

| Bath & North East Somerset Council | | |
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| MEETING/ DECISION MAKER: | Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel | |
| MEETING/ DECISION DATE: | 17th May 2022 On or after 17th May 2022 (for single Member decision) | EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: |
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| TITLE: | The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services Framework (ILACS) | |
| WARD: | All | |
| AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM | | |
| List of attachments to this report: Ofsted ILAC Report https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50181505 | | |

THE ISSUE

- 1.1 All Local Authorities are subject to Ofsted Inspection. B&NES were previously inspected in 2017 under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF): B&NES were judged to be Good overall with 2 areas Requiring Improvement to be Good.
- 1.2 This report outlines the findings from the Ofsted ILAC Inspection of Children's Services in February 2022.
- 1.3 The recommendations made within the Ofsted Inspection are to be considered and mechanisms for reassurance against the recommendations and ongoing progress are outlined.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

- 2.1 Recognise the improvements made within Children's Social Care as outlined within the Inspection report.
- 2.2 Acknowledge the recommendations made within the Ofsted report and work collaboratively with Children's Services to address the recommendations identified.
- 2.3 Agree the proposal for overseeing ongoing progress within Children's Services.

3 THE REPORT

Children's Social Care have been on an improvement journey since the last Ofsted inspection in 2017 and this work has been predominantly overseen by the Service improvement Board.

This work has paid off as demonstrated in the most recent Ofsted inspection.

- 3.1 Bath and North East Somerset Children's Services received a full Ofsted Inspection under the ILACS Framework in February 2022. This inspection took place over a two-week period and focused on all areas of practice including Children in need of help and protection, Children in care, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities. The grading given by Ofsted was that Bath and North East Somerset was Good in all 4 areas.

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

Ofsted went on to say that children in Bath and North East Somerset receive a good service.

- 3.2 Both corporately and politically, leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to achieving the best outcomes for children and families. Whether at the level of senior leaders or frontline practitioners, staff in BANES build effective working partnerships with statutory partner agencies, community groups and others to offer children and families an extensive range of services that are having a positive impact on their lives.
- 3.3 Against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and the context of rising levels of need, workers and the organisation have remained focused on the most vulnerable members of the community. Additional financial investment and the effective roll-out of the local authority's systemic and relationship-based model of practice underpin this achievement. Senior leaders and the strategic partnership have a clear picture of the evolving and complex needs of the community.

- 3.4 A forward-thinking approach to violence reduction, tackling child exploitation in all its forms, and to corporate parenting as a whole-council responsibility is helping to shape and deliver effective services for children.
- 3.5 Senior leaders know their service strengths and their areas for improvement very well. Their self-assessment is honest and accurate and is clearly aligned with the needs of the local community. More broadly, a genuine interest and commitment to developing practice through conferences, research, peer challenge and ongoing reflection leads to a well-informed and contemporary transformation programme.
- 3.6 Senior leaders have responded positively to the recommendations from the last inspection and much progress has been made against each of them. Families in the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline are supported well and their progress tracked efficiently.
- 3.7 There is a more robust quality assurance framework.
- 3.8 The percentage of children who are in EET continues to improve, while a strategy to reduce school exclusions is having a positive impact on reducing gaps in education experienced by children during the pandemic.
- 3.9 Support to care leavers has been strengthened, but leaders know that there is more to do in order for this to provide a consistently strong service to all care leavers.
- 3.10 Despite the challenges of COVID-19 and increasing demand, senior leaders have been effective in strengthening services since Ofsted's last inspection in 2017. Substantial investment by political and senior leaders and an effective model of social work practice have played a key part in this.
- 3.11 Early help has been enhanced by fuller integration into the front door and children almost always receive support at the right time for them.
- 3.12 They were of the view that for a small number of the most vulnerable care leavers, the support that they receive is not as strong as it is for most children.
- 3.13 When children return after having been missing from home or care, the learning from conversations held with them is not consistently well used to reduce the likelihood of them going missing again or to identify any wider patterns or trends.
- 3.14 Despite a recent increase in demand, staffing shortages and a small increase in social workers' caseloads, there has been little impact on children and their families due to the FSTs collectively knowing families well. A range of specialist services and resources have a positive impact on children's lives.
- 3.15 Children's Services will continue on their improvement journey with an ambition of becoming an outstanding Local Authority.
- 3.16 Ofsted made recommendations on 3 areas of our practice –
- 3.17 How effectively children are supported to take up return home interviews following a missing episode and how well the learning from interviews is used

to reduce the likelihood of them going missing again. This area of our practice is being reviewed and overseen through the service improvement board.

- 3.18 The other two recommendations are with regard to our service for care leavers-
 - a) How well leaders ensure that all care leavers, particularly the most vulnerable, receive a high standard of support
 - b) The timeliness with which personal advisers (PAs) are allocated to children to help them prepare for leaving care and adulthood, and how consistently care leavers are supported beyond 21 and up to the age of 25.
- 3.19 The feedback from Ofsted Inspectors was clear that to manage this, increased capacity in the team is required.
- 3.20 It is also important to recognise that our projected numbers of care leavers will increase over the forthcoming years, linked to an increase in overall care numbers up to 2018/19. Alongside this, there is also evidence to show that we may experience a further rise in care numbers in B&NES as from 2022 (in line with the B&NES and national data).
- 3.21 The needs of care leavers are increasingly complex, analysis shows that this is in part due to covid, EET opportunities, housing and mental health.
- 3.22 New statutory duties will come into force in April 2022 which directs all Local Authorities to keep in touch with young people aged 21-25 years and report formally to DFE. This will mean that our care experienced service in B&NES will need to expand.
- 3.23 We have already started to review service provision in this area, and we are working towards a dedicated care leaver service in B&NES in line with recommendations within the March 2022 OFSTED Inspection and new statutory duties as from April 2022.
- 3.23 It is likely that this will require substantial financial investment alongside practice changes. This area of work will be scrutinised and progressed through our Service Improvement Board.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Local Authority Children's Services are rigorously inspected under a number of Inspection frameworks, the inspection undertaken by Ofsted in 2022 was under the current Ofsted framework which is the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services Framework (ILACS).

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 Ofsted inspections are managed within current resources.
- 5.2 Some of the recommendations made from the Ofsted Inspection will require further financial scrutiny and investment.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.
- 6.2 Its is possible that not progressing the recommendations made from the Ofsted inspection will have a reputational impact upon the Council.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An EIA has not been carried out on this report. Any changes to service delivery will be underpinned by an EIA.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE


- 8.1 Children's Services must see children in their homes, settings and community in order to discharge their statutory responsibilities. Where possible, we will seek to minimize travel and use technology.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Policy Development &Scrutiny Panel Committee are informed of progress against the Ofsted report on a bi-annual basis.

10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 This report has been authored by Leigh Zywek Assistant Director for children and Young People Service, in conjunction with the Director of Children's Services.

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| Background papers |  Service Improvement Report to PDS July 20 |
| Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format | |