



REPORT OF CABINET

Full Council: 24th July 2024

LB Havering Ofsted Improvement Plan

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 11 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 local authority on the 5th 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
- 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.

Further detail can be seen in the Cabinet report, attached to this report.

Tara Geere – Director of Starting Well, Statutory Director of Children's Services

It is RECOMMENDED:

That Council adopt the Ofsted Improvement Plan as appended to this report.

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;

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(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.

Environment and Climate Change Implications and Risks:

There are no environmental or climate change implications