



# Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's services (ILACS)



# Ofsted Judgements

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>
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	Good
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

# Inspection Framework



- A standard 3-week inspection – 6 inspectors, plus Senior His Majesty's Inspector.
- 130 separate interviews and meetings, including parents, children and care experienced young people.
- Case audit tracking by inspectors
- Individual children's cases review via children's electronic record
- Meetings with social workers to discuss practice and outcomes across the county.
- Themes – child neglect, domestic abuse, exploitation, children becoming cared for, children exiting care
- Regulatory Services – fostering (including private fostering) and adoption.
- Education experiences for children open to Social Care.





# Practice Strengths Identified



- Children in need of help and protection has improved; children receive effective, proportionate and timely support.
- Early support to prevent escalation of risk.
- Style of writing used in assessment and review documentation is accessible for parents and children to support understanding of concerns. These documents use “caring language”.
- Skilled practitioners, high quality interventions.
- Improvements in responses to neglect and pre-birth assessments since previous inspection.
- Specialist adult practitioners support reduction of risks related to parental domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health



# Strengths continued

- Child focused, sensitive and creative direct work by social workers a strength, including understanding children's non-verbal communication to support protective interventions.
- Timely and effective family group conferences
- Supervision regularly addresses risk.
- Court work (pre-proceedings) is strong, helping to prevent the need for care proceeding and most are timely.
- Effective local authority designated officer (LADO) response.
- Elective Home Education oversight - a strength; robust tracking and systems to support work with key agencies.
- Children Missing from education are monitored with families and key agencies.
- Decision making for children to come into care is timely and appropriate; effective panel approach.
- Responses to children who go missing and at risk of exploitation are robust, including individualised and creative specialist exploitation team.
- Virtual School highly valued and effective.
- Adoption and Fostering Services effective.
- Care Leavers helped by skilled and caring personal advisors
- Clinical support provided by the authority supports children effectively.



## Strengths - Strategic and Operational Leadership



- Stability of longer standing operational leaders and middle management
- Corporate investment supporting service development and strengthening
- Corporate leaders committed to and ambitious for children and young people
- Strong partnership arrangements evidenced.
- Positive working relationships with the judiciary and Cafcass.
- Comprehensive sufficiency strategy



# ILACS – Areas to Improve




- The timeliness of actions when decisions have been made for children to escalate to the pre-proceedings arrangements of the Public Law Outline.
- Multi-agency arrangements within children's and adult services to promote information-sharing, analysis of risk and planning for care leavers who misuse drugs and alcohol, engage in criminal behaviours and are at risk of, or are, being exploited.
- The work, together with corporate leaders, to increase the range and take-up by care leavers of employment, education and training opportunities.
- The quality of direct work with disabled children who are in care



# Additional Learning identified in report

- Oversight of children's cases via supervision will consistently review each child's circumstances and make sure that any change in circumstances are fully explored.
- Explore young carer support provision across the county to ensure consistent offer.
- Workforce stability, particularly social workers for children to minimise change for children.
- Earlier allocation of Personal Advisors for care leavers as allocation close to 18 is too late.
- Further develop transitional Safeguarding arrangements for care leavers with adult service providers.
- Finalise the updated and co-produced Local Offer for Care Leavers to ensure it is well understood by all.
- Work with CAMHS to reduce waiting times for children.





# Action Plan – 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024



OCC will provide our action plan to work on the four key areas to improve set out in the report and share information about our continuous improvement plan, which captures key areas of improvement identified in our self-assessment and the inspection, including:

- Kinship Care and early permanence
- Quality Assurance framework
- Participation and engagement (families and staff)
- Family Safeguarding Approach development
- Social Work reforms as set out in Stable Homes Built on Love and Working Together 2024.



# Inspection experience - Service feedback to inspectors and leaders

- A calm experience for all in service.
- Practitioners enjoyed time with inspectors.
- Respectful inspectors who listened.
- Staff appreciated feedback from inspectors
- A learning experience.

