

**From:** Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services  
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director, Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

**To:** Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee –  
3 December 2014

**Subject:** Ofsted Inspection Mapping: Single Inspection Framework

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Summary:** This paper provides an overview of the key themes emerging from the inspections conducted under the Ofsted single, combined inspection framework: 'Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board', from framework launch in November 2013 until October 2014.

**Recommendations:**

The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- a) **NOTE** the findings outlined in this report.
- b) **AGREE** that the County Council should look to prepare for inspection, with attention paid to these areas of scrutiny.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In order to enable the County Council to fully prepare for the next inspection of our Specialist Children's Service and Early Help & Prevention service, Policy & Strategic Relationships has undertaken a review of all published inspection reports conducted under the new single inspection framework between framework launch in November 2013 and October 2014. This was done in order to identify key emerging themes common to all the inspections, and to distinguish areas which received particular Ofsted attention and/or scrutiny.
- 1.2 The following report outlines those topics/areas which received recurrent focus over multiple inspections.
- 1.3 This information can be used to help focus KCC's inspection preparation over the coming weeks and months.

**2. Background and Context**

- 2.1 The single inspection framework differs from its predecessor in that it brings together the assessment of local authority child protection services and services for Children in Care (including fostering, adoption, and leaving care services) into a single, combined framework. Furthermore, Ofsted usually

undertakes a simultaneous review of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) under this new arrangement.

- 2.2 The single inspection examines the experiences of children who need help, protection and care from the time this support is first needed until a young person who is Looked After has made the transition to living independently as a young adult i.e. it provides a holistic assessment of the child's journey.
- 2.3 The framework is set to take place over a three-year cycle. However, it is anticipated that the single inspection will be replaced by an integrated multi-agency inspection of 'children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers services' from April 2015.

### **3. Key Themes of Well Performing Authorities**

#### **3.1 *Multi-agency working:***

In-line with changes made to the 'Working Together' guidance in 2013, inspectors are looking for evidence that local authorities are working effectively with their multi-agency partners in order to safeguard children. Evidence of close, integrated cross-agency working is being sought e.g. effective sharing of information/intelligence; a shared understanding of provision; and clarity regarding access to services i.e. thresholds. This is particularly important in relation to transition between Early Help services and social care. Inspectors also commend effective multi-agency systems of managing contacts and referrals, and consistently focus their attention on multi-agency approaches to dealing with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) e.g. shared professional understanding and responses.

#### **3.2 *Early Help services:***

Inspections are seeking evidence of effective Early Help services, especially in relation to multi-agency working. Ofsted commends targeted service provision that is well coordinated; has clear thresholds for support; is well resourced; and is responsive to children, young people and families' needs.

#### **3.3 *Social work practice:***

The main categories of focus in relation to social work practice do not seem to differ significantly from previous inspections in the main. Ofsted is still looking for evidence of:

- Comprehensive case recording.
- Reflective social work practice that is analytical and shows evidence of applied learning.
- Appropriate levels of risk management, with timely, decisive action taken as appropriate (especially in relation to whether children should become Children in Care (CIC), or remain in care).
- Clear assessment and planning activity that is focused, measurable and timely. Permanence should be a focus of planning from the moment a child comes into care; care leavers should have adequate pathway planning; and social workers should strive to ensure placement stability.
- Good 'front door' keeping and implementation of thresholds.
- Robust supervision and management oversight.

However, under the single inspection framework Ofsted is also looking for clear evidence that the right children are becoming looked after; that families get as much support as possible so that children can stay at home; and that children only come into care if this best meets their needs (please see 'The voice of the child', page 4). The child's voice and experiences should be evident in all stages of planning and recording.

**3.4 *Consistent & comprehensive provision:***

Inspectors are looking for evidence that local authorities have good provision in place to assist their care leavers to live independently. The relationship that care leavers have with their social workers has been noted on a number of occasions, with authorities that enable their care leavers to access good accommodation, support for their physical and emotional health needs and information about what they should receive, including financial support, being commended. Inspectors are also looking for proof of consistent and comprehensive provision for children and young people who go missing or are at risk of CSE; and for evidence that long term planning to secure children's futures is always seen as a priority.

**3.5 *Legal:***

Ofsted will check to see whether there is a good working relationship between social care and the judiciary, and inspectors praise effective working between local authorities, the Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) and the Family Justice Court.

**3.6 *Leadership and management:***

Leaders and managers at all levels are commended for being self-aware, and for maintaining links - and fostering a collective understanding and commitment between - senior levels and their staff 'on the ground.' Furthermore, senior managers are expected to provide a consistent and visible vision for children's services, and to have clear plans for current and future development in relation to service planning, design and provision. It is also expected that strategic planning processes can evidence adaptation and change in response to lessons learnt from past experiences. Likewise, Ofsted is positive about elected Members whom it finds exhibit a strong commitment to children's services and to their corporate parenting responsibilities; Members who display high aspirations for Children in Care are also praised.

**3.7 *Challenge and scrutiny:***

Inspectors appear to be actively looking for an organisational commitment to continual learning and improvement, and for evidence that such learning is challenging (and lifting the bar of) the status quo e.g. that audit findings are being aggregated and used systematically to inform and improve service delivery. Ofsted also expects managers at all levels to understand, and use, their performance information (and that by extension, recording/performance systems are providing accurate and reliable data). Another recurrent theme is an expectation that managers will ensure assessments and plans are of high quality i.e. that they are outcome focused; are regularly tracked and reviewed; and that cases are not subject to drift. Inspectors look to see that complaints are being collated and that the information gleaned is being used to strengthen future provision.

### 3.8 **Resourcing:**

Ofsted appears to approve of authorities which advocate that their children and young people only come into care when there is no other satisfactory alternative - that treat care as an option of 'last resort', if it is the only way to improve children's outcomes. For example, Essex County Council is praised for creating a culture whereby it prioritises 'avoid[ing] the necessity of children having to come into care and always look[ing] for safe and appropriate alternatives in the first'<sup>1</sup>; for having policies which reduce the amount of time that children spend in the care system to a minimum; and for emphasising permanency planning from the moment a child becomes a CIC. This stance affirms the approach taken by a number of local authorities to reduce their highest cost services, and shows that Ofsted, in common with LAs, believes that improved outcomes can actually be successfully achieved by making targeted efficiencies.

### 3.9 **Educational Outcomes:**

As with previous frameworks, inspectors focus on the educational outcomes of children in the care system, and praise any positive measures LAs have in place to improve attainment. In particular, inspectors seek evidence of effective Virtual Schools (VS) and strong leadership from VS headteachers.

### 3.10 **The Voice of the Child:**

Ofsted views the voice of the child as having paramount importance under the single inspection framework. This extends from the views and experiences of children and young people being recorded in casework, to evidence that children's views have informed and shaped strategic thinking and service design. Inspectors view Children in Care Councils as essential and repeatedly commend local authorities which use CIC Council feedback and learning to develop business processes and to inform corporate decision making.

## 4. **Key Themes of Authorities that Perform Poorly**

4.1 In addition to the themes outlined above, there are also a number of themes which recur in relation to authorities that perform poorly under the single inspection framework. These include:

### 4.2 **Casework and Outcomes:**

In LAs where social work staff have high caseloads and high numbers of unallocated cases; where too many cases are awaiting assessment and casework is subject to 'drift', inspectors are unanimous in their condemnation. Likewise, inspectors are critical if they feel the pace of improvement is too slow, especially if delays are putting children and young people at any unnecessary risk. Inspectors have been markedly critical of authorities which have high numbers of NEET care leavers (Not in Education, Employment or Training); where high numbers of care leavers are not supported by the service; where adoption timescales have been too slow; and where numbers of Children in Care have not received health and dental checks, medical assessments and immunisations.

### 4.3 **CAMHS:**

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<sup>1</sup> Essex County Council, *Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy, 2001-2016*

Children and young people accessing appropriate Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is a focus of the inspections, and concerns raised by inspectors include delays in CAMHS referrals and long waiting times to access services.

**4.4 Proactively and Learning from Experience:**

It is expected that local authority strategic planning processes can evidence adaptation and change in response to lessons learnt from past experiences. Authorities which do not do this are not viewed favourably by inspectors.

**4.5 Challenge and Scrutiny:**

Inspectors are highly critical of what appear to be prevalent sector failings in relation to consistent and effective Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and Child Protection Conference Chair challenge. Senior managers and IROs are expected to drive plans and ensure progress is made within timescales. Authorities which do not have effective quality assurance mechanisms and performance management systems are berated by inspectors.

**4.6 Workforce Stability:**

Recruitment and retention is an ongoing issue for all providers, though some authorities have made inroads in these arenas. However, Ofsted continue to be clear that multiple changes of social worker can have a negative impact on children and families.

**4.7 Local Children Trust Boards (LSCBs):**

Inspectors are critical of LSCBs that have overly complicated structures and which lack robust oversight. LSCBs are also expected to exhibit a grip of performance data and to have the ability to own and drive forward improvements within timescales. In Kent, the LSCB is the Kent Safeguarding Children Board which has Gill Rigg as its independent chair.

4.8 To see the full list of local authorities whom have had their inspection reports published to date, see Appendix 1. Please note that at the time of writing, the following authorities are known to have been inspected but their results are yet to be published: Rotherham; Isle of Wight; Rochdale; Bristol; Lincolnshire; Plymouth.

## **5. Important Statistics**

5.1 Under the single inspection framework (between November 2013 and October 2014):

- 0 local authorities have been rated 'Outstanding'
- 9 local authorities have been rated 'Good'
- 18 local authorities have been rated 'Requires Improvement'
- 6 local authorities have been rated 'Inadequate'
- **This means that 71% of local authorities have been rated as failing to meet the required standards by Ofsted under the single inspection framework.**
- 0 LCSBs have been rated 'Outstanding'
- 11 LCSBs have been rated 'Good'
- 15 LCSBs have been rated 'Requires Improvement'

- 6 LCSBs have been rated 'Inadequate'.
- **This means 65% of LSCBs have been rated as failing to meet the required standards by Ofsted under the single inspection framework.**
- 22% of all LAs have been inspected under the single inspection framework since it was launched. If this pace continues, it is anticipated it will take Ofsted 3.5 - 4 years to complete their full inspection cycle.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This information could be helpfully used to focus KCC's inspection preparation over the coming weeks and months.

## 7. Recommendations:

The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- a) **NOTE** the findings outlined in this report.
- b) **AGREE** that the County Council should look to prepare for inspection, with attention paid to these areas of scrutiny.

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## Annex 1: Inspection Details

| Local Authority    | Overall Judgment   | LCSB effectiveness   |
|--------------------|--|----------------------|
| Barking & Dagenham | Requires Improvement   | Requires Improvement |
| Barnsley           | Requires Improvement (Care Leavers: Good)  | Requires Improvement |
| Bexley             | Requires Improvement   | Inadequate           |
| Birmingham         | Inadequate   | Inadequate           |
| Blackpool          | Requires Improvement   | Requires Improvement |
| Bolton             | Requires Improvement (Children in Care: Good)  | Requires Improvement |
| Bournemouth        | Requires Improvement (Adoption: Good)  | Requires Improvement |
| Bradford           | Requires Improvement (Children in Care, Leadership & Management: Good CIC)           | Good                 |
| Buckinghamshire    | Inadequate (Adoption, Care Leavers: Requires Improvement)                            | Inadequate           |
| Cambridgeshire     | Good (Child Protection: Requires Improvement)  | Good                 |
| Coventry           | Inadequate (Children in Care: Requires Improvement)                                  | Inadequate           |
| Derbyshire         | Good   | Requires Improvement |
| East Sussex        | Good (Adoption: Outstanding; Care Leavers: Requires Improvement)                     | Good                 |
| Essex              | Good   | Requires Improvement |
| Hampshire          | Good (Adoption, Leadership & Management: Outstanding)                                | Good                 |
| Haringey           | Requires Improvement   | Requires Improvement |
| Hartlepool         | Good   | Requires Improvement |
| Herefordshire      | Requires Improvement (Adoption: Good)  | Requires Improvement |
| Hillingdon         | Requires Improvement (Adoption: Good)  | Requires Improvement |
| Hounslow           | Requires Improvement   | Requires Improvement |
| Knowsley           | Inadequate (Children in Care: Requires Improvement)                                  | Inadequate           |
| Liverpool          | Requires Improvement   | Requires Improvement |
| Manchester         | Inadequate (Children in Care, Care Leavers: Requires Improvement)                    | Inadequate           |
| Newham             | Requires Improvement (Adoption, Care Leavers: Good)                                  | Good                 |
| North Yorkshire    | Good   | Good                 |
| Nottingham         | Requires Improvement   | Requires Improvement |
| Oxfordshire        | Good   | Good                 |
| Portsmouth         | Requires Improvement (Children in Care, Leadership & Management: Good)               | Good                 |
| Sheffield          | Requires Improvement (Child Protection, Care Leavers, Leadership & Management: Good) | Good                 |
| Slough             | Inadequate (Adoption: Requires Improvement)  | Inadequate           |
| Southampton        | Requires Improvement (Care Leavers: Inadequate)                                      | Requires Improvement |
| Staffordshire      | Good   | Good                 |
| Swindon            | Requires Improvement (Adoption: Good)  | Good                 |