 December 2023. Inspectors graded services using their one-word judgement criteria (outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good and inadequate) across three broad areas of social care practice, alongside the impact of leaders and that gave an overall effectiveness. The findings from the inspection were as follows:

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children in care	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires improvement to be good
Overall Effectiveness	Inadequate

As a result of the inadequate inspection findings, the Department for Education (DfE) served a statutory notice of improvement on the LA on the 5 March 2024.

The improvement notice set out the requirements for Havering Council and its partner agencies (as identified by the Children's Act (s11)) to comply with the actions set out. This includes the following requirements

- Working with the Secretary of State appointed DfE improvement Advisor who has recently been appointed.
- Setting up an Improvement Board with an Independent Chair of the Board with attendance from the DfE improvement advisor and DfE case lead to monitor progress against the improvement plan.
- Submitting an improvement plan to Ofsted and the DfE outlining how Havering will achieve the necessary change identified in the Ofsted report to deliver appropriate and sustainable improvements to practice, to improve outcomes for children and families.

As part of the statutory improvement notice Havering Children's Services are now subject of a period of monitoring by Ofsted and the DfE. This will include regular reviews by the DfE and monitoring visits by Ofsted followed by a re-inspection in approximately two years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet endorse and adopt the content of the costed Starting Well Ofsted Improvement Plan.

REPORT DETAIL

1. In December 2023, Havering Children's Services was inspected by Ofsted under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework. The report was published on 16th February 2024.
 - 1.1. In the report, Ofsted identified that 'the progress children make, their experiences and the quality of services they receive have significantly deteriorated'. Our last full inspection by Ofsted was in June 2018, when services were found to be Good overall.
 - 1.2. The report details six key areas of improvement, which have informed the development of our improvement plan, alongside our own self-evaluation and quality assurance activity.
 - 1.3. Alongside the areas for improvement, the inspection report also identifies areas of strength for us to build upon, including the partnership working within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), the impact of the systemic family therapist team and that, despite the challenges, most social workers like working for Havering and describe a highly visible and responsive leadership team.
 - 1.4. Following the report publication, and the subsequent issuing of a statutory improvement notice, we are required to submit an improvement plan detailing the steps we will take to improve services and outcomes for children. This plan was submitted to Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE) on 31st May 2024 in line with statutory timescales.
 - 1.5. On 5th June we received a letter from Caroline Dulong HMI, Regional Director for London acknowledging receipt of the plan and noting that the plan appropriately targets the findings and areas for improvement as described in the inspection report.
 - 1.6. The plan has been developed using our previous improvement plan alongside workshops and consultations with Havering Starting Well colleagues, wider council workforce and a variety of partners. This has included head teachers, nursery leads, Met. Police, local health providers, NEL ICB, Havering Safeguarding Children's Partnership, local councillors, as well as input from our recently appointed DfE advisor.
 - 1.7. Our Practice Improvement Board (PIB) has been in place, with an independent chair, since April 2024 alongside our Practice Improvement Oversight Board (PIOB)

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- 1.8. Work has commenced against many of the actions and priorities within the plan, and progress against the plan is being closely monitored at our monthly PIB and quarterly PIOB meetings.
- 1.9. Our recently appointed DfE independent advisor, Suzy Joyner, has provided input into the Improvement Plan and will provide ongoing support and monitoring us on our journey. Suzy will also keep the DfE apprised of our progress through formal reviews every six months.
- 1.10. Following the overall 'inadequate' judgement, Havering Children's Services is now subject to monitoring activity by Ofsted. This includes quarterly monitoring visits and a full re-inspection in approximately two years. We anticipate that our first monitoring visit will be in October 2024.
- 1.11. Ensuring Cabinet and cross-party support for the actions and priorities identified in our Improvement Plan is vital to enable us to progress and deliver the required changes for our children and families.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reason for the decision: To ensure that Cabinet are kept informed and apprised of the Starting Well Ofsted Improvement Plan

Other options considered: None; it is a statutory requirement for us to submit an improvement plan as per our improvement notice

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial Implications and Risks:

The cost of the improvement plan has been costed at c£5.0011m in addition to the £11.2m growth added to Starting well in 2024-2025. There is a statutory requirement to respond to the Ofsted inspection and a risk of Central government intervention should the Council not do so which means that these costs are largely unavoidable and care has been taken to keep them as low as possible. The Service and Finance are working on identifying how this can be funded.

The £2m funding allocated to Havering for social care will be used entirely for Children's Services to offset this amount. Children's Services have requested DfE grants of £0.671 (Improvement Grant of £0.352m, Mockingbird foster carer contribution of £0.155m and Service leaders in Practice contribution of £0.164m).

This currently leaves a c£2.3301 shortfall. If further support from Central Government is not received this will very need to be funded by capital borrowing which will result in additional interest costs.

Legal Implications and Risks:

Failure to comply with the Improvement Notice by the assessment dates or poor progress is set out in the DfE notice.

Should the Council be unwilling or unable to comply with the Improvement Notice or should ministers not be satisfied with the Council's progress at any stage, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (under s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the Council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children's services.

The Improvement Plan, which has already been submitted, appears to comply with the Improvement Notice and will minimise the risks of non-compliance with the Notice.

Human Resources Implications and Risks:

There are no direct or indirect impact to any staff member as a result of the Starting Well Ofsted Improvement Plan, the areas that require support from HR colleagues are outlined in the plan and any work undertaken (i.e. service redesigns) will be done following the necessary processes and procedures.

Equalities Implications and Risks:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

Any of the specific projects and programmes of work within the Ofsted Improvement Plan will have an Equality and Health Impact Assessment undertaken as needed, and any subsequently identified issues responded to.

Health and Wellbeing Implications and Risks

The Ofsted Improvement Plan contains specific actions related to physical and mental health, and addresses wider determinants of health (such as education and employment), which are expected to impact positively on health and wellbeing. As specific projects and programmes of work progress, health and wellbeing implications and risks will be reviewed, and identified issues responded to.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are no Environment and Climate change implications or risks for this decision

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1; Starting Well Ofsted Improvement Plan, 31st May 2023

Appendix 2; Havering Inspection of local authority children's services December 2023

Appendix 3; Improvement notice issued to London Borough of Havering