

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

Matt Dunkley, CBE, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education

To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 27 March 2019

Subject: **Ofsted Focused Visit on the Front Door**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides members with the background to the focused visit to the Front Door in January 2019 and a copy of the letter sent by Ofsted

Recommendation: The members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to **NOTE** the contents of the letter from Ofsted

1. Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

- 1.1 Ofsted introduced a new, flexible framework for inspecting local authority services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers in January 2019. It replaced the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) which was in use from 2013-18.
- 1.2 Under the new framework, 'Good' authorities such as Kent will receive a short inspection once in a three year period. In between these inspections there will be up to two focused visits, one of which could be a Joint Targeted Area Inspection, which is a thematic inspection looking at how well local agencies work together in an area to protect children. The current JTAI theme – child sexual abuse in the family environment – concludes at the end of March and the next theme will be children living with mental health issues, with inspections commencing in the summer 2019.
- 1.3 Also part of the new arrangements is the introduction of an Annual Conversation between Ofsted and key local authority officers which covers children's social care and education. The local authority produces a self-evaluation which is shared with Ofsted in advance of the meeting. This focuses on the quality and impact of social work practice on the children and families with which the authority works, the data that informs that knowledge and what plans are in place to maintain or improve practice. Kent's most recent Annual Conversation took place on 13th March.

2. Focused Visits

- 2.1 The inspection comprises two inspectors, who spend five days off site evaluating a range of evidence that the local authority is required to provide and then two days on site.

- 2.2 The visit focuses on an area of anticipated good practice or possible concern which will have been identified through the self-evaluation and discussion at the Annual Conversation
- 2.3 A focused visit does not have a judgement, but a narrative letter is sent to the Director of Children's Services which outlines specific areas for improvement based on the evidence from the visit. However, if the inspectors identified an area of Priority Action, this could trigger a full inspection.

3. Focused Visit of Kent's Front Door

- 3.1 The focused visit took place on 14th and 15th January 2019 and reviewed the effectiveness of decision-making around contacts referrals, our response to children who are missing and/or at risk of exploitation and progress made against concerns raised in the SIF Inspection in March 2017. They also reviewed the work of the LADO service. It was suggested at the Annual Conversation in February 2018 that the Front Door was a key area for a visit.
- 3.2 Inspectors spent five days off site evaluating evidence and then two days with staff tracking cases and observing frontline practice.
- 3.3 Inspectors noted that this is a high volume yet efficiently run services and that good progress had been made since the last inspection. Increased management capacity has strengthened oversight and staff can see the benefits of the changes that have been implemented. Areas of development identified by the inspectors will be a focus of work over the coming months.
- 3.4 A copy of the letter from Ofsted is attached for Members' information.

Recommendation:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to **NOTE** the content of the narrative letter sent by Ofsted following on from the focused visit in January 2019

4. Background documents

Letter from Ofsted re focused visit

5. Contact details

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