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| <b>Item No.</b><br>9.              | <b>Classification:</b><br>Open | <b>Date:</b><br>18 July 2017                    | <b>Meeting Name:</b><br>Cabinet |
| <b>Report title:</b>               |                                | Ofsted Inspection Report March 2017             |                                 |
| <b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b> |                                | All   |                                 |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>             |                                | Councillor Victoria Mills, Children and Schools |                                 |

## **FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR VICTORIA MILLS, CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS**

Southwark Council's services for children and families are good. These services are absolutely vital for our most vulnerable young people and their families are ones that the council and partners have strived to protect and improve in the face of growing demand and reducing budgets. We should be rightly proud that our recent Ofsted inspection recognises the monumental efforts of our social workers, foster carers, adopters, and all of those who work tirelessly for the protection, and the futures of the borough's children and young people.

Ofsted was particularly impressed with the council's adoption services which they found to be "outstanding" with well-trained social workers credited for supporting and preparing children for adoption, while prospective adopters benefit from high-quality training and post-adoption support. Ofsted also particularly commended the council's strong work helping young people who face particular difficulties, such as those at the risk of female genital mutilation, honour-based violence, child sexual exploitation, involvement with gangs and knife crime or homelessness.

The council's work with looked after children and care leavers still requires improvement. However, I am confident that the work to improve these services continues at pace and a clear and effective action plan will return to cabinet in September.

We all have a part to play in being ambitious for children and this report makes clear the commitment and leadership in Southwark to ensure every child is protected from harm and every young person is set on the path to achievement, fulfilment and happiness.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Cabinet notes the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate, Ofsted, of its inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.
2. That Cabinet requests the post inspection action plan returns to cabinet in September prior to its submission to Ofsted.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3. This inspection took place between 6 and 30 March 2017. It was published on 13 June 2017. The last such inspection took place around 5 years ago in May 2012.
4. Her Majesty's Inspectorate conducted this inspection under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. They focused on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, the experiences

and progress of children looked after, including adoption, fostering, the use of residential care, and children who return home. They also focused on the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after and the experiences and progress of care leavers. The leadership, management and governance judgement addresses the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people and the quality of professional practice locally.

5. The inspection was announced at short notice on Monday 5 March 2017, the following day a team of inspectors arrived in Southwark and commenced the inspection over the following 4 weeks. The final day the inspectors were in Southwark was Thursday 30 March 2017.
6. Within 70 working days of the publication date of the Inspection Report (13 June 2017), the Council is required to submit copies of its post inspection action plan to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007). The last date for submission of this will be 20 September 2017.

### KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. The council achieved an **overall effectiveness** judgement of good. This is a cumulative judgement derived from key judgements set out below.

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| <b>Children's services in Southwark are good</b>      |                      |
| <b>Children who need help and protection</b>          | Good                 |
| <b>Children looked after and achieving permanence</b> | Requires improvement |
| 2.1 Adoption performance                              | Outstanding          |
| 2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers          | Requires improvement |
| <b>Leadership, management and governance</b>          | Good                 |

8. Of the 136 local authorities who have been inspected results published thus far under this inspection framework, Southwark is in the top 30% who have received an overall judgement of good or outstanding. Southwark is in the top 7% for outstanding Adoption Services alongside 8 others.
9. Of particular note the inspection found when children need protecting, responses are quick. It found that Southwark is very good at helping young people who face particular difficulties, such as the risk of female genital mutilation, honour based violence and involvement with gangs and knife crime. It found that private fostering arrangements are highly effective and that work with children at risk of child sexual exploitation is reducing levels of risk for many children. The inspection praised sensitive community engagement with at-risk communities and social workers addressing cultural sensitivities carefully, while remaining risk and child focused.
10. The inspection report also made clear the strong culture of ensuring children and young people are at the heart of all services. Inspectors said that young people consistently told them that they feel valued and respected at regular forums, which

encourage them to put forward their ideas. They described this ingrained participation as “a real strength in the local authority” and noted “political leadership in the local authority demonstrates ambition for vulnerable children”. It noted the development of innovative services, informed by children’s participation and involvement and makes clear the strength of the engagement across health, schools, the voluntary sector and all the many agencies that work in partnership to keep children safe in Southwark.

11. The post inspection action plan is currently being developed. It builds on the council’s comprehensive understanding of the complex needs of the community that the inspection recognised, and the plans already in place to address areas of practice not consistently strong. The inspection recognised managers and local politicians are very determined to continue to improve services. It is anticipated a draft version of the post inspection action plan will be available in July with a final version agreed in early September 2017.
12. The services for children who need help and protection are good and need continuing support and development to remain so. Plans are continuing to develop to:
  - strengthen our approach to long term neglect through continuing to strengthen and develop our practice model informed by a more in depth study of young children who remain on child protection plans over a year.
  - work with partner agencies to improve referral information through building on the successful improvements in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) over the last 8 months.
  - ensure strategy meetings involve all relevant agencies through better use of technology for example conference calls, to ensure wider participation, as well as greater use of partners in the MASH.
13. The services for children in care and care leavers require particular attention over the next 12 to 24 months to improve. Plans are continuing to develop to:
  - improve the quality of return home interviews to reduce recurrence of missing episodes, through ceasing of the current model of contracted arrangements and development of a more fit for purpose in house service.
  - strengthen the management oversight of social workers, through consolidation of management to a permanent workforce, learning from effective arrangements in other services including the introduction of a Support and Challenge, based on an effective approach in Safeguarding and Family Support Services.
  - ensure the sufficiency strategy and effective commissioning provides a better supply of high quality placements through renewing the sufficiency strategy particularly around provision of accommodation for young people of 16 years and older, work that is familiar to Corporate Parenting Committee.
  - ensure Care Plans are more effectively considering how needs are met within placements through strengthening the approach to making initial placements, rolling out the secure base model through the Care Service, as well as move to

a more stable and better quality workforce to enable more focus on practice to consider how the needs of children are being met.

- ensure that children looked after achieve more timely permanence decisions for long term foster care through building on the success of practice and processes that developed this so successfully in adoption.
14. More work is needed to develop plans around equality of service provision for out of borough placements, as some of these services are not directly in the control or influence of the council, especially when young people move into such places in crisis.
  15. Plans to improve services to care leavers are being actively developed through the partnership with Catch 22 about which the Corporate Parenting Committee is familiar in general, and will be subject to more detailed reporting to the Committee.
  16. The performance of the adoption service is outstanding. This is a credit to many across the Children's Services, from Assessment and Intervention, Safeguarding and Family Support Services, as well as Fostering and Children in Care Services. Health and Education Services have also made a tremendous contribution to this well deserved recognition of outstanding performance.

#### **Community impact statement**

17. This inspection shows that the council is effectively safeguarding children and young people in the community. Overall the impact of this on the community must be judged as good. The inspection recognised that arrangements for those that go missing are effective. It recognised that work with those at risk of child sexual exploitation is effective, reducing risk for many. It recognised that engagement with young women and girls at risk of exposure to female genital mutilation is very strong. It commended the work of the Pause Project, aimed at some of the most vulnerable women within our community.

#### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

| <b>Background Papers</b> | <b>Held At</b> | <b>Contact</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| None.                    |                |                |

#### **APPENDICES**

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Title</b>   |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | London Borough of Southwark Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers (circulated separately) |

## AUDIT TRAIL

|   |   |                          |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| <b>Cabinet Member</b>   | Councillor Victoria Mills, Children and Schools |                          |
| <b>Lead Officer</b>   | Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families |                          |
| <b>Report Author</b>  | Alasdair Smith, Director, Children and Families |                          |
| <b>Version</b>  | Final   |                          |
| <b>Dated</b>  | 7 July 2017                                     |                          |
| <b>Key Decision?</b>  | No  |                          |
| <b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b> |   |                          |
| <b>Officer Title</b>  | <b>Comments sought</b>                          | <b>Comments included</b> |
| Director of Law and Democracy   | No  | No                       |
| Strategic Director of Finance and Governance                            | No  | No                       |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b>   | No  | No                       |
| <b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>                    | 7 July 2017                                     |                          |