

**From:** Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education  
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

**To:** County Council – 13 July 2017

**Subject:** **OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Summary:** The Ofsted inspection of Children's Services in Kent under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) took place over a four week period in March of this year. The inspection process was a rigorous one involving a team of twelve Ofsted inspectors reviewing all aspects of the Council's statutory safeguarding, corporate parenting and family support functions. The work of the Kent Safeguarding Children Board was also reviewed.

**Recommendation** Members are asked to **NOTE** the content of the report and the significant work of all the staff who have contributed to this very positive outcome.

## **1. Summary**

1.1 The Ofsted inspection of Children's Services in Kent under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) took place over a four week period in March of this year. The inspection process was a rigorous one involving a team of twelve Ofsted inspectors reviewing all aspects of our statutory safeguarding, corporate parenting and family support functions. The work of the Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) was also reviewed.

## **2. Children's Services in Kent**

2.1 The overall judgement was that Children's Services in Kent are good. The inspection team delivered category judgments of good in relation to Children Looked after (Adoption, Care Leavers) and Leadership, Management and Governance. However, work in relation to help and protection and the KSCB requires improvement.

### **2.2 Children looked after and achieving permanence and leadership, management and governance**

2.2.1 Category judgments in relation to children looked after and achieving permanence (including Adoption performance and the experiences and progress of care leavers) and leadership, management and governance were good. Some of the key points noted by the inspectors include:

- Social workers are good at working with other professionals to keep children safe. They meet children regularly, listen to what they have to say, and work hard to improve things for them and have a good

understanding of what support children need to help them to lead fulfilling lives and ensure that children get the support they need to live with their families when possible

- The well-established Children in Care Council ensures that children are involved in helping to develop services. They regularly attend council meetings, sit on interview panels, and help to arrange interesting events, such as activity days, where they have fun and meet new friends
- The vast majority of young people enjoy positive and trusting relationships with their personal advisers, who are enthusiastic, persistent and tenacious on their behalf. Young people who met with inspectors spoke highly of their personal advisers' commitment to 'getting things done'.
- The local authority works well with partners in the police and health services to agree priorities, such as tackling domestic abuse and ensuring a comprehensive response to children at risk of sexual exploitation or radicalisation
- Senior and political leaders are proud to be the corporate parents of Kent's children looked after and care leavers
- Performance management systems provide detailed data and helpful analysis to monitor and develop services effectively
- Nearly all children looked after go to good schools. Most have good attendance and are helped to do their best in their studies. Educational outcomes for children looked after are improving at key stages 1, 2 and 4. The virtual school uses personal education plans well to enable pupils to get the right support for personal and social development and academic progress.

## **2.3 Experiences and progress of children who need help and protection**

2.3.1 The category judgment in relation to the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection was requires improvement. Some of the key points noted by the inspectors include:

- Social workers see children regularly and know them well. Assessments are analytical, and capture family histories, views and experiences and result in high-quality plans. However, the quality of some assessments is not good, with some lacking analysis and not recognising all risk factors
- Inspectors saw appropriate action taken in the multi-agency child sexual exploitation team to monitor and reduce risks for children identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation. However, inconsistencies in the effectiveness of district ARM panels mean that intervention is not always successful in reducing risks for all children.
- Children living in private fostering arrangements are identified but assessments are not rigorous enough to ensure that the arrangements are suitable.

2.4 The Inspection Team noted that improvements had been made from the low base point of 2010 and in the face of a substantial challenge arising from the volume of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) for whom Kent had needed to provide support.

- 2.5 Ofsted acknowledged the strength of cross party support for the Children's Services agenda and the constructive relationships that have been built between Members and senior officers. Ofsted also acknowledged that senior and political leaders are proud to be the corporate parents of Kent's children looked after and care leavers.
- 2.6 As a national comparator 28% of Local Authority Children's Services inspected to date have received an overall judgement of good or better, this is a significant achievement and places Kent within the upper quartile of high performing authorities across the country.
- 2.7 The Council should be proud of the work of all the staff who have contributed to this very positive outcome.

### **3. Next Steps**

- 3.1 There are ten recommendations made within the inspection report (Attached as Appendix 1) with a requirement that Ofsted is provided with an action plan addressing them no later than 20 September 2017. This will be produced in the form of a Practice Development Plan.
- 3.2 Whilst delighted with the outcome of the March Inspection, Children's Services will continue to strive for improvement, consolidating areas of good practice and addressing those areas where shortcomings were identified to ensure that all children in Kent are able to consistently benefit from high quality social care and early help support when it is required.

### **4. Recommendation**

<p><b>4.1 Recommendation:</b> Members are asked to <b>NOTE</b> the content of the report and the significant work of all the staff who have contributed to this very positive outcome.</p>
--

### **5. Background Documents**

None

### **6. Report Author**

Philip Segurola  
Director of Specialist Children's Services  
03000 413120  
Philip.segurola@kent.gov.uk