

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES**  
**CABINET PANEL**  
**WEDNESDAY 13 FEBRUARY, 2019 AT 10.00AM**

Agenda Item No.  
**4**

**HERTFORDSHIRE INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILACS) OFSTED INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 2018**

*Report of the Director of Children's Services*

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**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a summary of findings of the recent Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Ofsted Inspection and actions to address report recommendations for further improvement.

**2. Summary**

2.1 In October 2018, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) conducted an 'Inspection of Children's Social Care Services' in Hertfordshire. Ofsted published their inspection report summarising the findings on 19 November 2018.

2.2 Following a comprehensive inspection over a two week period, the Inspectors' judged the overall effectiveness of Hertfordshire's children's social care services to be Good. Notably, the impact of leadership on social work practice was considered Outstanding and the other three judgement areas were each rated as good. There was specific mention of the service for care leavers as being outstanding.

2.3 Inspectors highlighted that social care services are well led and well managed and there is strong commitment at all levels of the organisation to improving outcomes for children, young people and families. Services are making a real difference to the lives of families and inspectors saw multiple examples of parents motivated to change behaviours that were having an adverse impact on their children. Partnership working is seen as a real strength particularly within multi-disciplinary teams. Furthermore, Hertfordshire is a good corporate parent whose actions demonstrate that children and young people in their care really matter.

- 2.4 The inspection team also noted that senior leaders have a good understanding, and commitment to addressing, areas requiring improvement. The team noted three areas for improvement in relation to: the balance between support and challenge with parents; application of thresholds with adolescents; placement stability and the number of children looked after (CLA) placed outside Hertfordshire. Actions to address these have been incorporated into the Children's Services self-improvement plan (Appendix A)
- 2.5 Overall, they felt that a culture of continuous improvement and strong leadership underpinned by 'top quality performance information' ensured that the organisation was well-placed to build on its strengths and address current and future challenges.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 The Cabinet Panel are asked to consider the Ofsted inspection report and agree to the proposed actions to address areas requiring improvement.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1 In 2017, Ofsted launched a new inspection framework, 'Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services' with the aim of establishing a more supportive relationship with local authorities to foster a culture of continuous improvement and high quality social care practice resulting in improved outcomes for children, young people and families. The Framework consists of the following elements:
- Annual conversation with inspectors informed by an annual self-evaluation of performance
  - *Standard judgement inspection* – 2 week on-site inspection for authorities previously rated as 'Requires Improvement'.
  - *Short judgement* – 1 week on-site inspection for authorities previously judged to be including Hertfordshire
  - *Focussed visits* – 2-3 day 'visits' from inspectors focused on particular service areas/ themes.
  - *Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)*- multi-inspectorate inspections of local authority and partner agency services for children
  - LA Special Educational Needs and Disability inspections
- 4.2 The inspection framework set out in the 'Ofsted inspecting local authority children's services framework', provides the details of the process and can be found here: [ILACS Framework](#).

4.3 During the inspection, the inspectors;

- Spoke with authority leaders and senior managers
- Reviewed an extensive range of performance data and documents to inform their lines of enquiry
- Evaluated and explored a sample of cases to judge the quality of practice
- Tested decision making at all stages of a child's 'journey' when receiving services
- Spoke with young people in care, School Heads, foster carers and adopters
- Observed practice and sat with workers to discuss cases.

4.4 Following the conclusion of the onsite visits and scrutiny of the data, evidence and documents provided, the county council received a detailed written report outlining the findings. The link to the full report can be found here: [Hertfordshire ILACS Report November 2018](#).

## 5.0 The Judgement for Hertfordshire Children's Services

5.1 The overall effectiveness of the service is given a judgement based on a four-point scale: outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate. The overall judgement received for the county council was '**Good**'.

This was derived from:

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 and care leavers	Good
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>

## 6.0 Summary of the report by judgement area

6.1 'The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families'

Inspectors noted that: senior leaders are restlessly ambitious for the children, young people and families. The service continues to be well led and well run and senior leaders have a good understanding of the Services' strengths and challenges. Furthermore they concluded that

Children's Services has an organisational culture where continuous improvement is the norm, underpinned by top quality performance information and one in which social work is flourishing. Under effective scrutiny from elected members, recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed and services, notably those for disabled children and young people, have continued to improve.

6.2 'The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection'

The inspection team concluded that early help services are well developed and making a real difference to the lives of children and their families and also reducing the number of referrals to social care. The Front Door is effective and well-managed with the recent introduction of the consultation hub particularly highlighted as successful. Inspectors observed many examples of purposeful direct work with children and young people which whilst child centred also considered the wider family context. Interventions were noted as relevant, purposeful and effective in delivering better outcomes. Partnership working, particularly in the multi-disciplinary teams was seen as real strength and inspectors recognised the benefits of bringing together a range of skills and experience through joint working.

6.3 Inspectors also noted that Hertfordshire provides good support for disabled children and those who are missing from education or electively home educated and at risk.

6.4 'The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers'

Children in care continue to receive a good service. Edge of care services are effective and there is a strong focus on achieving permanence when children and young people are in care. Workers know the children they work with, listen to their wishes and are persistent in trying to make sure their needs are met. Independent reviewing officers provide effective challenge and champion children's rights and views. Inspectors particularly noted that the Children In Care Council (CHICC) are actively engaged with senior leaders and influential in service development.

6.5 The attainment and educational progress of children in care was seen as improving over the last two years largely due to successful changes to the virtual school arrangements which have resulted in greater scrutiny and a focus on improvement and positive challenge.

6.6 Both adoption and fostering services were considered good and providing effective support to both adopters and foster carers. Inspectors also noted that services for care leavers is outstanding, particularly highlighting staff commitment to 'going that extra mile' and demonstrating that they really care about the young people they support.

## **7.0 Areas For Improvement**

- 7.1 The report recognises that senior managers are not complacent and are committed to continuing to improve services. In conclusion, the Lead Inspector identified the following areas for improvement.
- 7.2 Achieving the right balance between support and challenge with all parents. In a small number of cases, inspectors found that whilst there was a focus on motivating families to change, workers were over optimistic regarding the likelihood of change which contributed to drift and delay.
- 7.3 Consistently applying thresholds with adolescents. On occasion, inspectors were of the view that a different risk threshold is applied to adolescents, notably 16-17 year olds who present as homeless.
- 7.4 Placement stability and the disproportionate number of children in care who are living outside of the local authority's boundaries. This is a national issue and inspectors recognised that addressing the issue is a priority for senior leaders who are acutely aware of the impact it has on young people who are looked after.
- 7.5 In response, Children's Services has incorporated a series of actions to address these areas for improvement within its overarching Self-Assessment Development Plan (ref Appendix A)

## **8.0 Conclusion**

- 8.1 The inspection has confirmed the continued progress made since the last inspection in 2015. It also reinforces Hertfordshire's reputation for strong performance and innovative practice driving improved outcomes for Hertfordshire's children, young people and families.

## **9.0 Financial Implications**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications for this report. Any actions relating to the inspection are delivered within the agreed budget for Children's Services.

## **10.0 Equalities Implications**

- 10.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.
- 10.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this

requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

- 10.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 10.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment was not undertaken in relation to this matter as it was not deemed applicable to this report. Areas of equality and diversity were considered by inspectors during the course of the inspection.

### Background Information

Appendix 1 Extract from Children's Services Self-Assessment Development Plan 2018/19

## Appendix A – Extract From Children’s Services Self-Assessment Development Plan 2018/19

	Theme/ Action	Completion Date	How Will Progress/Impact Be Measured Or Evidenced?	Owner	Progress To Date
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Placement stability and the disproportionate number of children in care who are living outside of the local authority’s boundaries.</b>				
<b>4.1</b>	Ensure foster carers views are actively sought and encouraged through the use of surveys and events in order to adapt support offered in response.	May-19	Feedback from Foster Carer events/forums and e-surveys. Examples of process/practice changes e.g. implementation of a new form/checklist - evaluation of impact post change implemented.	Sue Lowndes, Head of Fostering and Adoption	Big Conversation held with foster carers listening to views on support, delegated authority and relationships with children’s social workers. Outcome - New model of informal engagement events across county to start 31st January 2019, to widen scope of foster carer voice. Fostering Forum will ensure foster engagement in solutions sought and monitor and scrutinise outcomes. Family & Friends foster carer representation agreed at forum and at engagement events.

	<b>Theme/ Action</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>How Will Progress/Impact Be Measured Or Evidenced?</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Progress To Date</b>
<b>4.2</b>	Implement changes to care planning processes to support best possible chance of long term placement stability.	May-19	Develop a checklist for workers regarding actions that should be taken for every child that needs to move placements - implement and test impact through speaking with those affected.	Sarah Baker, Head of Children Looked After	Checklist has been developed. Participation Team and CLA Managers have all contributed. This also includes CHICC views. Word versions have been distributed within the CLA Service. Form will be accessible via LCS (Social Work Recording System) by Feb 19.
<b>4.3</b>	Review of residential provision to inform the short, medium and long term strategy for Hertfordshire.	May-19	Final review document used to inform future commissioning activity.	Lynn Knowles, Head of Joint Commissioning CYP	Action plan in place Needs analysis taking place Meetings have taken place with finance re opportunities for capital funding. Further residential panel to take place in Jan 19 chaired by Marion Ingram. Inside out project progressing (step down from residential with intensive coaching )-some young people identified – begins April 19 Commissioning arrangements with providers progressing (for short to medium term

	Theme/ Action	Completion Date	How Will Progress/Impact Be Measured Or Evidenced?	Owner	Progress To Date
					increase in local placements). In house residential developments progressing- Business cases to be available Jan/Feb 19
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Consistently applying appropriate thresholds with adolescents</b>				
<b>5.1</b>	Developing and embedding good practice in line with 16 and 17 year old guidance and the local joint housing protocol.	Dec-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommendations paper to the Strategic Partnership Accommodation Board</li> <li>- Implementation of subsequent actions</li> <li>- Inclusion in Joint Housing Protocol and social work procedures</li> </ul>	Caroline Cook, Head of Targeted Youth Support & Vulnerable Young People	Recommendation paper to be presented to the SPAB meeting arranged for 18.1.19
<b>5.2</b>	Review and develop safeguarding and early help service for adolescents to ensure best outcomes and appropriate thresholds are applied.	Apr-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outcome of a review of services to adolescents.</li> <li>- Data and work volumes analysis.</li> <li>- Thresholds and pathways for adolescent referrals reviewed.</li> <li>- Practice guidance issued</li> </ul>	Andy Manson, Head of Services for Young People & YC Herts	In progress

	Theme/ Action	Completion Date	How Will Progress/Impact Be Measured Or Evidenced?	Owner	Progress To Date
5.3	Review and ensure the consistent use of multi-agency risk management meetings supported by appropriate processes.	Jan-19	- Review undertaken - Actions from the review implemented	Caroline Cook, Head of Targeted Youth Support & Vulnerable Young People	Currently exploring whether a report could be generated to capture MARM meeting activities (this is needed in order to undertake a review).
6.0	<b>Achieving the right balance between support and challenge with all parents.</b>				
6.1	Ensure that there are relevant oversight and reviews in place to support working with families under Child in Need plans.	Feb-19	-Themed audit of CIN care planning.  -Monitoring of length of time children are open to CIN plans.  -Monitoring of care planning that moves from CIN – CPP within 2months of transfer from Assessment to FS teams.  -Review the CIN Panel arrangements every 6months.  -Themed audit of ICPC decision making.  -Review of any ICPC / RCPC	Mayank Joshi, Heads of Safeguarding West Ross Williams, Head of Safeguarding East	(1) Reviewed the CIN Panels and criteria to monitor casework including the TOR. (2)CP chairs to conduct complex CIN review meetings from Feb 2019. (3) Developing monitoring arrangements for CIN work which steps down from CPP to ensure that ongoing support to families is provided. (4) Reviewed the current PLO timeframes and process with operational and legal colleagues to ensure that children are not

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			<p>decision where the decision made is not unanimous.</p> <p>-Feedback from Quarterly workshops from participants to inform practice.</p>		experiencing delay.
6.2	A clear workforce plan is in place for the continued development of Motivational Interviewing for staff to include practice workshops and training to ensure continued learning across the services.	Feb 19	<p>-Analysis of the internal review to inform next stages of FS practice.</p> <p>-Practitioner feedback from workshops.</p> <p>-Ensure that learning and feedback form Community of Practice informs decision making and is discussed at Senior Management Meeting.</p>	<p>Matt Ansell, Operations Director Children &amp; Families</p> <p>Lisa Burton, Training and development.</p>	<p>(1) Agreed two days training for all social work frontline staff and one day essential training for all other CS staff.</p> <p>(2) Developed train the trainer training and other professional development including post-qualification modules for MI Champions and other SW staff. (3) MI in action workshops delivered in CLA, Assessment, Family Safeguarding and Fostering and Adoption Teams. Now working with MI in Action Champions to evaluate these and begin 'phase 2' bespoke sessions for each of their service areas.</p> <p>All Social Work Students</p>

	Theme/ Action	Completion Date	How Will Progress/Impact Be Measured Or Evidenced?	Owner	Progress To Date
					<p>receive MI training prior to their placement</p> <p>(4) Incorporated into the CS Leadership Development Programme session on 'leading with MI'.</p> <p>(5) Community of Practice workshops to develop learning of the use of MI within safeguarding services. This learning to be effectively disseminated across service areas.</p>
6.3	<p>Ensure that partners working with children and families understand and apply the relevant challenge and where necessary use escalation processes if they believe that the care planning for children is not sufficiently safeguarding them.</p>	Jan-19	<p>-PPP Group to monitor and oversee all multi agency partner policies to inform and support practice.</p> <p>-Analysis of audit work to be presented at Children Service Core Board for action planning and agreement of feedback to staff.</p> <p>-3 and 6month review of new referral form, impact and quality.</p> <p>-All escalation to be reviewed and analysed and presented to</p>	Raj Chibber, Head of Assessments	<p>(1) Reviewing the current process and policy for partner escalation at the newly formed Practice, Policy and Procedures Group to ensure that all agencies are aware and following this policy (Jan 19)</p> <p>(2) Undertaking an audit sample on a monthly basis of 'No Further Action' and 'Pass to Early Help 'from the MASH to ensure appropriate application of thresholds</p> <p>(3) Implementing the</p>

	Theme/ Action	Completion Date	How Will Progress/Impact Be Measured Or Evidenced?	Owner	Progress To Date
			Children Services Core Board on a quarterly basis.		partnership agreed Referral Form and undertake monthly monitoring of the impact (Feb 2019) (4) Developing a system for collating all areas of challenge / escalation across the service to ensure that learning can be taken and shared with managers at the leadership forums.