

**Report of the Director of Children & Families**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

**Subject: Ofsted Update and Children and Families Improvement Plan**



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

Children’s Services in Leeds were subject to an Ofsted inspection in October 2018. The inspection was based on the new inspection ILACS framework that has a strong emphasis on the quality of practice and outcomes for children. The outcome of the inspection rated Leeds Children’s Services as Outstanding overall.

The inspection report, published on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018 is largely positive about Leeds Children and Families Services, however, there are four areas where Ofsted identified the need to improve.

The identified areas are part of a refreshed service improvement plan. The improvement plan outlines how the service intend to lead the work to meet the aims and priorities of the new Leeds Children and Young People’s Plan; to continue to make Leeds the Best City for Children and Families in the UK through the Best Council Plan; and to set out how we aim to continue to learn, change, grow and innovate over the next year to meet the challenging aspirations we have for the children and families in Leeds.

The areas for improvement identified by Ofsted had previously been recognised by Children and Families Services and were already important aspects in the improvement plan.

As is the case for each local authority after an inspection, Leeds is required to respond to the identified areas of improvement within 70 working days of the publication of the report with copies of the Children and Families Services post inspection action plan provided to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector (The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007). The deadline for the response is 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The plan setting out the areas for improvement will be

submitted to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in advance of the March deadline.

## **Recommendations**

Executive Board is recommended to:

- Endorse the report and improvement plan as the appropriate response to the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services in Leeds in October 2018.
- Note that the Officer responsible for implementation is the Deputy Director Children and Families Social Care by March 2021.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Executive Board with an update on the Children and Families improvement plan including the requirements of the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services in Leeds.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.2 Children's Services in Leeds were subject to an Ofsted inspection in October 2018. The inspection was based on the new inspection ILACS framework that has a strong emphasis on the quality of practice and outcomes for children. The outcome of the inspection rated Leeds Children's Services as Outstanding overall.

- 2.3 This is an exceptional outcome and is a recognition of the continued improvements to services and outcomes for children and families in Leeds. Only three councils have previously been judged to be 'Outstanding' overall under this new inspection framework (East Sussex, Bexley and North Yorkshire) and only six councils have an overall 'Outstanding' judgement in their most recent inspection. Leeds is the first city to achieve this standard and is remarkable given the challenges faced by Core Cities and most councils in the region.

- 2.4 The identified areas are part of a refreshed service improvement plan. The improvement plan outlines how the service intend to lead the work to meet the aims and priorities of the new Leeds Children and Young People's plan; to continue to make Leeds the Best City for Children and Families in the UK and to set out how we aim to continue to learn, change, grow and innovate over the next year to meet the challenging aspirations we have for the Children and Families in Leeds.

- 2.5 The inspection report, published on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018 is largely positive about Leeds Children and Families Services, however, there are four areas where Ofsted identified the need to improve. The areas for improvement identified include:

- The routine involvement of health agencies in strategy discussions;
- The consideration given to children's culture and identity in all assessments;
- The quality, recording and review of personal education plans (PEPs) so that they provide clear, consistent and purposeful targets, covering both short- and longer-term objectives; and
- Pathway planning to be better reflected in case records and pathway plans to be reviewed to ensure that they are meaningful documents for young people.

- 2.6 The areas for improvement identified by Ofsted had previously been recognised by Children and Families Services and were already important aspects in the improvement plan.

- 2.7 As is the case for each local authority after an inspection, Leeds is required to respond to the identified areas of improvement within 70 working days of the publication of the report with copies of the Children and Families Services post

inspection action plan provided to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007). The deadline for the response is 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The plan setting out the areas for improvement will be submitted to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in advance of the March deadline.

2.8 The plan setting out the areas for improvement will be submitted to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in advance of the March deadline.

### **3 Main issues**

3.1 The full inspection report where services and outcomes for Children and Families in Leeds have been judged to be 'Outstanding' overall was published on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and is attached in Appendix 1.

3.2 This is an exceptional outcome and is a recognition of the continued improvements to services and outcomes for Children and Families in Leeds. Only three councils have previously been judged to be 'Outstanding' overall under this new inspection framework (East Sussex, Bexley and North Yorkshire) and only six council have an overall 'Outstanding' judgement in their most recent Ofsted.

3.3 Amidst a consistently positive report, it is important to note some particularly important comments and findings:

- *The importance of a stable and skilled workforce:* 'There has been investment in the effective recruitment and development of staff, facilitating a more experienced and stable workforce which are very loyal to Leeds and highly motivated to provide the best service it can to children and families.'
- *The vital role of practice and the value of a clear shared practice approach:* 'Leaders have established a well-understood practice model that promotes child-centred work and productive working relationships between workers and families as well as giving a clear overview of the outcomes desired.' and 'The local authority is committed to a framework of restorative practice and working with families to effect change.'
- *The impact of cross-Council leadership support:* Ofsted note both that 'The local authority is a committed corporate parent that is ambitious for its children, encourages children to realise their potential and celebrates their achievements.' and 'Children are placed at the centre of work within the city and strong multi-agency strategic partnerships are promoting effective practice among their practitioners'.
- *Ambitious, strong leadership:* The leadership team has a clear and ambitious vision for what it wishes to achieve for the children of Leeds. Substantial progress has been made in delivering this vision to make Leeds a child-friendly city.
- *Continuous improvement:* The leadership are committed to continuous improvement, invite feedback and engage in innovations to further enhance services. This is reflected in an accurate self-evaluation and improvement plan, focusing not just on successes but also on areas where further work is required.

- *The benefits of clusters and locality working:* ‘Children and families benefit from a well-established and resourced ‘cluster’ model of early help which appropriately meets many children’s needs at the lowest formal level of intervention.’
- *Good work on domestic violence:* ‘Work regarding domestic abuse and the effect it has on children is a clear strength of the local authority and the issues are well understood across the partnership.’

3.4 Alongside these strengths inspectors made a small number of recommendations for improvement. The areas for development identified include:

- The routine involvement of health agencies in strategy discussions.
- The consideration given to children’s culture and identity in all assessments.
- The quality, recording and review of personal education plans (PEPs) so that they provide clear, consistent and purposeful targets, covering both short- and longer-term objectives.
- Pathway planning to be better reflected in case records and pathway plans to be reviewed to ensure that they are meaningful documents for young people.

3.5 These areas for development were previously known to the service and plans to address them were already incorporated into the Children and Families Service Improvement Plan.

3.6 The identified areas are part of a refreshed service improvement plan. The improvement plan outlines how the service intend to lead the work to meet the aims and priorities of the new Leeds Children and Young People’s plan; to continue to make Leeds the Best City for Children and Families in the UK and to set out how we aim to continue to learn, change, grow and innovate over the next year to meet the challenging aspirations we have for the children and families in Leeds.

3.7 The recognition of continued improvement in services for children and families in Leeds is part of an improvement journey that began in 2010 when services were judged to be inadequate. Whilst this is a remarkable achievement the service remains committed to further improvement with no room for complacency, given the challenging circumstances children and families face in the city.

3.8 As an organisation committed to ‘outcomes based accountability (OBA)’ our first test of success must always be to judge if we have improved outcomes for children and families in Leeds. Our record is good – we have ‘turned the curves’ on our shared obsessions of reducing the need for care, improving school attendance by around 400,000 additional school days since 2011 and reducing the number of young people not in learning or work. A wide range of other indicators including stability of the workforce support this strong picture.

3.9 The progress achieved is based on strong political support and the hard work and dedication of the whole city, working together through strong partnerships like Child Friendly Leeds and in clusters at a neighbourhood level. Our success is down to the shared values, priorities and commitment to children and the relationships for change we’ve built at all levels – with children, with families, with

communities and colleagues. Our journey of improvement has been led by the skills and care of the social workers and partners working every day with children, young people and families.

- 3.10 There remain important challenges ahead with increased demand for support and services and the impact of austerity and deprivation across the city. Leeds has pockets of affluence, but also pockets of deprivation; while 8% of the 0-16 year old population live in the 10% least deprived areas in England, 30% live in the 10% most deprived areas in Leeds. As a successful and prosperous city, Leeds has seen significant population growth over the last few years, as a result of both inward migration and much of our growth in the under-16 population has been concentrated in the most deprived areas, which also have high levels of Children's Services demand. Universal Credit was introduced in Leeds in October 2018, and this may have an impact on families requiring additional support.
- 3.11 There are a number of priorities that are currently addressing to improve the experiences of children, young people and families in Leeds; building on the success of improving children and young people's school attendance by broadening the focus of the OBA obsession to look at improving pupils' achievement and their academic attainment.
- 3.12 This improvement programme is supported by improved engagement with strategic partners across the city for example through development of the Multi-agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements through the Risk and Vulnerability sub-group of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership. In addition the city wide partnership approach through the Children's Trust Board towards developing and implementing a workforce development programme for Early Help.
- 3.13 A further example of this multi-agency approach to improvement is the development of the Care Leavers Covenant. The oversight of the Corporate Parenting Board in relation to care leavers has been strengthened, and there has been increased engagement in the care leavers' agenda from the Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Board.
- 3.14 Improvements to the service have been enhanced by the enrichment offer developed through the Child Friendly Leeds agenda with our public, private and third sector partners. In relation to in-house residential homes, Leeds has undertaken an ambitious programme of improvement, both with regards to the physical condition of the homes and in relation to practice.
- 3.15 Leeds remains committed to the ethos and the vision that has seen us improve significantly since 2011. Restorative practice is embedded as a way of being in Leeds, with practitioners working with children and families, colleagues and partner agencies – rather than doing things to them or for them. Relationship-based practice is the key to supporting families in achieving their own solutions, and Leeds has invested heavily in family group decision making as an approach. In Leeds we are committed to having the right conversations between the right people at the right time, and ensuring that wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so, we offer families help and support.
- 3.16 All of the improvement and service development to date has been based on these principles and these are the messages that we have brought into our sector-led improvement work with other local authorities as a Department for Education

Partner in Practice and through the Leeds Restorative Practice Centre. This Service Improvement Plan will help Leeds to continue to lead the sector in developing new and effective models of practice and services. This work has been very popular with colleagues across the UK – over half of Local Authorities have engaged with us through events, visits, consultancy and support. In addition Leeds work has attracted international interest, with recent visitors from New Zealand, Holland, Australia, Japan and Paraguay.

3.17 The Children and Families Service Improvement Plan (see Appendix 2) has two priority areas for improvement:

- **Improving Outcomes, improving the lives of children, young people and families**

To do this we are focusing on the following:

- The Three As – helping every child and young person attend, attain and achieve
- Improving the lives of children who need help and protection
- Improving the lives of children looked after and care leavers
- Improving the lives of children with special educational needs and disabilities

- **Creating the conditions for success**

To do this we are focusing on the following:

- Leading change, building relationships – Leadership, Partnerships and Workforce
- Further developing relational practice in Leeds
- The Journey to Better Outcomes – performance management and quality assurance
- Securing the future – Turning the Curve and ensuring financial sustainability

3.18 This is an ambitious plan and will ensure that the service is well placed to learn and improve in future years and to continue the pace of change in Leeds.

3.19 Children and Families Senior Leadership Team will monitor progress against the plan and a report will be made to Executive Board in March 2020, with interim reports to Scrutiny Board. Progress against the inspection report recommendations will be shared with Ofsted through the annual conversation.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 A programme of consultation and engagement with staff at a number of levels throughout Children and Families Services has been carried out to inform the

development of the improvement plan. Key elements of the plan, such as those for care leavers and residential care have been shaped by close involvement of young people and front line staff.

## **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 There is one area for development in the Inspection report that relates to equality and diversity. Ofsted state that 'the consideration given to children's culture and identity in all assessments' needs to improve. This will be addressed through the Children and Families' Service Improvement Plan.

4.2.2 The Improvement Plan as a whole is aiming to address issues for vulnerable families facing the impact of austerity and deprivation across the city. Leeds has pockets of affluence, but also pockets of deprivation; while 8% of the 0-16 year old population live in the 10% least deprived areas in England, 30% live in the 10% most deprived areas.

## **4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 This report relates to the Council's priority to make Leeds a Child Friendly City, the Best City for Children and Families in the UK.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 It is important to note that good inspection judgements have been vital for Leeds' success in securing additional investment from central government and other partners – for example Partners In Practice funding and nearly £15M of Innovation Programme funding.

## **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 No relevant issues.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 This report relates to one of the Council's highest corporate risks relating to safeguarding failures and inspection failure in Children's Services. This positive inspection report shows the impact of a cross-Council focus on Children and Families Services.

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The latest Ofsted report is very positive news for Leeds - the 'outstanding' judgements are welcome recognition of the city's ambition to be a Child Friendly City, and the skill and hard work of front line staff who work *with* children and families every day.

5.2 It is important that this success does not lead to complacency and a slowing pace of reform. It is an opportunity to build on the city's recent progress and to continually improve services for children and families in the city. The Service Improvement Plan sets out how we will achieve these ambitions.



## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Executive Board is recommended to:
- 6.2 Endorse the report and improvement plan as the appropriate response to the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services in Leeds in October 2018.
- 6.3 Note that the Officer responsible for implementation is the Deputy Director Children and Families Social Care by March 2021.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.