

**Meeting date:** 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**Report to:** Audit Committee

**Report title:** Childrens Services Improvement Plan Update

**Report from:** Pete Campbell – Director of Childrens Services

**Report author/lead contact officer:** Carol Douch – Assistant Director Improvement, Childrens Services

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**Wards affected:**

- All Wards |  Bickenhill |  Blythe |  Castle Bromwich |  Chelmsley Wood |  
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath |  Elmdon |  Kingshurst/Fordbridge |  Knowle |  
 Lyndon |  Meriden |  Olton |  Shirley East |  Shirley South |  
 Shirley West |  Silhill |  Smith's Wood |  St Alphege
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**Public/private report:** Public

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**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Audit Committee with an update in relation to the Children's Services Improvement Plan.
- 1.2 As a result of having services graded Inadequate by Ofsted, Children's Social Care are required to create an improvement plan that responds to the issues raised by Ofsted. This plan is being formed, and the next stage is for a meeting with Ofsted to discuss and agree the content of the plan. Following this the plan can be formally sent to Ofsted and shared more publicly.
- 1.3 Typically, Inadequate authorities are inspected by Ofsted again 2.5 years after the Inadequate inspection. During this period there are a number of monitoring visits (between 6 - 8) by inspectors to review progress and improvement.

**2. Decision(s) Recommended**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the below matters for consideration regarding the Improvement Plan.

### 3. **Matters for Consideration**

- 3.1 On 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022, the Local Authority received official notification from Ofsted that they would be subject to a 'Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services' (ILACS) Inspection. Following a comprehensive 2-week inspection, inspectors gave their formal feedback and provisional judgement to the Children's Senior Management Team and Senior Leads on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022.
- 3.2 On 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023, Ofsted published their final report which found the overall effectiveness of services to children and families in Solihull to be 'Inadequate'.
- 3.3 As a consequence of being rated 'Inadequate', the Authority is required to produce and share an action plan with Ofsted which addresses the recommendations and findings from the report. Over the next two years or so the Authority will be subject to regular monitoring visits from Ofsted which will assess the level of improvement made.
- 3.4 As per the Ofsted ILACS Framework issued in December 2022, an action planning visit is required to be undertaken between Ofsted and the Local Authority within 30 working days of the final inspection report being issued.
- 3.5 The purpose of this action planning meeting is:
- Clarify the roles, responsibilities and activities of Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE)
  - Help the local authority and its partners understand the inspection findings so that they can develop an action plan
  - Set out the implications for statutory partners, including those included in the local strategic safeguarding arrangements
  - Discuss the draft action plan
  - Confirm the calendar month of the first monitoring visit and establish the pattern of future monitoring activity
  - Agree the focus of the first monitoring visit and any subsequent monitoring visits
- 3.6 The action planning meeting with Ofsted has not yet taken place, therefore we cannot share our draft improvement plan publicly with the Audit Committee at the time of writing.
- 3.7 Meanwhile, the Children's Services Senior Management team have been proactively working to create an Ofsted improvement action plan which appropriately addresses each of the recommendations from Ofsted's report.
- 3.8 Priority areas of action have also been determined, which cover Partnerships, Leadership & Governance, Workforce, and Quality of Practice.
- 3.9 The draft improvement plan comprises of 10 sections which correlate to each of the 9 Ofsted recommendations and priority action areas; with each section containing a series of aims and actions which specify the improvement activity required. The tenth section focusses on Early Help.
- 3.10 To complement the improvement plan, an improvement programme of work is also being developed by the Assistant Director for Improvement which consists of 13 projects

which aim to deliver the improvement specified per our overall priorities.

3.11 These proposed projects cover:

- Workforce
- Governance for Improvement
- MASH & Emergency Duty Team (EDT)
- Early Help / Targeted Early Help
- Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP)
- Placement Sufficiency - Children's homes and Fostering
- Early Permanence-PLO/ Agency Decision Making (ADM)
- Quality Assurance & Performance Management
- LCS System
- Youth Justice and Exploitation Hub
- SEND agenda
- Edges of care
- Corporate Parenting - Transforming the children in care and care experienced offer

3.12 Work is currently underway to scope the deliverables for these projects and to seek funding for a project team to be assembled to deliver these key pieces of work.

3.13 Service leads are also creating their own respective actions plans which cover the operational service areas, and these link into the priority action areas outlined within the Ofsted improvement plan.

3.14 In addition, a Partnership Improvement plan is also being devised which will focus on those areas of improvement which cover the multi-agency areas of service delivery. This plan is to be owned by the Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership.

3.15 Following the Statutory Improvement Notice being issued to the Local Authority on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022, Sir Alan Wood joined the Authority as the Department for Education's appointed Commissioner for Children's Services.

3.16 Sir Alan furnished his report to the Secretary of State for Education in February 2023 providing recommendation to whether Children's Services has the capacity and wherewithal to improve and deliver a good standard of services within an acceptable timescale. The SoS response to the recommendations of Sir Alan is expected in early March.

3.17 Pending the outcome of Sir Alans report, a new Improvement Board will also be setup which will focus on the improvement directly attributable to the Local Authority; with the Solihull Childrens Safeguarding Partnership operating in a similar function to oversee the Partnership improvement plan.

3.18 Any feedback or recommendations arising from Sir Alan's report will also be streamlined into the improvement plan where necessary.

4. **What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

4.1 N/A as this is an update report, outlining the progress of improvement activity undertaken by Childrens Services in relation to the Ofsted ILCAS report.

5. **Reasons for recommending preferred option**

5.1 N/A as this is an update report, rather than recommending new proposals.

6. **Implications and Considerations**

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.</li> <li>2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.</li> <li>3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>4. Enable communities to thrive.</li> </ol>	<p>By taking the robust action as identified within the improvement plan, outcomes for our most vulnerable children, young people and their families will be improved. This will enable children and families to access a variety of services and provision to ensure they receive the right support in a timely way</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres.</li> <li>6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.</li> <li>7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.</li> </ol>	<p>The development of our multi agency response to children and families who are at risk/in need across the borough will improve outcomes for those who are vulnerable as well as our wider communities. Investment in families and children will contribute to healthy and thriving communities with effective support structures.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.</li> </ol>	<p>NA</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Promote employee wellbeing</li> </ol>	<p>NA</p>

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 The Ofsted Improvement Plan and subsequent improvement activity will be monitored via regular monitoring visits conducted by Ofsted, as well as regular meetings with the

Department for Education. Outcomes will be monitored through the Ofsted inspection framework.

### 6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) implications of the improvement journey was last reported to Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023. On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 Council approved final decision making on the 2023/24 budget strategy, incorporating the Children's MTFS improvement requirements.

6.3.2 Action to improve the quality of Children's Services has required significant expenditure investment in 2022/23 and will require significant investment going forward. The approved MTFS includes an allocation of £9.7 million for 2023/24, £9.9 million for 2024/25 and £8.5 million for 2025/26 and on-going.

### 6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1 In May 2022, we responded to the findings of the JTAI by submitting our Statement of Action to Ofsted.

6.4.2 In January 2023, Ofsted published their inspection report which found the overall effectiveness of services to children and families in Solihull to be inadequate. The Authority will be required to submit an action plan to Ofsted.

### 6.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

6.5.1 Risks identified due to inspection and improvement activity will be reflected within risk registers. These will be revised accordingly and managed within current processes

### 6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1 The improvement plan will actively seek to reduce inequality and improve outcomes for vulnerable children, young people, and their families within the borough. Service leads will also ensure that equality concerns are considered within their own respective service plans.

6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

6.7.1 Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS) are a key partner in delivering our services to children, young people, and families.

## 7. **List of appendices referred to**

7.1 NA

## 8. **Background papers used to compile this report**

8.1 NA

9. **List of Other Relevant Documents**

9.1 NA