

For General Release

REPORT TO:	Cabinet 10 October 2016
AGENDA ITEM:	8
SUBJECT:	Joint Targeted Area Inspection
LEAD OFFICER:	Barbara Peacock, Executive Director, People Ian Lewis, Director Children's Social Care
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People Families and Learning
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT / AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON The recommendations address the following Corporate Plan 2015-18 priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growth, creating growth in our economy;• Independence, helping residents to be as independent as possible;• Liveability, creating a welcoming, pleasant place in which local people want to live. The Independence and Liveability Strategies 2015-18 set out how the Council will achieve the commitments made in the administration's 'Ambitious for Croydon' election manifesto in respect of independence and liveability. The Independence Strategy sets out how the Council's vision for maximising the life chances and outcomes for everyone in Croydon. This includes a partnership approach to ensure children and vulnerable adults are protected from harm, abuse and exploitation through effective and efficient safeguarding processes and procedures. The Liveability Strategy sets out how the Council will achieve the Liveability strategic priority to create a welcoming, pleasant place in which local people want to live.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT There are no financial considerations with this report.	
FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO. This is not a key executive decision.	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below.

This report is to update the Cabinet on the findings of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in the London Borough of Croydon. This inspection focused on a 'deep dive' around the multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and those missing from home, care or education.

It will also update Cabinet on the actions that have been taken following the inspection to and to respond to the inspection findings.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to:

- 1.1 Note the feedback from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection, the action taken to date and the improvement plan that has been developed.
- 1.2 Recommend that a report is taken to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee in 6 months to review the progress made on implementing the improvement plan and to report on the outcome of the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF) if undertaken within this timeframe.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Between 16 May and 20 May, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) undertook a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in the London Borough of Croydon.
- 2.2 This multi-agency inspection seeks to establish the quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision making in response to notifications and referrals; the partnership response to all forms of child abuse, neglect and exploitation at the point of identification and the leadership and management of this work, including the Local Safeguarding Board (LSCB). Each JTAI includes a 'deep dive' theme, which is currently child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing from care, home or education. The inspection also covered the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).
- 2.3 The JTAs do not give an overall judgement as with the Single Inspection Frameworks (SIF); instead they provide a narrative on partnership effectiveness. Croydon's report, which was published on 29 June 2016, highlights a number of strengths in relation to tackling child sexual exploitation and children missing from home, care and education, ensuring the borough's most vulnerable children are protected. It also contains a number of areas for improvement which we are addressing with statutory partners through a Joint Improvement Plan, which is submitted to Ofsted.

- 2.4 The Council has set up a Children's Improvement Board, chaired by the Executive Director of People Services, to progress the actions needed and to provide longer term strategic oversight for overall performance improvement within the Councils services. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning is also a Member of the Board, providing political responsibility for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of local authority children's services.
- 2.5 Council members have made a significant commitment to meeting their corporate responsibilities to promote safeguarding for children. Members across the Council have undertaken training on safeguarding and on their responsibilities as corporate parents for children who are looked after. A clear example of this was to convene a Council Congress, supported through the Local Strategic Partnership, regarding Child Sexual Exploitation. The Congress brought together key partner agencies, community, voluntary and faith groups and representatives from the private sector in Croydon as well as young people.
- 2.6 The Croydon Children's Safeguarding Board (CSCB) has a key role in overseeing the multiagency aspects of the Joint Improvement Plan. Regular reports on actions are taken to the CSB Executive, Chaired by our Independent Chair Sarah Baker and also to the full CSCB Board.
- 2.7 Ofsted will publish a single thematic report at the end of each block of six JTAI inspections outlining the findings of the 'deep dive' element of this activity; the purpose of this is to drive improvement. The first one will be published this Autumn.

3. THE INSPECTION FRAMEWORKS FOR CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE

- 3.1 The Single Inspection Framework (SIF) was launched in 2014. This looks at the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children as well as the experiences and progress of looked after children – including adoption, fostering, the use of residential care and children who return home. In addition, the inspection framework covers the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after and the experiences and progress of care leavers. Significantly, the framework looks at the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance, and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people and the quality of professional practice locally.
- 3.2 At the end of September 2016, 106 local authorities have had their SIF. This leaves 46 authorities (including Croydon) to be inspected. Ofsted have committed to assessing each local authority under the Single Inspection Framework by December 2017.
- 3.3 The SIF is not the only inspection framework currently looking at the effectiveness of care and support for children and young people. Ofsted has been working with the regulators for partner agencies: Care Quality Commission (Health services and Adult Social Care), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (Police) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (Probation and Community Rehabilitation Companies). The Joint Targeted Area

Inspections bring together all four inspectorates to identify how a partnership, as a whole is identifying and protecting vulnerable children and young people.

- 3.4 Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs) were launched by Ofsted in January 2016. These shorter, one-week inspections, drill down on a specific theme and highlight good practice as well as areas for improvement. The current scope of the JTA looks at how agencies identify and manage risk at the front door and the multi-agency response to tackling CSE and children going missing from home, school or education. Inspectors look to see how children and young people are identified, assessed and the potential risks investigated and responded to. On a broader level, the multi-agency inspection evaluates how the leadership and management prioritise local needs and are able to plan and monitor services.
- 3.5 Between February and August 2016, the inspectorates have visited six areas. At the end of July 2016, South Tyneside, Oxfordshire, Central Bedfordshire, Liverpool, and Croydon have been visited and their reports published. The JTAs do not give an overall judgement like the SIFs do; they instead focus on a narrative of partnership effectiveness.

4. THE JTA INSPECTION PROCESS

- 4.1 The Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTA), is conducted by a team of inspectors from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). The government launched the new system of inspection in February, and Croydon is amongst the first few authorities to have received one of these inspections.
- 4.2 All four inspectorates visited in May to look at how the Council, the Police, Health, Probation, Community Rehabilitation Company and Youth Offending Services are working together to identify, support and protect the borough's most vulnerable young people.
- 4.3 Inspectors spent a considerable amount of time observing the operation of the 'front door' (Croydon's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) to assess the effectiveness of practice and arrangements for identifying and managing the range of risks of harm to children and young people. Inspectors reviewed contacts and referrals to children's social care to ensure that children at risk of harm received timely identification and response.
- 4.4 Much of their work involved observing front-line practice in a range of settings, including the Police, Health and Children's Social Care, and inspectors visited services to assess the effectiveness of local services first hand. They also reviewed documents, case files and spoke directly to senior leaders in partner agencies to discuss the work they were doing to protect some of the most vulnerable children in Croydon.
- 4.5 The inspection included a 'deep dive' element, focusing on a small number of cases where children were missing from home, school or care or thought to be possibly at risk of child sexual exploitation. The Council was asked to work with

partners to evaluate the experiences of five children selected by the lead inspector. This was done to assess the overall strengths of the practice and identify areas for development.

5. OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

- 5.1 Inspectors published a joint report on 29 June 2016 which contained strengths and areas for improvement for all partners in Croydon. A summary of the findings are included below.

Overall findings

- 5.2 Inspectors' acknowledged Croydon's unique characteristics, for example, the high numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, high numbers of children placed by other local authorities in the Borough, and increasing levels of deprivation. The borough has the highest number of missing children in London, which is in part due to strong reporting alongside the features of the resident child population and the fact we have high numbers of children placed in Croydon by other Local Authorities.
- 5.3 The inspectors' overall findings included positive feedback about a number of aspects of service delivery and practice. This included recognition that all partners are working together effectively to meet the challenges of increasing demand and complexity in the local population.
- 5.4 It was also recognised that increasing demands for services are placing pressures on partners to ensure there are sufficient resources to meet the needs. In response, the commissioning of a range of voluntary sector services was seen, they were making a real difference to children and their families.
- 5.5 Inspectors' found that some aspects of multi-agency work are delivering well for children and young people. However in other areas, multi-agency and individual agency work requires improvement.

Strengths

- 5.6 An overview of some of the strengths identified in the inspection are included below:
- 5.7 The clear commitment from the Council and senior leaders across all partners to work together to support some of the most vulnerable children.
- 5.8 The Leader of the Council, Local Strategic Partnership and Local Safeguarding Children Board have prioritised CSE through a longstanding programme of work to increase awareness across the local area and strengthen the response to CSE.
- 5.9 Partners are working together effectively in many areas of practice to meet the challenges of increasing demand and complexity in Croydon.

- 5.10 Children missing and at risk of child sexual exploitation are supported by the Council through a wide range of voluntary agency specialist services, for example Safer London. This was seen to be making a real difference to children, young people and their families.
- 5.11 The work of Operation Raptor, a joint operation involved the Council, Met police and NCA was praised for its ground-breaking work in helping to combat child sexual exploitation.
- 5.12 The report singled out 'highly effective practice' by the Council in relation to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs), for example in the speed with which we find foster carers for UASCs when they present in Croydon, and in the thoroughness of age assessments.
- 5.13 The report recognised good work in health including the Case Reflection Model for GPs which allows cases to be considered in more depth and an innovative national recognised project to help protect women from female genital mutilation and to support victims in the borough.
- 5.14 The inspectors reported that the governance arrangements for the YOS are robust. There is evidence of effective management oversight of practice and, in particular, a clear focus on risk of harm to others, safeguarding and child sexual exploitation, so that YOS workers have a good understanding of risk and staff record this well.

Areas for improvement

- 5.15 The inspection also identified areas for improvement, a summary of the key areas are included below.
- 5.16 The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is experiencing high and increasing levels of demand. Inspectors found systems and capacity issues. The inconsistent application of thresholds across partners means that there is not always a timely identification and assessment of children's needs.
- 5.17 The quality of contacts received by MASH from partners is variable. The time it takes to gather further information is contributing to delays in the timeliness of the response to children.
- 5.18 The quality of front line practice in various agencies is variable, particularly in cases where the risk is less immediate.
- 5.19 The local authority, police, health and probation services undertake analyses of the known cohort of children at risk of sexual exploitation, and this is driving the development of services to meet current needs and to prevent exploitation. However, the profiling of those who offend against children is underdeveloped.
- 5.20 Senior managers across the partnership, children's services, police, and health and probation services do not currently collate and use a full enough range of management information to help steer further improvements.

- 5.21 Inspectors found that the administration of the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel (MASE) requires improvements.
- 5.22 The high number of children placed in Croydon by other boroughs presents a challenge in terms of oversight, monitoring and analysis of patterns and trends of all children missing.
- 5.23 The quality of performance data received by the LSCB requires improvement in order that the Partnership can have effective oversight of all areas of practice, in particular in respect of the front door of services.

6. RESPONDING TO THE FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

- 6.1 The Council and statutory partners are committed to responding to the findings from the inspection, ensuring effective learning from the process and the implementation of the appropriate action needed. This includes delivering on the longer term strategic actions to improve services for children in Croydon as well as the short term actions needed. Good progress has been made and will continue.
- 6.2 The Council took immediate action in relation to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Additional resources were provided to address the pressing capacity issue. An external review of the MASH has been commissioned and recommendations for strengthening the work processes have already started to be implemented. A new data set for the MASH is being developed so stronger management oversight can be in place. A manager from the service has been to visit another Local Authority that has a well functioning MASH in order to bring the learning back to Croydon to strengthen the work.
- 6.3 The CSCB Executive has taken immediate action to start talking about partner capacity in the MASH and to look at how to take forward work with all partners about thresholds and ways to improve the quality of referrals into MASH.
- 6.4 The Executive Director People will be reviewing information of children placed in Croydon by other Local Authorities and will be formally writing to other Directors of Children's Services who are placing high numbers of children.
- 6.5 The Council and statutory partners have developed a Joint Improvement Plan demonstrating the action they will be taking to respond to the findings from the inspection. This plan is submitted to Ofsted and progress will be tested when the Ofsted SIF inspection happens in the next year, i.e. before December 2017 which is the final conclusion of the Ofsted SIF programme.
- 6.6 The Council has set up a Children's Improvement Board, chaired by the Executive Director of People Services, to progress the actions needed and to provide longer term strategic oversight for overall performance improvement. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Learning is also a Member of the Board, providing political responsibility for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of local authority children's services.

6.7 The CSCB will also provide strategic oversight of the joint actions with partners which are need to deliver the plan. This will be monitored closely by the CSCB Executive.

6.8 The effective implementation of the improvement plan will be critical to achieving improvements in performance when Ofsted undertakes a wider, longer inspection of Children's Services under the Single Inspection Framework.

7. CONSULTATION

There are no needs for consultation arising from this report.

8. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

There are no financial considerations or risk with this report.

Approved by Lisa Taylor, Head of Finance CFL on behalf of the Director of Finance.

9. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

The Solicitor to the Council comments that there are no legal implications arising from this report.

Approved by J Harris Baker, Acting Council Solicitor and Acting Monitoring officer

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

There are no Human Resources considerations arising from this report.

Approved by Debbie Calliste, HR Business Partner on behalf of the Director, Workforce and Community Relations.

11. EQUALITIES IMPACT

The Council is continuing through its work to manage the equality impacts for Children's Social Care. The Council has particularly recognised the issues of CSE, child poverty and the high numbers of UASC and is ensuring that its activities respond to identified need and mitigate the impact on groups with protective characteristics. This has been built into the improvement plan and the priorities are recognised in the Council Opportunities and Fairness plan 2016-20.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

There are no direct implications contained in this report.

13. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

There are no direct implications contained in this report.

14. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

This report is for information and there are no recommendations other than to note its contents. The report has been included on the agenda for the next relevant scrutiny committee.

15. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not relevant.

CONTACT OFFICER: Ian Lewis, Director of Children's Social Care

Background papers:

JTAI Published report
Joint Targeted Area Inspection Improvement Plan