

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	12 th November 2019
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen City Joint Inspection Report
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/19/408
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CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
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TERMS OF REFERENCE	2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To share the report - **Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People in need of Care and Protection in Aberdeen City**, published 3 September 2019, which provides the Committee with independent external assurance as a result of Inspectorate's independent examination of the systems, processes and practices in place across the multi agency partnership.

To remind the committee of the work being undertaken across Children's Services, and how, in our view, the associated actions arising from this inspection are already included in existing strategic improvement plans such as our LOIP, our Child Protection Improvement Plan and our Corporate Parenting Action Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 notes the findings of the 'Report of a joint inspection of services for children and young people in need of care and protection in Aberdeen' – September 2019 (Appendix A).
- 2.2 notes that the Community Planning Partnership is required to prepare a plan detailing the action it intends to take in response to the Inspection Report within 6 weeks of its publication, has submitted this action plan to the Care Inspectorate and that this action plan be shared with Members via a Service Update.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Care Inspectorate are independent regulators who lead joint strategic inspections of services for children and young people in need of care and protection across Scotland.

3.1.1 In discharging their regulatory and scrutiny functions the Care Inspectorate works in partnership with Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS), Education Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) to independently undertake strategic inspections to determine the effectiveness of community planning partnerships to improve the lives of children and young people in need of care and protection and for whom community planning partnerships have corporate parenting responsibilities.

3.1.2 The role of the Care Inspectorate is to ensure that existing strategic improvement plans accurately reflect areas where improvement is required.

3.1.3 This included scrutiny of the Child Protection Improvement Plan, which is an iterative plan which is also in front of committee today.

3.1.4 Following a Scottish Government Review into child protection in 2017, a recommendation was made to review the method for strategic inspection of children's services.

3.1.5 As a result of this, the Care Inspectorate introduced a new methodology in July 2018 and Aberdeen City was the 4th Authority to be inspected under this new format.

3.1.6 Where previous inspections looked at all services delivered to children, the new methodology focusses on services that aim to care and protect children. As a result of this, it is difficult to make exact comparisons between this and the previous inspection undertaken in 2014/2015.

3.2 Work to prepare for inspection commenced across the partnership in Autumn 2018, with this focussing on evaluating the quality of services which were being provided to children and their families. As a result, partners were well placed to respond with evidence of our self-evaluation activity, when notice was served on the partnership regarding the inspection, on 22.12.18

3.3 A variety of types of activity took place to prepare staff across the partnership in advance of the inspectors arriving on site, including:

- 7 Community Planning Partnership briefings issued between Oct 2018 – March 2019
- 2 critical friend sessions
- 2 Chief Officer Group Sessions
- 2 Multi agency partnership events for all staff
- Weekly project team meetings

3.4 Direct inspection activity from the Care Inspectorate took place between January and May 2019 and encompassed interrogating information via a variety of fora including:

- Detailed inspection of 105 files of the most vulnerable children and young people in the City, selected at random by the Care Inspectorate
- Observation of a range of different types of meetings (5) held in respect of children where multi agency planning has been necessary
- Interviews with a large number of staff from across the partnership, individually or in larger focus groups (between 40 and 50)
- Reviewing a wide range of documents and joint self-evaluation materials provided by the partnership (300+)
- Meeting directly with children and young people (70) and their parents (36),
- Analysing the responses from surveys completed by children, young people, parents and carers (117)
- Analysing the responses from the survey of 718 staff from across the partnership (84% response rate)

3.5 The Care Inspectorate through their inspection seeks to determine the effectiveness of the partnership against five questions:

- i. How good is the partnership at recognising and responding when children and young people need protection?
- ii. How good is the partnership at helping children and young people who have experienced abuse and neglect stay safe, healthy and well and recover from their experiences?
- iii. How good is the partnership at maximising the wellbeing of children and young people who are looked after?
- iv. How good is the partnership at enabling care experienced young people to succeed in their transition to adulthood?
- v. How good is collaborative leadership?

3.6 The Care Inspectorate then evaluated the partnership against four indicators:

- i. Leadership and direction
- ii. Impact on families
- iii. Impact on children and young people
- iv. Improvements in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people.

For each of these indicators the partnership was evaluated as '**Good**'. The grading scale is Unsatisfactory; Weak; Adequate; Good; Very Good and Excellent. The improved gradings reflects well on the efforts of staff across the partnership to care for and protect our most vulnerable children.

3.7 The following key strengths were identified within the Report:

- i. The quality and stability of the care provided by staff working with children and young people with an emphasis on building on strengths in families.
- ii. The robustness of multi-agency pre-birth assessment and planning processes and the early stage help these provide to vulnerable women and their unborn babies.
- iii. Staff recognition of signs of risk, effective information-sharing processes and responses to threats of significant harm.
- iv. The wide range of universal and targeted support services helping children, young people and their families to recover from cases of abuse and neglect.
- v. The effectiveness of joint working and the collaborative approach, vision, values and aims promoted by leaders.

3.8 The Report notes the following priority areas for improvement:

- i. Strategic oversight of corporate parenting was not as robust as that for child protection.
- ii. There were limitations in outcomes data with which the partners were able to demonstrate improving trends for looked after children and young people, particularly those looked after at home and care leavers.
- iii. Children and young people in need of care and protection were not benefitting from timeous assessments of their health needs while there were also gaps in some services in terms of addressing emotional health and well-being.

3.9 The draft report with gradings was shared with the Chief Officers Group (COG), who met with the inspection team. In response to this meeting, COG elected to follow the CI appeal process in relation to the evaluation scores for ***Impact of Services on Children and Young People*** and on ***Leadership and Direction***. Communication was subsequently received from the CI advising that we had been unsuccessful in our appeal. The Care Inspectorate recognised within their Report that the partnership's self-evaluation demonstrated a clear and thorough evaluation of itself. Given the fact that the Care Inspectorate did not identify any significant or new areas of improvement, it is disappointing that at least one Very Good grade was not awarded. However, feedback from the Care Inspectors indicates that the partnership is well on its way to achieving higher gradings and our existing improvement plans will hopefully achieve such in future inspections.

3.10 Gradings as awarded to the four local authorities who have undergone strategic inspection under Care Inspectorate's new methodology as follows:

Local Authority	Indicator 9 ¹	Indicator 2.2 ²	Indicator 2.1 ³	Indicator 1.1 ⁴
Aberdeen City	Good	Good	Good	Good
Argyll & Bute	Good	Good	Good	Adequate
City of Edinburgh	Good	Good	Very Good	Adequate
Fife	Good	Good	Good	Good

¹ 9 Leadership and direction

² 2.2 Impact on families

³ 2.1 Impact on children and young people

⁴ 1.1 Improvements in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people

3.11 Areas for improvement and development cited by the Care Inspectorate had already been identified by the Community Planning Partnership within existing strategic planning documents (the LOIP, the Child Protection Improvement Plan and the Corporate Parenting Action Plan), a fact that is recognised within the Care Inspectorate's Report. As a result, we are confident that our strategic documents address the points raised by the Care Inspectorate hence no separate documents will require to be compiled. Committee Members will be provided with a copy of this agreed action plan as taken from our existing documentation, via a Service Update once this has been agreed by the Community Planning Partnership and the Chief Officers Group.

3.12 In light of this positive inspection from the Care Inspectorate there will be no follow up inspection. The next inspection of Children's Services is therefore unlikely to be for another three years.

3.13 In line with our continuous improvement agenda, a **lessons learned** workshop was held across the partnership, to consider what elements of our inspection preparation we would wish to develop in advance of future inspections. Feedback from this was fed back to the Adult Protection Committee, to inform their respective inspection preparation.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Care Inspectorate are responsible for the scrutiny of children's services as set out in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, and therefore Aberdeen City Council in conjunction with the partnership fulfils its statutory responsibilities by participating in Inspection activity.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	Officer time will not be dedicated to the progression of inspection findings.	L	The implications of Inspection findings are commensurate with the ongoing learning and development approaches

			already embedded in child care and protection work across the city on a multi-agency basis.
Legal	We have statutory responsibilities to children, young people and their families in Aberdeen which if we failed to adhere to would render us in breach of these.	L	This Inspection Report has evaluated services for children and young people in Aberdeen as good in all four focus areas. They conclude that they have confidence in our continual improvement and scope to address the areas requiring improvement.
Employee	Officer time is not afforded to retain current standards of practice and to progress areas for development	L	The multi-agency nature of work to support children, young people and their families already relies on a collaborative approach where continual improvement and learning has been embedded. This work is shaped via the Chief Officer's Group, and the strategic plans in place, in line with stretch aims contained in the LOIP.
Customer	Required improvements and areas for development in practice are not actioned.	L	<p>Actions in line with Inspection Findings had already been identified within Aberdeen City's self evaluation hence work to make improvement is already underway.</p> <p>Children, young people and their families in Aberdeen can be assured that services in Aberdeen City are subject to continual quality assurance, in line with the Child Protection Improvement Programme, the Corporate Parenting Strategy, in line with this years' refreshed LOIP.</p>

Environment	<p>Quality of care establishments for children who are required to be accommodated away from their families might become compromised.</p> <p>Working environments may become compromised for staff and for children, young people and their families.</p>	L	<p>The culture and ethos afforded within our residential establishments has been recognised as positive as was intervention with children, young people and their families due to embedding of strength-based practice and our relational approaches, within the Inspection Report.</p>
Technology	<p>If we do not continue to progress our use of advances in technology we will fail to sustain our improvements.</p>	L	<p>Use of improved data collation was recognised within the Inspection Report. We are collaborating across the partnership as well as using microsoft cloud to mitigate against this risk.</p>
Reputational	<p>Findings of Inspection Reports in relation to Child Care and Protection can bring significant media interest and scrutiny of services delivered to children and young people in Aberdeen.</p>	L	<p>The public can be assured by the fact that this inspection report has graded child care and protection services as 'good' across all areas, showing marked improvement since the period of the last inspection carried out in 2015.</p> <p>Aberdeen City Council ensures compliance with action plans following inspection findings, as well as with legal requirements, national standards and guidance; partners respond to self and external scrutiny; and identified areas for improvement are addressed.</p>

7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	No significant impact.
Prosperous People	<p>This Inspection Report acknowledges the role that the Chief Officers Group and the Child Protection Committee play in supporting and assuring that the multi-agency partnership in Aberdeen City delivers on the outcomes of the LOIP – Prosperous People – Children are our Future and that they have the ‘best start in life,’ they are ‘safe and responsible’ and that they are ‘protected from harm.’</p> <p>Children who are protected from threats to their health, safety and economic wellbeing are more likely to prosper than those who are not.</p>
Prosperous Place	Recognition has been given to the benefits to maximising scope for children to remain within their own communities and work to this effect is recognised in the Inspection Report.

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	The service is in process of redesigning in line with Target Operating Model. Findings of the Inspection Report will be taken into consideration.
Organisational Design	The service is in the process of redesigning in line with Target Operating Model. Findings of the Inspection Report will be taken into consideration.
Governance	<p>Appropriate oversight of services delivering public protection provides assurance to both the organisation and the public in terms of meeting the council’s statutory duties and contributes to compliance with agreed standards.</p> <p>The partnership’s joint action plan activity will be supported via the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Child Protection Committee under the endorsement of the Chief Officers’ Group.</p>

Workforce	Through Aberdeen City's Performance and Quality Assurance Sub Committee to the Child Protection Committee, a shared learning approach is adopted, to ensure staff across the partnership are appropriately supported via workshops and training events to understand the range and complexity of child care and protection issues both locally and nationally and this is recognised within the Care Inspectorate Report.
Process Design	n/a
Technology	We will continue to utilise emerging technology, such as the Mind of My Own app, a means of gathering views of young people through a medium and at a time most suitable to their needs, in order to improve quality and efficiency of services.
Partnerships and Alliances	The scope of the inspection spanned all services to children and their families within Aberdeen City, and hence the partnership must acknowledge the strengths identified as well as ensuring compliance with identified areas for improvement.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	S 1,8,9 complete and sent to the Equalities Team.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Not required.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES (if applicable)

Appendix A - Joint Inspection Report for Children and Young People in need of care and protection in Aberdeen.

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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