

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	13th October 2025	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	ILACS Report	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: B&NES Children’s services ILACS Report, June 2025.		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 We are presenting our ILACS Inspection Report Findings

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

2.1 Consider the findings of our inspection report and provide related scrutiny.

3 JUNE 2025 ILACS REPORT- OUR STRENGTHS

3.1 This report describes the service we offer to children and families as 'Good' overall and good across all 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	Good
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

- a) When children are referred to children's services, they are given appropriate priority based on their presenting level of need and risk.
- b) Consequently, children in BANES receive the right help and support, at the right time. When concerns are significant, action is taken swiftly to safeguard children. This remains the case out of ours, when support is offered by the Emergency Duty Team.
- c) Families open to early help and to children's social care receive detailed assessments of their needs, which includes input from other agencies who know the child. Assessments receive robust management oversight.
- d) Social workers take time building relationships with children and families, meaning that they know their needs well and offer a trauma informed service. The local authority offers innovative support, through initiatives such as Fostering Families, which aims to keep families together and reduce the number of children coming into care.
- e) When children do need to come into care, their family networks are thoroughly explored, meaning that the majority of children are placed with people they know. Children receive timely direct work from their social workers, to ensure that they understand why they cannot live with their parents, when this is the case.
- f) The majority of children who come into care are in the right placement to meet their needs. However, due to placement sufficiency, a small number of children are not in the correct provision. Leaders are aware of this and working to increase the number of placements available. Where children are in unsuitable placement, there is strong senior leader oversight and ongoing searches for the correct accommodation.
- g) Children in care are well supported to meet their educational goals and do well. Social workers advocate for children in the care of B&NES, as do the Virtual School, ensuring they receive the correct support to meet their emotional, vocational and academic needs.

- h) Many children in care are supported through the Life -Long Links Service, to nurture their relationships and connectivity. Children in care are also well supported by their Independent Reviewing Officers, who know them well and advocate on their behalf, driving forward planning.
- i) Disabled children receive a bespoke service, which is child centred and considers their holistic needs.
- j) Young people who come to B&NES seeking asylum receive a timely response that meets their needs, and this continues when they reach 18.
- k) Personal Advisors are strong advocates for Care Experienced Young People. PAs develop enduring relationships, offer relational support and advocate strongly for those they work with.
- l) Care leavers benefit from a comprehensive local offer that easily accessible via an app. Support is practical and includes accompanying young people to appointments, for example. There is targeted support in place for those who need it, such as when young people become parents themselves.
- m) There continues to be strong corporate commitment to children in B&NES, demonstrated by recent staffing investment for children with disabilities and care experienced young people.
- n) There is a strong Quality Assurance Framework, which includes input from children and families and ensures that senior leaders know the service well. This is demonstrated through their accurate self-assessment.
- o) Leaders know their strengths well and also work diligently and collectively to address areas that need improvement. Leaders are transparent and this allows for continued improvement and growth.
- p) Social workers speak positively about working in B&NES. They feel well supported by managers and senior leaders. They make excellent use of the Practice Framework, to support and inform their interventions with families.

4 JUNE 2025 ILACS REPORT- OUR AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 4.1 The report highlights the areas we need to continue to work on and helps to give a roadmap for how to further improve our service, as we strive towards outstanding.
 - a) Whilst the recent visit highlighted that we have made changes to our Return Home Interview Process. This remains an area for improvement and needs more strategic oversight, to improve consistency. Young people who go missing are not always offered a return home interview in a timely way.
 - b) Leaders made the decision to reduce audit activity in recent months due to organisational restructure. Leaders are aware of the need to increase audit activity and have plans in place to do this.

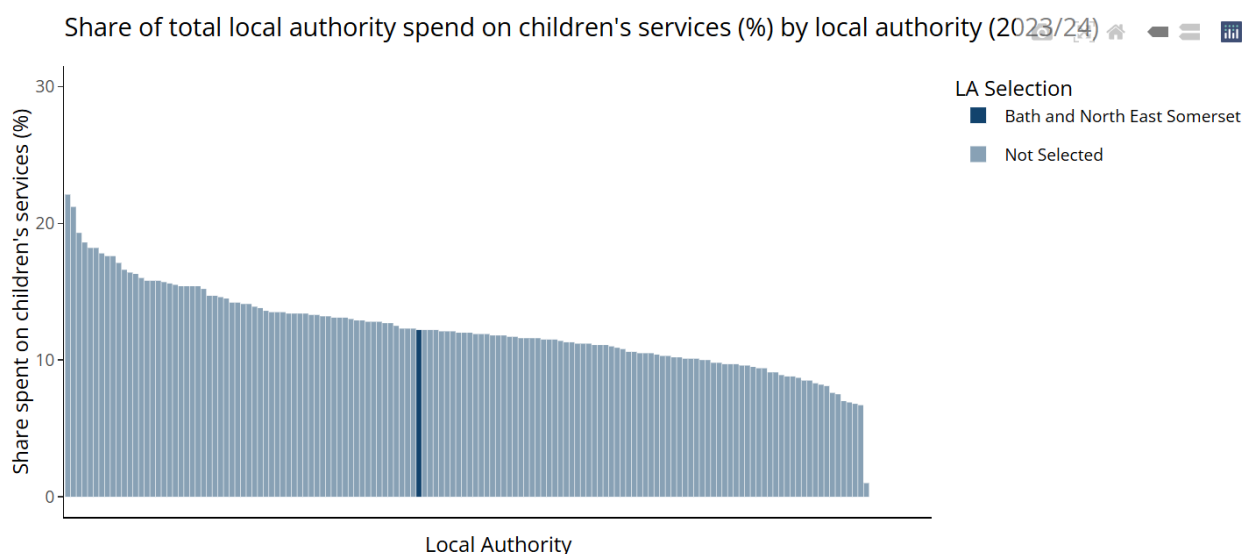
- c) Where young people require intense therapeutic support; this is spot purchased. Senior leaders are aware that aspects of the emotional health offer can be limited and have plans to address this.
- d) Case recording for some young people, particularly those in care, is not always consistent and more is needed to improve this. Leaders have recently invested in technology to support staff with recording; however this investment is too recent to be able to see its impact.
- e) Management oversight and supervision is not consistently recorded. For some young people, this has meant that rationale for key decisions is not visible in care records. Though these are often captured via panels.

5 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Our Ofsted Inspections are carried out under s.136 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#). Detailed guidance is contained within the Framework for Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services ([ILACS](#)), last updated in April 2025. Where a local authority is judged to be 'Good', they receive one 'Short' ILACS inspection every 3 years, with a 'focused' visit in -between. This Short Inspection lasted two weeks, with inspectors being off site for the first week carrying out reading and preparatory work, and on site visiting different teams within our service, during week two.
- 5.2 The inspection report described how we are meeting our statutory duties for young people in our area. This includes through applying the correct thresholds at the front door and escalating concerns as appropriate under the [Children Act 1989](#) and [Working Together 2023](#). The report describes the good quality support offered by our virtual school, as legislated through s.99 of the [Children and Families Act 2014](#) and detailed in [policy guidance](#).
- 5.3 There is much new legislation and policy guidance for children's services, some of which has already been passed and some of which is on the horizon. Of note is the group of policy changes referred to as '[Families First](#)'. This includes significant changes to the way we work with families, which we are currently planning through various workstreams and via our Transformation Steering Group. These changes are due to be implemented in April 2026. At the core of these changes is reducing the number of children entering care, by providing a greater level of multi-agency support at an earlier stage.
- 5.4 Part of the Families First changes includes the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024](#), which is due to receive royal assent in Autumn 2025. This places extended duties on our Virtual School and increases oversight around children who are electively home educated, particularly those subject to a Child Protection plan. Our recent inspection described our current Election Home Education service as providing robust support and oversight, putting us in a good place to enact these additional duties. There will be greater scrutiny on the support offered to children and young people open to children's social care to access education. Work has begun to increase oversight in this area, with greater links now in place between our Family Support Teams and the Virtual School. The recruitment of our Designated Social Care Officer has also helped to increase links between our family support and education teams.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 6.1 From a financial perspective, it is a positive that we have retained our 'Good' status within children's Social Care, as moving down to 'Requires Improvement' can lead to significant cost implications and also, to increased inspection and scrutiny.
- 6.2 The below chart shows our spending on children's services in 2023/24, in comparison to other Local Authorities. In 2023/24, 12.2% of our overall spend was on Children's Services. For more information, please visit the [DfE Children's Social Care Outcomes and Enablers Dashboard](#).



- 6.3 We are currently carrying out a review of how we operate our services and planning our Families First Transformation. We will ensure that we include any investment required to help us to improve in the areas identified by Ofsted within this business planning.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT

This Inspection has demonstrated that we are performing well in many areas. However, it has identified moderate risk, related to the below factors. Please see updates in orange.

- 7.1 Our recording practices for some children, especially those in care needs to improve. We have implemented new scrutiny measures at Director level, to improve oversight regarding recording practices. As mentioned by Ofsted, we have invested in Magic Notes AI technology, and we have started to see improvements in recording as a result, these now need to be embedded.
- 7.2 Our Supervision and management oversight is sometimes not recorded in a timely and detailed way. We have a new data report relating to supervision, to increase our ability as leaders to scrutinise this aspect of our work and drive change. Since 02/09/2025 when this was launched, we have seen a 13% increase in the number of supervisions now recorded as occurring on time and expect to see this continue to improve. We have planned a Supervision

Thematic Audit for November 2025, to help to continue to drive practice in this area.

- 7.3 Return home interviews for our young people require greater oversight. We have implemented greater senior management oversight and scrutiny relating to our return home interviews. We are planning on changing the structure of support relating to return home interviews as part of our Families First Transformation. We are releasing a 'two-page guide' to the Return Home interview Process for all social workers in October 2025 and rolling out increased return home interview training for from October 2025.
- 7.4 Auditing was slightly reduced in the lead up to the Ofsted Inspection, due to the Being our Best Process and the pressure this put-on managers across our teams. We need to ensure that we are conducting an appropriate number of audits for individual children. Auditing has increased over the past 2 months. We are planning auditing training for managers in November 2025. There is now increased scrutiny and oversight around auditing themes and actions within our Service Improvement Board.

8 EQUALITIES

We have a strong commitment to promoting equality and equity of service within our directorate. Whilst we are not proposing any changes to services within this report for scrutiny, we would like to highlight the below factors, relating to equality.

- 8.1 There is a strong social gradient linked to intervention from children's services, with [research](#) showing that those from more deprived areas are more likely to have social care intervention. The provision of more preventative services, as in planned via our Families First Reforms, will help us to reduce this inequality.
- 8.2 The inspection report praised our work with children with disabilities, discussing how this cohort receive a "child centred response from committed social workers, who know them well."
- 8.3 The inspection report praised our work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, who receive a bespoke service both when they are in care and care experienced. This is a strength of our service.
- 8.4 Our inspection praised our participation work with care experienced young people. As we look to improve our recording practices, we are planning on recruiting some of our young ambassadors to be involved in a workshop with social workers, to help them to understand the importance of good quality and contemporaneous recording practices.
- 8.5 We need to continue to improve our council wide commitment to promoting care experienced as a protected characteristic. This will be achieved through the continuation of our Working Group, led by Cherry Bennet (Director of People and Change). This report identifies ways in which we need to continue to improve our service for Care Experienced young People and these changes will be considered through our current Families First Transformation Programme.
- 8.6 We are holding a conference focusing on 'Justice-Centered Practice: Challenging Racism in Systems' for colleagues across Children's Services, on

5th November 2025. We are committed to embedding anti-racist practice across our service.

9 CLIMATE CHANGE

9.1 No climate change impacts identified.

10 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

10.1 None.

11 CONSULTATION

11.1 To be completed following consultation.

Contact person	Jean Kelly, Director of Children's Services.
Background papers	Please visit the Ofsted Website for all previous reports. https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80427
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