



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

8 MARCH 2022

**REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT
JANUARY 2022**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES**

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee the outcome of the recent Ofsted Focused Visit.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Ofsted Inspection was undertaken in accordance with the framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services.

Background

3. Children's Social Care is subject to regular Ofsted inspections under the framework of Inspections Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). These inspections focus on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home, the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption and the experiences and progress of care leavers.
4. The framework also evaluates the effectiveness of leaders and managers, the impact they have on the lives of children and young people, and the quality of professional practice.
5. Following a full ILACS Inspection, Ofsted make the following graded judgements:
 - overall effectiveness,

- the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection,
 - the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers,
 - the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families.
6. The framework ordinarily works to a three year cycle. A full inspection results in the service being graded and then followed by annual visits in the two intervening years. Annual visits are based on either a Focused Visit or a Joint Area Targeted Inspection (JTAI). The timetable of inspection has been impacted upon by Ofsted availability during the pandemic, and the recent Focused Visit was the first following the full ILACS inspection in 2019.
 7. In 2019, the service was graded as Requiring Improvement to be Good for overall effectiveness, Good for the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, Good for the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers and remained as Requires Improvement to be Good for the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection.
 8. The service has continued to make progress against the continuous improvement plan and revised the Road to Excellence in 2021, which will now run until 2023.
 9. The department received notification from Ofsted on 19 January to give notice of the Focused Visit on Children in Need of Help and Protection, commencing the week beginning 24 January. Two Inspectors visited Leicestershire, undertaking field work for the first two days and then spending two days on site meeting with social workers to discuss children's cases, and with senior leaders.
 10. The letter detailing the findings from the inspection will be published on 2 March 2022. The Focused visit inspection does not give a graded judgement, however, detailed feedback from Ofsted on their findings is set out in the published letter. Ofsted will take their findings from the Focused Visit into the next full inspection. The letter from Ofsted is attached as Appendix A.

Findings from the Focused Visit

11. Ofsted has reported very positively on the progress made across the Service and on the quality of service provided to children in need of help and protection. Their key lines of enquiry focused on children in need, children in need of protection and children involved in the Public Law Outline (this covers children where the Local Authority is considering, or is taking, legal action under The Children Act 1989).

12. The inspection team reported that the Senior Leadership team understands the Service well and has been committed, strong and focused to build on the progress seen at the last inspection. Ofsted recognised the commitment and investment by political and corporate leaders, together with effective work by senior leaders and staff to ensure that responses to children in need of help and protection have improved.
13. Particular strengths identified in the report include:
- Children being at the centre of decision making. Direct work with children and their families is strong and is informing decision making,
 - Social workers know the children they support well. Voice work is strong and social workers work hard to include all family members, including non-resident fathers, to develop effective safety plans through family meetings,
 - Safety planning and multi-agency working is strong,
 - Children receive a timely and proportionate social work response to manage risk and meet their needs,
 - Children benefit from timely and regular child protection conference, core groups and child in need reviews,
 - Public Law Outline practice is strong with good management oversight to prevent drift and delay,
 - Social workers like working in Leicestershire, they are well-motivated and report feeling well supported by team managers, senior managers and the wider organisation. Caseloads are manageable. Supervision takes place. The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme and training is received positively,
 - Senior Leaders have maintained a steady pace of change despite the challenges of COVID 19,
 - Senior Leaders have a good understanding of frontline practice through strong performance and quality assurance processes.

Key Areas for improvement.

14. The report identified two key areas for improvement:
- Consistency in the quality of children's plans,
 - Consistency in the recording of supervisions to ensure that it evidences reflective discussions and how this is leading to progress against the child's plan.
15. These are areas the service identified as part of its continuous improvement plan, therefore the work to drive forward the improvements will continue through the Road to Excellence Plan.

16. Ofsted will take the findings from this Focused Visit into account when planning the next inspection or visit.

Resource Implications

17. There are no resource requirements resulting directly from the inspection.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

18. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments will be undertaken as appropriate should there be any reviews of Departmental strategies or services.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – copy of the Ofsted letter following the Focused Visit.