

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

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

**Additional Agenda Item**



**Subject: OfSTED Inspection Report**

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
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**

- In July 2009 OfSTED carried out an unannounced inspection of Leeds Children’s Services contact, referral and assessment arrangements. This inspection identified serious concerns about the safety of children in Leeds and led to a full safeguarding and looked after children inspection being undertaken in November and December 2009. These inspections meant that the Council was subject to formal intervention from Government and children’s services in Leeds were rated as inadequate.
- Since 2010 children’s services in Leeds have shown significant and sustained improvement. A clear strategic vision was put in place with cross-party support for Leeds to become a Child Friendly City where children are supported to succeed and be happy, healthy, safe and active citizens whose voices are heard and who have fun growing up.
- A new leadership team was established supported by investment, stronger partnerships, a new shared strategy and a clear approach to practice with children and families. In 2011, a further inspection noted a “remarkable and impressive improvement in the quality of the services inspected and the safety of children in the city”.
- A continued focus on improvement and ambition for children and families in Leeds ensured that by the time Leeds children’s services were inspected again in January 2015, the Authority was judged to be ‘good’ overall, with ‘outstanding’ ‘leadership, management and governance’.
- OfSTED returned to the city to inspect children’s services in Leeds between 29th October and 2nd November 2018. The inspection was conducted under the new OfSTED ‘ILACS’ (Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services) framework that has a closer focus and a stronger emphasis on the quality of social work practice and outcomes for children.

The ILACS Framework is summarised in four summary judgements:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers
- Overall effectiveness
- The findings of the 2018 inspection are as follows:

The experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection	<b>Outstanding</b>
The experiences and progress of children looked after and care leavers	<b>Good</b>
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness	<b>Outstanding</b>

- This is an exceptional outcome and demonstrates recognition of the continued improvements to services and outcomes for children and families in Leeds. To date, 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 OfSTED. Leeds will be the first major city to achieve this standard, in stark contrast to the ongoing challenges faced by other Core Cities and most councils in the region.

## Recommendations

Executive Board is recommended to:

- Formally record the appreciation and thanks of the Board for:
  - Front line staff and managers whose often challenging day to day work has made such a difference to the lives of children and families in Leeds;
  - Elected Members across all parties and senior officers of the Council who have prioritised children and led the change;
  - The support of individuals, third sector partners, businesses and communities across the city who have supported this work through Child Friendly Leeds.
- Note Ofsted's recognition that decisions made to invest in early help, prevention and workforce development have significantly contributed to this judgement.

- Continue to support the ongoing improvement of Children's Services in the city as we seek to ensure Leeds is the best city for children to grow up in.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Executive Board with the findings of the recent OfSTED inspection of children's services in Leeds.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 OfSTED inspected children's social care services in Leeds between 29<sup>th</sup> October and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018. The inspection was undertaken under the new OfSTED 'ILACS' (Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services) framework that has a closer focus and a stronger emphasis on the quality of social work practice and outcomes for children than previous inspection frameworks. The ILACS Framework is summarised in four summary judgements:
- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
  - The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
  - The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers
  - Overall effectiveness
- 2.2 Leeds has been on a remarkable improvement journey. In July 2009, an unannounced OfSTED inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements found that Leeds Children's Services did not adequately safeguard children.
- 2.3 A subsequent full inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services undertaken in November and December 2009 deemed that Leeds children's services were 'inadequate' overall, with inspectors stating that children had been put at risk due to a failure of practice, decision-making and leadership. This resulted in the Secretary of State making Leeds Children's Services subject to an Improvement Notice and establishing an Improvement Board.
- 2.4 The local authority took robust action to address the concerns identified by Ofsted. A new leadership team for Children's Services was recruited and education services were brought back into the Council from Education Leeds, establishing a Children's Services Directorate. Working closely with partners through the Children and Young People's Trust Board, an ambitious programme was set out to make Leeds a Child Friendly City and the best city in the UK for children and young people to grow up in.
- 2.5 The Children and Young People's Plan set out how partners would work together to improve outcomes for children and young people in the city. At the heart of the plan was a commitment to working *with* children, young people and families and there was a strong emphasis on early support with a view to preventing the need for more intensive interventions.
- 2.6 The Children and Young People's Plan identified twelve priorities and three 'obsessions'; to safely and appropriately reduce the need for children to become looked after by the local authority; to ensure that all children and young people were accessing their entitlement to education; and that all young people leaving school were in employment, education and training.

- 2.7 By early 2011 OfSTED noted ‘considerable progress’ at the Safeguarding Inspection and judged services to be ‘adequate’ and leadership and capacity to be ‘good’. As a result, Leeds Children’s Services were no longer subject to formal intervention by the Government.
- 2.8 Despite the challenging financial climate, Leeds City Council maintained its commitment to prioritising services for children and young people. The city has retained all of its children’s centres and invested in evidence-based interventions such as Multi-Systemic Therapy and Family Group Conferencing. A social work career pathway was developed which strengthened the recruitment and retention of social workers. The service developed a restorative approach to leadership and practice that helped change the culture of the organisation and supported the ambitious ‘obsessions’ to improve outcomes for children and families.
- 2.9 By 2015 the city had made further progress. The OfSTED ‘Children’s Services’ inspection in that year found services to be ‘good’ for both children in need of help and protection and for children looked after, adoption and care leavers. Leadership, management and governance was judged to be ‘Outstanding’.
- 2.10 The 2015 inspection was an important turning point for the city – Leeds was no longer associated with failure but with innovation and success. Leeds became the first major city to achieve these high ratings and as such has become a national exemplar of good practice and transformation. This in turn has enabled the city and the Council to build better relationships with government and partners – securing additional investment and support to continue to improve.
- 2.11 Following the positive outcome of the 2015 inspection the service has worked hard to avoid complacency and maintained the pace of improvement with a continued commitment to and ambition for children and young people.

### 3 Main issues

- 3.1 The full inspection report was published yesterday and is attached in Appendix 1. The main judgements are as follows:

The experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection	<b>Outstanding</b>
The experiences and progress of children looked after and care leavers	<b>Good</b>
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness	<b>Outstanding</b>

- 3.2 This is an exceptional outcome and demonstrates recognition of the continued improvements to services and outcomes for children and families in Leeds. Only three councils have 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 OfSTED.

3.3 Leeds will be the first major city to achieve this standard, in stark contrast to the ongoing challenges faced by other Core Cities and most councils in the region. Leeds will be by far the largest Council to have achieved an outstanding judgement – it is 50% larger than the next biggest authority (North Yorkshire).

3.4 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.'

3.5 Alongside these strengths inspectors made a small number of recommendations for improvement. These were generally about processes rather than practice or outcomes. 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.

3.6 These areas for improvement were already identified by the service and plans are in place to address them as part of the Children and Families Service Improvement Plan.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 No significant issues although it should be noted that inspectors spoke extensively to front line staff and managers and also with children and families. The knowledge, skill and commitment of front line teams was an important part of the success in this inspection, as was the positive feedback from children and families. The Have a Voice Council of children looked after particularly impressed the inspectors with restorative high support and high challenge and their humour, insight and energy.

### **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.

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

4.3.1 This report relates to the Council's priority to make Leeds a Child Friendly City.

### **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 due to the reputational and financial impact of inspection failure in children's services. This positive inspection report shows the impact of a cross-Council focus on children's services.

## 5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The latest OfSTED report is great news for Leeds - the 'outstanding' judgements are welcome recognition of the city's ambition to be a Child Friendly City, our shared strategy for change, 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 or a slowing pace of reform. Instead this OfSTED report should be seen as an opportunity to build on the city's recent progress to find new ways to work with children and families; to continue to innovate, to continue to build the city's role as a national leader in the sector.
- 5.3 Leeds needs to continue to have the highest ambitions for children and young people. The next big challenge has to be to ensure every child and young person has the opportunity to fulfil their potential – for the city to be as celebrated for the best educational outcomes as it is for its social work practice.

## 6 Recommendations

Executive Board is recommended to:

- Formally record the appreciation and thanks of the Board for:
  - Front line staff and managers whose often challenging day to day work has made such a difference to the lives of children and families in Leeds;
  - Elected Members across all parties and senior officers of the Council who have prioritised children and led the change;
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- Note Ofsted's recognition that decisions made to invest in early help, prevention and workforce development have significantly contributed to this judgement.
- Continue to support the ongoing improvement of Children's Services in the city as we seek to ensure Leeds is the best city for children to grow up in.

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

None

### Appendices

Leeds ILACS Report 2018

Letter from Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director Social Care

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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.