



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE - 3 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S
SOCIAL CARE SERVICES**

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

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection of children's social care services in Leicestershire.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. In December 2019, the Cabinet considered a report regarding the outcome of a recent Ofsted inspection of children's social care services in Leicestershire and were presented with an Action Plan which had been developed to address the recommendations within the Ofsted Report.
3. The Ofsted inspection was undertaken in accordance with the framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services.

Background

4. Ofsted undertakes the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services on all local authority areas with the statutory responsibility for delivering children's services. The inspection framework inspects local authority services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers and the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people and the quality of professional practice.
5. The last full inspection of the County Council's children's services was undertaken in September/October 2019, when the services were graded as "requiring improvement to be good".

Leicestershire's Ofsted Inspection

6. The inspection was carried out over three weeks from 15 April to 3 May 2024, involving six inspectors. The inspectors considered the quality of work across

Early Help and Children’s Social Care and the impact these services had on children and young people in Leicestershire.

7. The inspectors read case files, met with staff and leaders in the Department and talked to children, young people and their families. They also considered the Department’s self-assessment of its own performance and improvement journey since the inspection in 2019.

Inspection Findings

8. The findings of the inspection are detailed in a report from Ofsted, which is appended to this report.
9. The report includes gradings indicating how the Service is judged to be performing across four broad areas. The grades available to Ofsted are (1) inadequate – which triggers formal intervention by DfE, (2) requires improvement to be good, (3) good, and (4) outstanding.
10. Leicestershire has been graded as follows:

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

11. The overall effectiveness of children’s services in Leicestershire has been judged to be Outstanding.

Report Headlines

Leicestershire’s Strengths

12. Services for children and families in Leicestershire have much improved since the previous inspection in 2019, when the judgement for overall effectiveness was ‘requires improvement to be good’. Significant progress has been made across all service areas. This improvement has been underpinned by an ambitious and child-focused senior leadership team that has successfully created a culture whereby the experiences and progress of children are at the heart of social work practice. The report highlighted strengths in particular areas which are detailed below.

13. Leaders have proactively engaged in the current national social care reform developments and have recently introduced a well-considered family safeguarding and family help model.
14. Most children in care and care leavers receive an outstanding service from workers, who know them extremely well. The vast majority of children live in stable homes with carers who are supportive and ambitious for children.
15. Personal advisers (PAs) are tenacious and determined in working with care leavers to improve their experiences and outcomes for the future.
16. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for further development in their services, informed by a thorough and accurate self-assessment.
17. Leaders and managers have successfully created a work environment whereby the workforce understands the importance of building strong and long-lasting relationships with children and their families. As a result, many families achieve positive change and improved outcomes for their children.
18. Senior leaders recognise that the provision of high-quality social work services relies on a well-trained, supported and motivated workforce. The well-being of staff is a priority.
19. An overwhelming majority of staff told inspectors that they like working in Leicestershire and value the investment and support that they have had from their managers. This investment in staff makes them want to stay. As a result, they are making a positive difference to children's experiences and progress.

Areas for Improvement

20. The report also outlined the following areas for improvement:
 - Monitoring of pre-proceedings to tackle drift and delay and the accessibility of letters before proceedings. This recommendation relates to the improvements that are required to ensure that those families that are going through the child protection court process fully understand the process and that decisions are made in court happen in a timely way. In the inspection, Ofsted identified that for a few families this was not happening as quickly as it should have done.
 - Timeliness of initial child protection conferences. This recommendation relates to ensuring that the first child protection conference always happen on time.

Appendix

Inspection of Leicestershire County Council Local Authority Children's Services

Officers to Contact

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