

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee 19 September 2017
AGENDA ITEM:	6
SUBJECT:	OFSTED Inspection of Children's Services
LEAD OFFICER:	Barbara Peacock Executive Director (People)
CABINET MEMBER:	Alisa Flemming Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	This item follows the recent OFSTED inspection of the council's children's services.
RECOMMENDATIONS	Members are invited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Note that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, at its meeting on 5 September 2017, agreed to lead on scrutinising the progress of the overarching improvement plan and that each Children and Young People's Scrutiny Meeting will have a standing item to focus on a key theme in the Improvement Plan; ii) Note the terms of reference of the Improvement Board and scrutinise the approach to the development of the improvement plan; iii) Scrutinise the content of the Transitional Action Plan; and iv) Note that a programme of 'deep dives' will be developed by the Improvement Board and agree that the work programme for the Sub- Committee be amended to enable Scrutiny involvement in those 'deep dives' when it is becomes available.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The appended report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee details the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of local authority services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers and review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The inspection took place between 19 June and 14 July 2017.

- 1.2 On 4th September 2017, Ofsted published its report providing an overall judgement that Children's Services in Croydon are inadequate. The Local Safeguarding Children Board was also judged inadequate, as inspectors found that the LSCB had not fully established effective arrangements to discharge its statutory functions. The council has fully accepted the findings of the report.
- 1.3 The Leader of the Council presented the findings of the report, a summary of the response to date and the programme of improvement action to be taken to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 5 September 2017. The Scrutiny Committee agreed that it would lead on scrutinising the progress of the overarching improvement plan and that each Children and Young People's Scrutiny meeting will have a standing item to focus on a key theme in the improvement Plan.
- 1.4 This report presents the Ofsted findings in full to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Sub-Committee, along with details of the improvement planning timetable, the terms of reference of the Improvement Board and the latest Transitional Action Plan.
- 1.5 The Sub-Committee is asked to take a thematic approach to scrutinise the emerging improvement planning work in the context of the Inspection findings and offer its views on any areas where there are opportunities to enhance the Council's improvement programme.

2. Ofsted Inspection

- 2.1 On 4 September 2017, Ofsted published the report of the Ofsted Inspection of local authority services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers and review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (commonly referred to as the 'Single Inspection Framework'). A copy of this report is included at Appendix 1
- 2.2 The inspection of local authority functions was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the report of the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) was carried out under the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (Review) Regulations 2013 and 15(A) of the Children Act 2004.
- 2.3 The inspection reviewed the following:

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: These are children and young people that;

- are at risk of harm (but who have not yet reached the 'significant harm' threshold).
- have been referred to the local authority, including those for whom urgent action has to be taken to protect them; those subject to further assessment; and those subject to child protection enquiries.
- are the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan setting out the help that will be provided for them and their families to keep them safe and to promote

their welfare.

- have been assessed as no longer needing a child protection plan, but who may have continuing needs for help and support.
- are receiving (or whose families are receiving) social work services where there are significant levels of concern about children's safety and welfare, but these have not reached the significant harm threshold or the threshold to become looked after.
- are missing from education, or being offered alternative provision.

The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving

permanence: These are children and young people looked after either by being accommodated under section 20 or those 'in care' during or as a result of proceedings under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and those accommodated through the police powers of protection and emergency protection orders. This review also covered;

- adoption performance
- the experiences and progress of care leavers. These are young people aged 16 to 25 who are preparing to leave care, or who have left care.

Leadership, governance and management: This review focused on the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people and the quality of frontline practice.

The review of the effectiveness of the Children's Safeguarding Board: This review evaluated the extent to which the CSCB complies with its statutory responsibilities in accordance with the Children Act 2004 and Working Together Regulations. It looked for evidence that it coordinates the work of statutory partners in helping, protecting and caring for children in its local area and whether mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of those local arrangements.

2.4 Inspectors make judgement on a four point scale;

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Inadequate

2.5 The overall judgement in this report is that Children's Services in Croydon are inadequate, with the grading for each part of the inspection as follows:

1. Children who need help and protection	Inadequate
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Inadequate
2.1 Adoption performance	Requires Improvement
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires Improvement
3. Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate
4. Local Safeguarding Children Board	Inadequate

2.6 The key areas for improvement identified by the inspectors were:

- Widespread and serious failures in providing services for children and families that leave some children at risk of significant harm.
- Too many children are left too long for a decision to become looked after and our responses are not timely or robust enough to ensure risk was reduced.
- The quality of our plans and weak managerial oversight are not driving practice and outcomes for children and young people sufficiently.
- We are not creating conditions for social work to thrive across the whole service, with some social work caseloads being too high in parts of the service.
- Children and families experience too many changes in social worker.
- Corporate parenting needs strengthening to ensure improvement takes place across all practice areas for looked after children.
- Early help is not fully established or understood enough across the partnership (council and Croydon Safeguarding Children Board).
- There is insufficient line of sight to the front line.
- The Croydon Safeguarding Children Board does not understand the experiences of children and young people and has failed to sufficiently monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of front-line practice.
- The Croydon Safeguarding Children Board lacks direction and purpose and does not provide effective challenge to poor practice and risks to vulnerable children in Croydon.

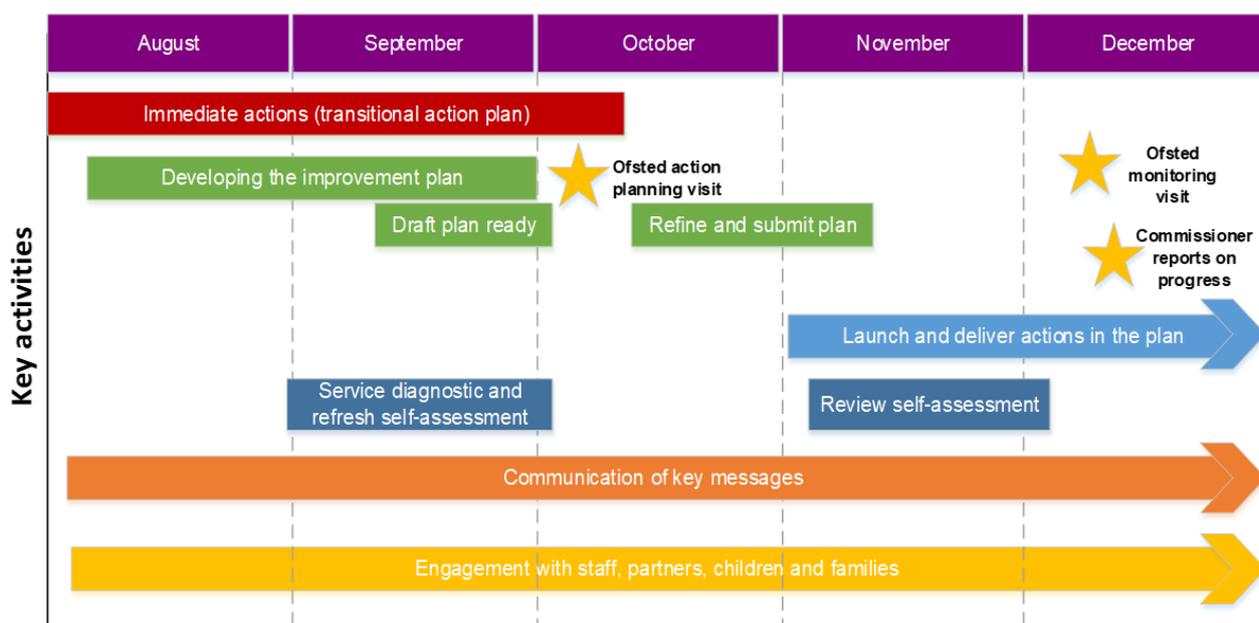
3. IMPROVING PERFORMANCE FOLLOWING THE INSPECTION

- 3.1 Following the inspection, the Council is required to develop an action plan that details how it will deliver the improvements required in the Inspectors' recommendations. This plan must be submitted to Ofsted by 11 December 2017.
- 3.2 Ofsted will review the action plan after it is received and confirm whether or not it adequately reflects the inspection findings and recommendations.
- 3.3 The Department for Education had appointed a commissioner, Eleanor Brazil, to work with the Council following the Ofsted inspection. Her role is to help drive improvement and review the capacity and capability in the council to improve services at a fast pace. The Commissioner will monitor and review the Council's progress, review practice across the service and test the Council's improvement plans throughout the next three months.
- 3.4 Reporting back to the Minister for Children and Families in three months, the Commissioner will make recommendations to the Minister on the best course of action for the service going forward.

- 3.5 In order to develop and deliver its improvement plan, the Council has established the Children's Service Improvement Board. A copy of the Board's terms of reference are attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.6 The Board is chaired by an independent chair, Edwina Grant OBE, and includes officers and elected members from the council, partners, external support, the Local Government Association, the Department for Education and the commissioner who will meet on a monthly basis to provide oversight and challenge to the improvement programme. A shadow board meeting took place in August and the Board had its first meeting on 5 September.
- 3.7 Improvement support will be provided by, Achieving for Children, who will begin providing support to the council in September. In addition, the London Children's Services advisor from the Local Government Association (LGA) will offer advice and support to officers and members.

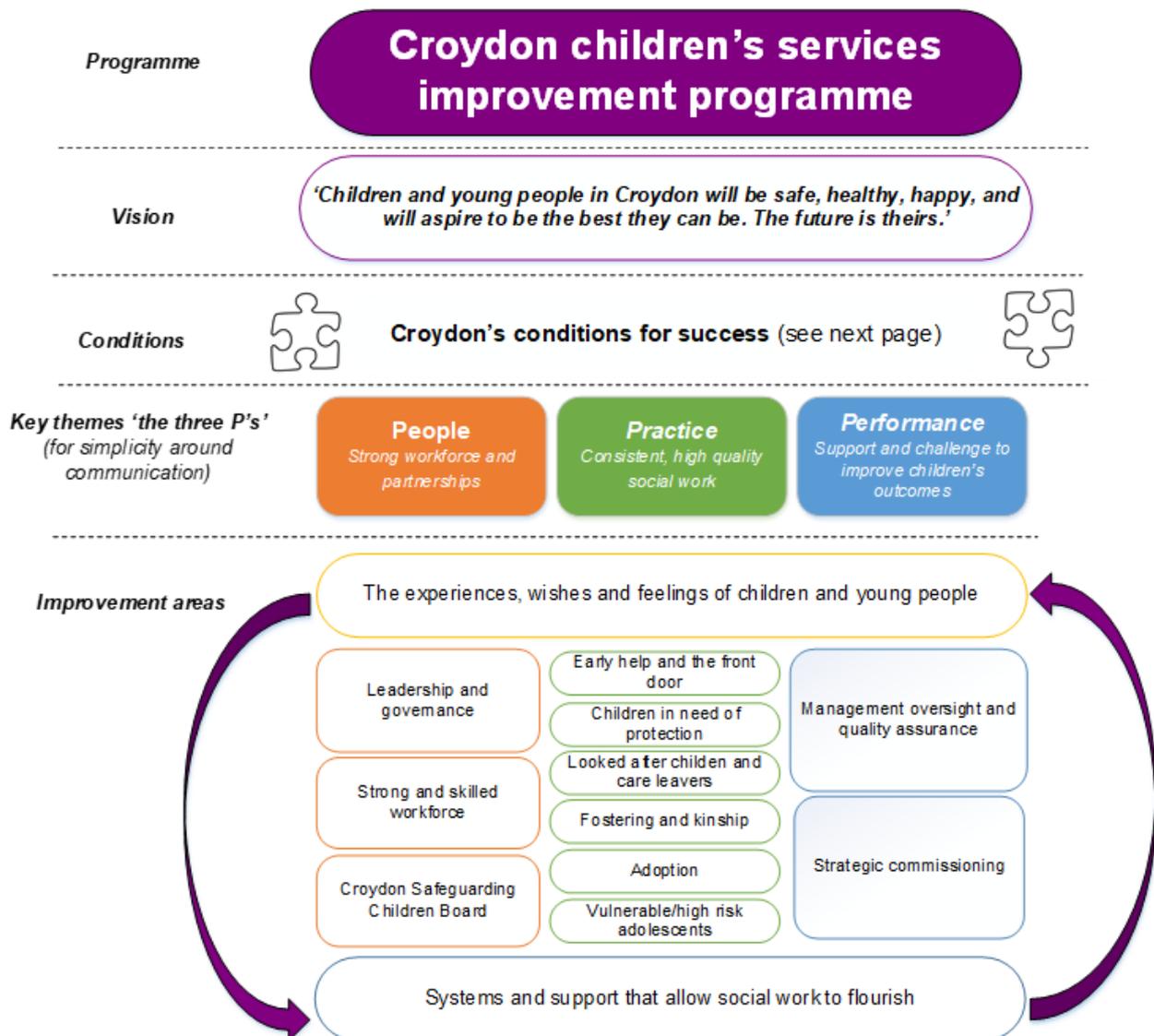
4. DEVELOPING THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 4.1 The Children's Services Improvement Plan will be the single plan across the council and partners to drive improvement. The improvement programme has significant scale and complexity with work spanning across the service, corporately across the Council and with partners.
- 4.2 The key milestones which will set the pace for the design and implementation of the improvement programme and plan are as follows:



- 4.3 The improvement planning process will include engagement with staff, elected members, partners and children and young people to ensure that the plan reflects the views of all stakeholders, with ongoing engagement a key feature of the improvement programme.

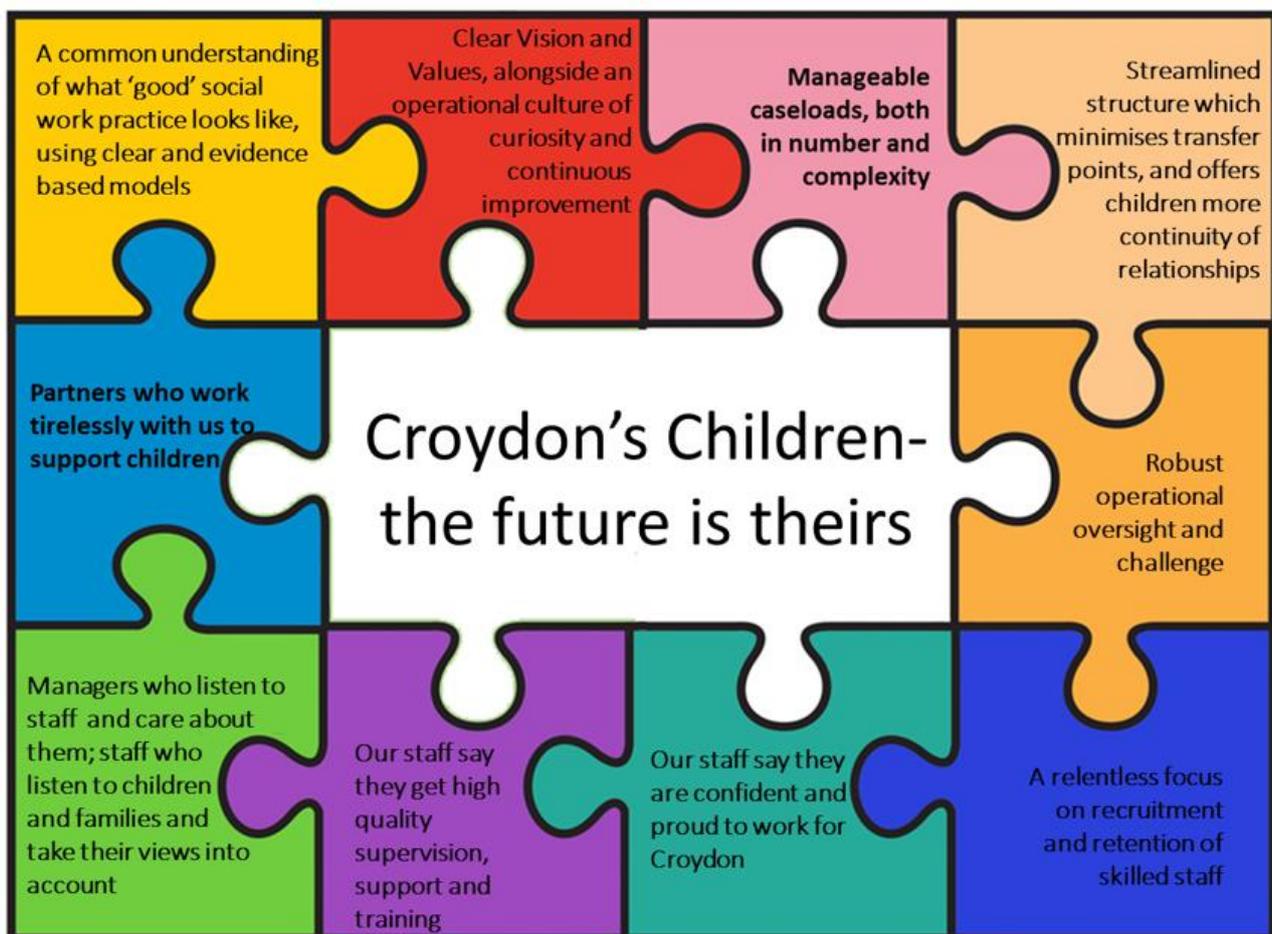
- 4.4 A Transitional Action Plan has been developed to deal with immediate priority actions that are required while the improvement programme is being developed. A copy of this plan is included at appendix 3.
- 4.5 As the improvement programme is developed, it will be submitted to Ofsted and the Department for Education for feedback in advance of the monitoring visit in November / December. As feedback is received from both Ofsted and the Department for Education, the plan will be updated to reflect the latest requirements.
- 4.6 A draft improvement framework has been developed to enable the council to both provide strategic focus to the delivery of the improvement programme and communicate its overall approach, vision and key messages. The draft framework is as follows:



4.7 There are a number of component parts which make up the draft children's improvement framework:

- The vision; the council's current strategic vision for children's services; *'Children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy, happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs'*.
- Croydon's conditions for success; developed in response to initial feedback from Ofsted inspectors, in consultation with senior council officers, and children's social care staff. These will be a public commitment to our staff and will support the work moving forward.
- Key themes; a set of simple strategic themes, 'the three P's' (people, practice and performance) that could be used to support communication with front-line staff and partners
- Initial improvement areas; based on Ofsted's recommendations and recurring comments throughout the draft report. These will be developed into a set of key priorities.

4.8 The conditions for success have been identified as follows:



4.9 As the Improvement Programme is being developed, so too will a programme of 'deep dives' for the improvement board to focus on specific areas of the service for

improvement. The Sub-Committee will need to develop its work programme to reflect the emerging programme of deep dives, to allow the sub-committee to scrutinise the deep dive areas for improvement and contribute to those reviews.

5. DRAFT IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- 5.1 An initial set of draft improvement areas has been developed that will provide a start to shaping the structure to the delivery of the improvement programme.
- 5.2 From this initial list, a set of priorities will be developed and agreed, through the engagement and feedback with key staff, elected members and other stakeholders
- 5.3 The draft improvement areas are:
- i. Leadership and governance
 - ii. The experiences, wishes and feelings of children and young people
 - iii. Management oversight and quality assurance
 - iv. Strong and skilled workforce
 - v. Systems and support that allow social work to flourish
 - vi. Croydon Safeguarding Children Board; a partnership response
 - vii. Strengthening early help and the front door
 - viii. Supporting children in need of protection
 - ix. Improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers
 - x. Improving fostering and kinship
 - xi. Strengthening adoption services
 - xii. Protecting vulnerable and high risk adolescents
 - xiii. Strengthening strategic commissioning

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Sub-Committee is asked to:
- i) Note that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, at its meeting on 5 September 2017, agreed to lead on scrutinising the progress of the overarching improvement plan and that each Children and Young People's Scrutiny Meeting will have a standing item to focus on a key theme in the Improvement Plan;
 - ii) Note the terms of reference of the Improvement Board and scrutinise the approach to the development of the improvement plan;
 - iii) Scrutinise the content of the Transitional Action Plan; and
 - iv) Note that a programme of 'deep dives' will be developed by the Improvement Board and agree that the work programme for the Sub-Committee be amended to enable Scrutiny involvement in those 'deep dives' when it becomes available.

CONTACT OFFICER: Stephen Rowan, Head of Democratic Services & Scrutiny

Background papers: There are no unpublished background papers to this report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1. Inspection Report, including the review of the effectiveness of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board

Appendix 2. Improvement Board Terms of Reference

Appendix 3. Transitional Action Plan