

13th January 2020

Agenda Item: 5

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Children and Young People's Committee on the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of the Local Authority children's services which took place in October 2019, and to seek approval for the monitoring arrangements for the resultant improvement plan.

Information

2. In October 2019, Ofsted undertook an inspection of the Local Authority's children's services under the ILACS framework. The scope of the inspection covered services for children in need of help and protection including early help, and services for children in care and care leavers, and the impact of leaders on such services. It also included a regulatory inspection of fostering and adoption services. Under the inspection, the authority was judged on a four point scale: Outstanding; Good; Requires Improvement to be good and Inadequate.
3. The inspection methodology included a review of performance and quality assurance information, tracking of cases on the case recording system Mosaic, inspectors spending time having case discussions with frontline practitioners as well as meeting with children and young people in the care of the Council.
4. On 19th December 2019, Ofsted published the outcome of the inspection. The inspection report is attached as **Appendix 1**. Ofsted has made the following judgements:

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	Requires Improvement
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

5. The report outlines that in the previous inspection in 2015, Nottinghamshire was judged to be Good across all service areas, except for care leavers. The recent inspection concluded that *"good practice has been maintained for children in care, and the care leavers service*

has been transformed. Most children who require help and protection services receive effective support, but the local authority has not yet successfully sustained good services for all children”.

6. The report highlights many strengths within the Local Authority’s practice, notably highlighting the skills and commitment of the workforce, and the positive support provided by their managers. The report also highlights the strength of political and corporate support, and the positive impact in particular on services for children in care and care leavers, for example through leisure cards and council tax exemptions.
7. The report outlines a number of discrete areas for improvement that the Council is required to make:
 - a) the quality of strategy discussions and meetings so that they are always timely, involve all relevant partners and are well recorded
 - b) the consistency of social work practice in all geographical areas of the County
 - c) the awareness of, and social work response to, safeguarding privately fostered children
 - d) the assessments, support and oversight of children in care placed with family and friend carers.
8. Officers within the Department are already working on securing the necessary improvements in these areas, and this was recognised by Ofsted, who reported that the Authority’s self-evaluation was an accurate reflection of work across the County, with action plans for areas of weakness in place.
9. The improvement plan in respect of the areas for improvement identified is being refocussed and will be submitted to Ofsted within 70 working days in line with the requirements of the inspection framework. The action plan will build on the improvement initiatives already underway through the development and implementation of the strengths-based practice model across children’s services. It is recommended that Children and Young People’s Committee receive six monthly updates on progress in securing the improvements required.

Future Inspection Activity

10. As Ofsted has judged that the Local Authority’s overall effectiveness continues to be “Good”, this means that the Local Authority remains on “pathway 1” of the inspection framework. This means that the next comprehensive inspection will take place in approximately three years, and will be a short inspection. During the intervening period, it is likely that the Authority will receive at least one focused visit or joint targeted area inspection. Focused visits take place over two days and evaluate a particular aspect of practice, a theme or the experiences of a particular cohort of children, such as the front door, the experiences of children in need or subject to a child protection plan, the protection of vulnerable adolescents (contextual safeguarding), children in care, permanence, and care leavers. Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) examine a particular theme in respect of the experiences of children in need of help and protection, and are undertaken jointly by Ofsted, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS), the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation, over a three week period. Previous themes have included children experiencing abuse and neglect, child exploitation, children living with domestic abuse and child sexual abuse in the family environment. The current theme for JTAs is children’s mental health.

Other Options Considered

11. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. It is important the Children and Young People's Committee receives assurance on progress in respect of areas for improvement within children's services.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

14. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

15. Successfully delivery of the improvement plan arising from the Ofsted inspection of Local Authority children's services will continue to strengthen arrangements to safeguard vulnerable children and young people in Nottinghamshire.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Committee agrees to receive six monthly reports on progress on areas for improvement arising from the recent Ofsted inspection of the Local Authority's children's services.

Colin Pettigrew
Corporate Director, Children and Families

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Lucy Peel
Group Manager, Service Improvement
T: 0115 977 3139
E: lucy.peel@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (AK 16/12/19)

16. The report falls within the remit of Children and Young People's Committee under its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 17/12/19)

17. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Framework, evaluation criteria and inspector guidance for the inspection of local authority children's services

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828678/ILACS_framework_and_evaluation.pdf

Joint targeted area inspections: framework and guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832023/Joint_targeted_area_inspections_framework_2.pdf

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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