

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 10<sup>th</sup> JULY 2024**

### **POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE CABINET LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES, SAFER COMMUNITIES AND REGULATORY SERVICES**

#### **Inspection of the Leicestershire Children's Services**

In April this year Ofsted undertook a full inspection of Children's Services in Leicestershire as part of the Inspection of Local Authorities Children's Services Framework.

The inspection looked at all areas of children's social care and targeted early help across the department over a three week period. The final report on the inspection, including the final judgement is being published on 12<sup>th</sup> July.

Whilst I can't share the final judgement ahead of the publication date, I can share that I am very pleased with the outcome of the inspection and look forward to sharing the full judgement and grades with you on Friday.

In the meantime, I would like to share feedback from inspectors.

Inspectors found that 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'.

The improvement that has taken place across the department has been underpinned by an ambitious and child focused approach that has created a culture whereby the experiences and progress of children are at the heart of social work practice.

In the feedback about services for children who need help and protection, our early help offer and range of preventative and targeted services were highlighted, alongside praise for the Family Hubs and early help assessments.

Inspectors praised the work undertaken to re-shape services for children and their families through the development of the new Family Help service that brings together targeted early help and work with children in need.

Our work at the front door to children's services was praised for responding quickly and according to the level of need and risk in the presenting information and for its strong assessments and decision making to ensure that children benefit from the right service at the right time.

Assessments across services were complimented for being timely, comprehensive and of good quality. Children's plans are said to be realistic, identify clear desired outcomes, and are child focused and written to the child which helps to capture the child's lived experience.

Inspectors saw that social workers know their children well and develop effective relationships with parents, enabling them to understand concerns and what needs to change.

Inspectors commented on our work to support young carers in Leicestershire and the bespoke individual and group support provided. One child who spoke to inspectors said, 'Being a young carer is hard work and demanding, but the help I've had has made a massive difference. I have been encouraged to share my views with council leaders and this has made a difference for me and other young carers. Going to the groups has also been good, it's been a friendly, welcoming, and safe place for me to go and share my experiences.'

Inspectors also looked at our services that support children in care and those services that work with care leavers. In relation to these services inspectors commented that children in care receive a service that results in their life experiences significantly improving. The department is aspirational for the children in their care and demonstrates a determination to improve children's experiences.

They saw a strong commitment by leaders, managers and social workers to support children to remain with their families where appropriate.

Ofsted commented that the relationships that social workers have with children are a notable strength that gives children much needed stability and helps them to feel cared for and cared about.

Fostering and adoption services were highly commended by Ofsted who commented that our foster carers are offered consistent and reliable support from social worker and they feel valued.

Our work to support care leavers was recognised as being strengthened and care leavers fed back to Ofsted positively about the support they receive. One care leaver said, 'The service I have received has changed my life. My PA is kind, and they care about me.' Another said, 'The service has been amazing and over time they have helped out as much as they can.'

Finally, Ofsted noted the fact that the Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, Lead Member and senior leaders have worked tirelessly to transform the quality of help and protection for vulnerable children in Leicestershire and praised the progress and improvements made across the services.

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 and as a result of this they are making a positive difference to children's experiences and progress.

The inspectors saw the evidence of the culture created across service that enables social work practice to develop and thrive, which results in many families achieving positive change and improved outcomes for children.

I want to end by thanking staff across the department for their hard work, their focus and determination to improve services for children and their families in Leicestershire. This inspection outcome is a significant achievement for children's services and for children and their families across Leicestershire.

**Mrs. D. Taylor**  
**Lead Member for Children, Families, Safer**  
**Communities and Regulatory Services**

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