

London Borough of Enfield

Inspection of children's social care services

Inspection dates: 4 March 2019 to 15 March 2019

Lead inspector: Tara Geere
Her Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Senior leaders, with strong corporate and cross-party political support, have worked effectively to strengthen and improve service provision since the recent focused visit in September 2018 and the previous judgement inspection in 2015.

Children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers in Enfield receive good services. Prior to the focused visit, senior leaders had appropriately identified capacity issues and high caseloads in some aspects of the service and had agreed additional staffing. Prompt recruitment activity, underpinned by significant investment, has been made to address the capacity issues and improve the quality of practice in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and frontline teams. Appropriate action plans are in place that are regularly monitored by senior managers in order to ensure that children receive timely and appropriate help to meet their needs.

Practice lead positions introduced in the autumn of 2018 are improving services and the skills and knowledge of frontline staff and managers effectively. However,

practice remains variable within the MASH and for some children in need. Further work is required to ensure consistency in services for children missing from home and for children living in private fostering arrangements. Leaders are aware of the need to improve the consistency of practice and are appropriately targeting resources and training to continue to improve services and outcomes for children in Enfield.

What needs to improve

- The quality of plans for children in need.
- Return home interviews for children missing from home.
- Private fostering responses, including timely statutory checks and regular visits to ensure that children live in safe arrangements to meet their needs.
- Health information for care leavers.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good

1. Children and families benefit from an effective early help offer in Enfield based on a family resilience model. The recently developed early help triage, supported by a comprehensive and broad range of good quality universal and targeted early help services, is having a positive impact on children's outcomes.
2. Enfield's children's centres work effectively as hubs, allowing families to experience a seamless service, underpinned by a well-embedded social work model of practice. This allows staff to work effectively with children and families to develop sustainable strategies to improve outcomes for them.
3. Senior leaders had already identified capacity issues and were taking actions to address caseloads prior to the focused visit in September 2018. However, following the visit, leaders took prompt action to appropriately increase resources and management oversight in the MASH and to develop the early help triage. This has resulted in a better understanding and application of statutory thresholds to safeguard children who need help and protection.
4. During the inspection, the local authority acknowledged that there was a lack of recording of any dispute escalation processes between the early help triage and the MASH. Leaders acted immediately to develop a way of tracking any professional discussions about thresholds to allow senior leaders to assure themselves about ongoing improvements to consistency and application of thresholds.
5. The additional management oversight in the MASH has resulted in the vast majority of children receiving an effective, timely multi-agency response to their needs. Ongoing work with partner agencies is resulting in better quality referrals, and the co-location of police and health partners is adding value to decision-making in the MASH. However, the lack of both operational and strategic multi-agency MASH meetings is not maximising multi-agency working, especially in relation to strategy discussions.
6. Senior managers have undertaken a comprehensive audit of MASH cases. They have increased management capacity and quality assurance support to the MASH and safeguarding services, to further strengthen decision-making and practice.
7. However, practice is not yet consistent. A minority of the cases seen during inspection highlighted some variability in the initial threshold decisions applied. In a very small minority of cases seen, children's referrals had not been progressed to a strategy discussion but had progressed to assessments. Where strategy discussions had occurred, a minority of cases were not timely and the rationale for actions to be taken was not always consistently recorded. This means that a

small number of children experience delays in receiving the right level of support and help that they need.

8. Enfield's emergency duty team ensures that children and families receive an effective response outside of office hours. Work to improve the quality of recording is resulting in clear alerts to the MASH and allocated workers as required.
9. The majority of child protection enquiries are timely and demonstrate multi-agency information-sharing to underpin appropriate decision-making, although recording is not yet consistently sharp or time bounded to allow progress to be monitored within children's timescales.
10. The vast majority of assessments demonstrate a good understanding of individual children's needs, with clear evidence that children are seen and seen alone, as appropriate, to inform the assessment. However, rationale, recommendations and management oversight are not consistently recorded. In the stronger child protection plans, actions are child-focused and clear on timescales in order to help parents understand what needs to change. Children in need plans are not yet consistently sharp or child-focused, or do not contain clear contingency plans that are updated as children's circumstances change. This means that, for a small number of children, planning is not always clear on the actions and timescales required to support individual children's needs.
11. Children are regularly seen by social workers, who undertake a wide range of sensitive direct work with parents and children. This helps children to understand their lived experiences and promotes change to improve progress. Consultation work with wider cohorts of children, young people and families, such as parent feedback and community safety consultations, is appropriately used to develop and improve services.
12. Social workers receive regular supervision and feel well supported. However, the quality of supervision records does not always do justice to the quality of supervision reported by social workers. When supervision is recorded, it does not consistently evidence reflection, analysis and management direction to demonstrate monitoring of children's progress against their plans.
13. When children's needs escalate, the public law outline (PLO) is used effectively. Managers routinely monitor timescales and final outcomes for children through the PLO tracker. Letters to families before proceedings are clear regarding risks and potential outcomes if changes cannot be made. When changes do not occur for children, decisive action is taken to safeguard children.
14. A range of good-quality services effectively support children to remain in the care of their families. When this is not possible or appropriate, carefully considered action is taken so that children come in to care in a timely manner.

15. Children in Enfield benefit from strong strategic partnerships and collaborative working to protect them from harm from contextual safeguarding risks. Practitioners are alert to and appropriately recognise indicators of child exploitation and gang affiliation. Effective joint-working arrangements, for example the child sexual exploitation and prevention team, ensure timely and effective help and support, which reduce risk and prevent further harm.
16. Young people aged 16 and 17 at risk of homelessness receive an effective and timely response. Where appropriate, emergency, short-term, supported accommodation is available to allow time to assess children's longer-term needs. Comprehensive, insightful, child-focused assessments are undertaken with children and their families, with a focus on children returning home when it is safe and in their best interest. Children are well supported to understand their rights and entitlements to become looked after and to make informed decisions.
17. Disabled children benefit from highly effective, outstanding services in Enfield, delivered by knowledgeable, passionate social workers and managers with high aspirations for their children. Workers know the needs of individual children and demonstrate an excellent awareness of increased risks due to children's additional vulnerabilities. Strong direct work with children and their families, using a range of communication methods, informs quality assessments, and clear plans, and children's lives improve as a result of the help and support received.
18. The management of allegations and concerns against adults who work with children is timely and proportionate. A well-managed system prioritises and focuses on allegations in a timely manner in order to safeguard children.
19. There has been a reduction in the number of children in private fostering arrangements to four arrangements at the time of this inspection. Further work is required to raise awareness of private fostering with partners. The quality of practice for children in these arrangements, including the timeliness of initial visits and ensuring that appropriate support is put in place, is not yet consistent. Leaders took immediate action to review children in private fostering during the inspection, putting forward an appropriate plan to improve practice for children in a timely manner.
20. The local authority has effective systems in place to engage with the growing numbers of parents who educate their children at home and to ensure that the welfare of children who are electively home educated is monitored effectively. This includes those children who have an education, health and care plan. Services work well together to monitor the small number of children in need to ensure that they are receiving appropriate support.
21. Services work in a joined-up way to minimise the risks to children and young people who are out of education. Most of these children have complex or challenging needs. Agencies work well together to ensure that appropriate provision is quickly identified, and they do what they can to remove any barriers

that the young people face. Regular reporting and tracking of progress hold the various services to account.

22. Following the decommissioning of an external service for return home interviews, children subject to a child protection plan and children in care who go missing are routinely offered return home interviews from an independent reviewing officer (IRO). The recently redeveloped offer of return home interviews has improved the response to these children following missing episodes, to further understand the risks that children may face. However, the response to children who are missing from home is not consistently robust. Information is not yet consistently recorded, and this could prevent the ability to gather information and effectively analyse the push and pull factors or identify patterns and trends to inform service delivery.

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: good

23. Senior leaders have maintained and improved good-quality services for children in care in Enfield. Children benefit from living in a wide range of high-quality placement arrangements that meet their individual needs. Most children live with matched carers who provide a good range of activities and opportunities that enable them to enjoy life, improve their progress and promote a rounded childhood. However, there is still further work to ensure consistency in permanence matches for children in long-term foster care.
24. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children benefit from effective multi-agency practice to ensure that their needs are assessed and responded to. There is good consideration of children's individual needs, including clear consideration about where children are settled, leading to them not being referred to the national transfer scheme for transfer to other local authorities. This careful consideration informs good-quality subsequent assessments, plans and placements to meet their needs.
25. When children are placed at some distance from their home, clear notification work takes place to ensure that host authorities are informed. However, senior leaders are aware of the need to strengthen consultation with the host authorities before children are placed so that they can receive the help and support they need in a timely manner.
26. Children benefit from good support from advocates and independent visitors, who support and help them to share their views and opinions.
27. Children in care benefit from regularly monitoring of their plans by IROs at timely reviews, with oversight midway through, although this is not yet consistently evidenced on all children's files. Inspectors saw clear evidence of IROs

intervening and advocating appropriately and escalating issues regarding practice and quality of care in order to improve outcomes for children.

28. The achievements of children in care are celebrated well in Enfield, and a wide variety of activities are offered for children to participate in. KRATOS, the Enfield children in care council, benefits from the input of a wide range of children and young people, with over half the cohort of children in care engaging with KRATOS. It has a meaningful influence on service developments, such as the care leavers' local offer.
29. Social workers have a thorough understanding of the children they work with, and are passionate about improving outcomes for them. Inspectors saw sensitive, creative examples of direct work with children and young people to help them to understand their individual circumstances and participate in their own planning. Child-focused, age-appropriate life-story work with children being adopted is routinely undertaken. Senior leaders are aware of the need to develop this further for children in long-term placements, with additional training for staff planned for later this year.
30. Careful consideration is given to the diverse needs of children and young people, and this is progressed effectively into social workers' practice and decision-making. Inspectors saw clear identification of individual needs and any potential discrimination children might face. This is exemplified in the service for disabled children. Social workers have a good understanding of the children they work with, and they visit children regularly, ensuring good access to health services so that children's health and emotional well-being needs can be met.
31. The effective, multi-disciplinary HEART team champions the importance of positive educational outcomes for children in care. High-quality joint-working by co-located services, including child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS), social work, nursing, speech and language therapy, education psychology and the virtual school, means that there is timely, effective and coordinated support for those children who need it most.
32. Most children in care attend the right school for them, and the majority of schools that they attend are graded as good. When this is not the case, careful attention is paid through close monitoring, school visits and personal education plans (PEPs) to ensure that children make good progress.
33. Children in care make good progress in early years and primary education, and especially by the end of key stage 2. They benefit from a strong focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The academic progress made by children in secondary education, particularly at key stage 4, is less positive, and this can also be seen in weaker attendance levels. The strong emphasis on ensuring that PEPs are of good quality and completed in a timely way is contributing well to children's progress. This could be strengthened with a focus on transition for those young people coming to the end of Year 11. There have

been no permanent exclusions for the past three years. However, despite improvements, more work is needed to reduce the incidence of fixed-term exclusions. The proportion of young people currently in employment, education and training is higher than it is for statistical neighbours.

34. Children are routinely taken for dental and optician appointments, to ensure that their health needs are met, and these are regularly reviewed at children in care review meetings. However, this is not yet consistent for care leavers. Older young people are not routinely informed of their health histories, and the local authority is not aware of how many young people have them. This limits young people's understanding of their past health and the basis on which to make informed decisions about their future healthcare.
35. Managers have a clear understanding of good early permanence planning and comprehensive systems to monitor children's progress and to ensure that they can live with families that meet their needs. There is a strong focus on assessing family members and special guardians, through thorough, well-analysed assessments, with clear support packages for special guardians and adopters. Managers are aware that support plans and children's permanence reports cover the current needs of the child but they do not consistently anticipate lifelong needs.
36. Children are enabled to continue meaningful relationships with people who are important to them, and this is sensitively managed by social workers. Children are listened to and arrangements are adjusted according to the wishes and feelings of children or observation of the impact on children. This is an area of particular strength, and the children reported to inspectors that their individual arrangements worked well for them.
37. Relationships for brothers and sisters are supported and understood well by practitioners. Children's needs are assessed through 'together and apart' assessments, and these are currently undertaken by a variety of teams. This is an area under development to align the processes and templates. However, appropriate decisions are made for children, which lead to the right outcomes, and managers are ambitious to ensure that large groups of brothers and sisters have the opportunity to be placed together permanently where possible.
38. Enfield has effective fostering and adoption services, which are overseen by highly experienced, long-standing, child-focused leaders and managers. The local authority benefits from being part of a long-established regional consortium, and there is cabinet approval to join the Adopt London, North regional adoption agency with Barnet, Camden, Hackney, Haringey and Islington.
39. The adoption of older children is a strength. Although this affects timescales for children entering care to being placed in their adoptive placement, outcomes are good for those children. Enfield has a high level of transracial placements, and

managers are working with staff to ensure that prospective adopter reports and adoption support plans consistently address this area.

40. There are effective recruitment, assessment, support and training arrangements for adopters and foster carers in Enfield, with strong panel arrangements to ensure that decision-making promotes the best outcomes for children. Not all foster carers have profiles available for children before they move in. The senior leaders are aware of this, and have an action plan to ensure that the approval of placements for children with connected carers is carefully monitored to ensure compliance with statutory fostering regulations.
41. The majority of care leavers benefit from the provision of timely support by workers who know them well and are aspirational for them. Children and young people are able to request to keep workers with whom they have built strong relationships, and this is supported whenever appropriate. There is a clear focus on helping prepare young people for independence. Workers use the comprehensive pathway plan checklist document effectively in order to ensure that the right support and training helps young people with their independence skills.
42. The local authority is in touch with the vast majority of its care leavers. Inspectors saw some tenacious efforts by workers to try to re-engage with young people, as well as clear recording when older young people have informed staff that they no longer wish to be in touch with services.
43. Care leavers live in a range of suitable accommodation and benefit from effective support. There is good use of staying put arrangements to support young people to remain living with their carers beyond their 18th birthdays and until they are ready for independence.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: good

44. Senior leaders know their services and have a clear understanding of the current strengths and areas for further development. This is underpinned by a recently updated and accurate self-assessment.
45. The chief executive, the executive director - people (the statutory director of children's services), the director of children and family services and the lead member all have a clear and strong focus on improving services and outcomes for children in Enfield.
46. Since the inspection of local authority children's services focused visit in September 2018, further work has been undertaken within the MASH and referral and assessment teams to significantly develop staffing levels and duty systems to improve the quality of practice. Staff reported to inspectors that these changes

had made a real and positive difference to their workload and to the quality of their practice.

47. Strong, corporate and cross-party political support and carefully targeted investment have enabled leaders to manage increasing demand and target areas for development, with resources such as the introduction of increasingly effective practice leads to ensure that children's needs are a top priority in Enfield.
48. Practice improvements have gained momentum since the introduction of the additional practice leads and head of service capacity in the autumn of 2018. As a result, inspectors were able to see significant improvements in practice. Managers are working to consolidate the improvements and ensure consistency across all services.
49. Mature, robust relationships with a range of partners have resulted in improvements in effective multi-agency safeguarding at an operational and strategic level, and these are being built on further. This includes the effective child sexual exploitation and protection team and the agreement to develop a new multi-agency domestic abuse team from April 2019. These relationships are overseen by a range of appropriate governance arrangements and effective scrutiny of service provision, including a range of boards with aligned priorities.
50. The corporate parenting board has strong cross-party political involvement, good representation from partners and considers children's feedback from KRATOS. This enables a focus on a broad and appropriate range of issues, including placement stability, the care leavers' local offer, the education of children in care, the annual culture survey, and housing needs, to drive improvements and outcomes for children and young people.
51. Developments of a range of performance reports enable managers and leaders to monitor performance against key performance indicators, such as the positive improvements to assessment timescales. The planned development of further functionality within the children's information systems and developments to the quality assurance framework arrangements have been designed to further strengthen managers' understanding of performance and practice for individual children and their families.
52. Senior leaders have a clear, dedicated focus on staff recruitment and retention, which has resulted in very positive effects on the stability of the workforce, with reducing rates of agency staff. Targeted, significant investment, especially in the referral and assessment teams, has resulted in manageable caseloads across all services, allowing workers to undertake more effective direct work.
53. A well-established 'grow your own' programme ensures that cohorts of students and newly qualified social workers are well supported by a comprehensive learning and development programme. This is then further supported through the work of the effective practice leads to improve skills and knowledge. Social

workers feed back positively on the practice leads' audits, which help them to understand what constitutes good practice and what improves services.

54. Staff in Enfield speak positively about proactive, visible, supportive managers, the introduction of paid sabbaticals after three years' service and the training available, triangulated by the annual cultural survey. As a result, social workers' morale is high, and they enjoy working in Enfield.



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