

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People & Families  
Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director Children's Services

**PORTFOLIO:** Children and Young People

**SUBJECT:** Children's Social Care Update

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 Members of the Board to receive a presentation on an update of the work undertaken to date following the Ofsted Focused Visit which took place in 13 and 14 October 2021 and the subsequent actions taken in response to their findings.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members of the Board:**

- i) Note the steps that have been taken and the role of the Children's Improvement Board;**
- ii) Moving forward the key priorities and actions outlined in the Children's Improvement Plan**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Halton received a Focused Visit from Ofsted to its Children's Services department in October 2021. Inspectors looked at the arrangements for children in need, including those who are subject to a child protection plan.

3.2 In their report Ofsted made several recommendations identified as 'areas of priority action'. These included:

- The quality of assessments, so they are child focused and use history to inform an understanding of children's experiences and decision making;
- The quality of plans and planning, to support a timely, multi-agency response, including decisive escalation to pre-proceedings when children's circumstances do not improve;
- The quality assurance of social work practice.

- 3.3 Since then, steps have been taken to make improvements to the Service overseen by a Children's Improvement Board with regular reporting arrangements to the Department for Education.
- 3.4 On 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November Ofsted conducted a Focused Visit on our front door arrangements, including how we respond to contacts, referrals, strategy discussions and child protection processes.
- 3.5 The letter was published on 13<sup>th</sup> January and whilst this is not a judgment inspection, it does form part of the system that monitors local authority progress.
- 3.6 The inspection provided further external validation of the work we have done to date. Although, we now these is a lot more to do we do appear to be doing the right things and given us confidence in moving forward with our plans to improve.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None identified.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None identified.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

Having a strong and robust framework for identifying and responding across all agencies is the key to ensuring that children and young people are safe and protected, and partners are clear about their responsibilities and role in working together.

##### **6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None identified.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Children and young people whose health needs and level of development is potentially compromised are identified early and multi-agency support is in place to support them.

##### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Children who are at risk of harm are identified quickly and services work together to minimise the risk of harm and take action to formally protect children in a timely way.

## **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 All key stakeholders are committed to working together to ensure a robust and consistent approach to protect children in Halton.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Issues arising from a child's equality and diversity needs will inform the decision-making at the point of contact and it will be ensured that the voice of the child is to the forefront.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.