

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

DATE: 20th January 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director of Children's Services

SUBJECT: Services for Children and Families in Halton Improvement Plan

PORTFOLIO: Children and Young People

WARDS(S): Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To share the submitted Services for Children and Families in Halton Improvement Plan and provide an update against the 12 key areas of improvement.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 Accepted as the mechanism by which Elected Members can monitor and scrutinise progress going forward.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 On 12 July 2024, Ofsted published a report rating Halton Borough Council children's services as inadequate following an inspection that took place between 13 and 24 May 2024. The council was given 90 days to prepare an improvement action plan in response. This was submitted 21 October 2024.

3.2 Following the publication of the Ofsted report a statutory direction was issued by the Secretary of State to Halton Borough Council and Steven Walker was appointed as Commissioner for Children's Services in Halton.

3.3 Progress against the improvement plan is overseen by the Improvement Board, independently chaired by Stuart Smith (Department for Education Improvement Advisor). The Board meets on a monthly basis and has adopted a thematic approach in its focus on the outlined areas of the overall plan.

3.4 The most recent update report was submitted to the improvement board on 29.11.24 which provided an overview on the 12 areas for improvement with a deep dive in A2 - Identification, response to and management of risk.

- 3.5 The Improvement Plan includes a 'BRAG' rating outlining the progress status of each of the areas for improvement as well as a 'BRAG' rating to measure impact. This will help evaluate and determine if the improvement activities are improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- 3.6 Ofsted also monitor progress against the improvement plan and conduct a series of monitoring visits following an inadequate inspection judgement. The first monitoring visit to Halton will take place in January 2025.
- 3.7 Progress against the improvement plan is overseen by the Improvement Board and will continue to be reported upon to Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board at regular intervals.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Areas for improvement will inform policy and service development within Children Social Care and Early Help.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Budgetary decisions throughout the improvement journey will be informed by the priorities identified within the plan. A Finance and Investment Board will track spend and the impact this is having on the outcomes for children, young people and families.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

The improvement plan was co-produced with colleagues from health.

- 6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

Keeping our children local to Halton and improving their educational outcomes will build stronger communities, create better employment opportunities that will support talent within Halton to remain in Halton.

- 6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

The Ofsted inspection judgement of 'Inadequate' has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Halton.

Keeping children safe is one of the most important things this council does and the improvement plan supports whatever action is required to ensure children and families receive the services they deserve.

- 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need**

The Children and Young People's Plan considers the support, services and opportunities within the borough for vulnerable children and young people and their families.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

There are no specific implications for the environment arising from this report.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The Ofsted inspection judgement of 'Inadequate' has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Halton.

Keeping children safe is one of the most important things this council does and the improvement plan supports whatever action is required to ensure children and families receive the services they deserve.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no new risk implications identified emerging from the recommendations in this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues identified emerging from the recommendations in this report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no specific implications for the environment arising from this report.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

10.1 None.