

**Agenda Item No.6 (k)****DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****CABINET****16 March 2020****Report of the Executive Director for Children's Services****INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES ("ILACS") –  
POST ILACS ACTION PLAN AND SUMMARY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE****(YOUNG PEOPLE)****1. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to:

- i) Share with Cabinet the action plan which has been developed to address the five areas for improvement identified in Derbyshire's ILACS inspection;
- ii) Seek Cabinet agreement to publish a summary version of the Ofsted report and action plan for children and young people.

**2. Information and Analysis**

In July and August 2019, Ofsted carried out an inspection of Derbyshire County Council's Children's Services under the ILACS inspection framework. The inspection report is available on Ofsted's website at the following address:

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/830>

The inspection identified that senior leaders in Derbyshire have a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement across the service. Inspectors highlighted a sustained trajectory of improvements in many children's services, and commented positively on:

- An improved response to children in need of protection, as a result of effective work by senior managers. Children now benefit from clearer, more focused planning and timely intervention, which safeguards their welfare.

- Most social workers are well supported, receive regular supervision and oversight. Service remodelling and significant investment has led to increased capacity in social work and supervisory roles.
- Strategic leaders' actions to strengthen performance management and quality assurance arrangements have been successful in ensuring more effective oversight of practice.
- The preventing family breakdown team provides a high-quality service and adds significant value by supporting children on the edge of care
- Children in care live in homes that meet their needs. They build positive relationships with dedicated social workers, who spend time getting to know them.
- Permanence is planned for children at an early stage.
- Children in care receive effective support from the virtual school.
- Audits demonstrate an improving trajectory in respect of the quality of practice and the effectiveness of operational management oversight, which is helping to improve children's outcomes.
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Derbyshire receive an excellent and responsive service to meet their needs.
- The local authority fostering service is a strength.
- Adoption timeliness for children has shown sustained improvement since 2017, and adopters are positive about the services and help they receive. Life appreciation days are held for every child, and this provides adopters with the opportunity to meet with significant people in their child's life and enhances their knowledge of children's life histories. Adoption workers go to extraordinary lengths to facilitate this impressive service

The inspection also identified that further work is needed to address some remaining areas of pressure and/or inconsistent practice. The specific areas for improvement identified in the report are:

- The timeliness with which Starting Point progress decision-making on contacts when there are no child protection concerns.
- The quality and timeliness of assessment and planning for children in need, including disabled children, those in private fostering arrangements and young people who present as homeless.

- The consistency of the quality of recording of strategy discussions.
- The timeliness of initial personal education plans (PEPs) and initial health assessments for children newly into care.
- The consistency of practice, including the effectiveness of front-line management oversight and supervision

The Care Leavers' service in Derbyshire was commissioned to an external provider for a 12 year period up to 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019, and transferred back to the Council on the day inspection was notified. At the time of inspection, Ofsted agreed that support for care leavers needed to improve and endorsed the steps already taken by the Council, commenting that:

*“the new service provides a secure basis for a streamlined and coordinated service for care leavers and there are early signs of some improvements. However, it is too early to demonstrate positive impact, as this service was only just launched at the time of the inspection.”*

Ofsted requires all local authorities (other than those judged to be 'outstanding') to submit an action plan following inspection. Since August the senior management team in Children's Services, together with relevant lead officers and elected members, have considered the above improvement priorities. A post-ILACS action plan has been developed, which focuses on how the pace of change can be accelerated to ensure a swift and robust response to the inspection findings.

A copy of the post-ILACS action plan is at Appendix 1. The plan is underpinned by more detailed project plans for each priority.

The action plan was submitted to Ofsted in December 2019. Ofsted do not have a role in approving the plan, however they have indicated that it covers all the areas they would expect.

Work is underway to deliver the actions, with progress being monitored regularly by a Quality Assurance Board chaired by the Executive Director and the Practice Improvement Board, which includes senior managers and elected members. Improvements have already been achieved in several areas, including the timeliness of decision-making in Starting Point where there are no child protection concerns, and the timeliness of initial PEPs for children in care.

Young People's Summary Version

Ofsted require that a summary version of their inspection report is made available to young people locally. The draft at Appendix 2 has been developed by the Participation Team with input from the Derbyshire Youth Council. It summarises the main findings of the inspection and explains how the Council is working to improve services further.

If Cabinet approves the draft at Appendix 2, it will be shared with the Youth Council and with all Derbyshire children in care and care leavers. Copies will be provided to social workers to share with families, and it will also be made available in children's centres and social care offices.

### **3. Financial Considerations**

The investment required to deliver current improvement plans for Children's Services, and to address ongoing areas of pressure, is detailed in the Council's budget plan and will be met from existing approved budgets.

### **4. Social Value Considerations**

This report and action plan seeks to further strengthen the quality and consistency of help and protection for vulnerable children.

### **5. Legal Considerations**

The Framework, evaluation criteria and inspection guidance for the inspection of local authority children's services November 2017 (updated December 2019) requires that the local authority should write an action plan that responds to the findings in the report.

### **6. Other Considerations**

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered:- prevention of crime & disorder, equality of opportunity, environmental, health, legal & human rights, human resources, property and transport considerations.

### **7. Key Decision**      No

### **8. Call-in**

Is it necessary for the call-in period to be waived in respect of the decisions being proposed in the report? No

### **9. Background Papers**

These are held on file in the Children's Services Performance, Quality and Participation Section.

**10. Officer Recommendation**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- i) Notes the content of the action plan at Appendix 1; and
- ii) Approves publication of the summary version for children and young people at Appendix 2

**Jane Parfremment**  
**Executive Director for Children's Services**



**INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILACS) – 1<sup>st</sup> July to 12<sup>th</sup> July  
 and 5<sup>th</sup> August to 8<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

**PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION**

<b>What needs to improve</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By Who</b>	<b>By When</b>
The timeliness with which Starting Point progress decision-making on contacts when there are no child protection concerns	Finalise and launch new thresholds document, supporting active roll-out by all agencies to support consistent understanding of thresholds	Rachel Harrison Head of Service, Starting Point	January 2019
	Review and strengthen call handling processes within Call Derbyshire to improve initial signposting and reduce inappropriate/poor quality referrals.		March 2020
	Re-design 'Pod' model within Starting Point to ensure the most efficient response to all contacts received at the appropriate threshold		Already in progress with improvements to timescales as below  <i>September 2019 performance:</i> CP 1 working day CIN 4 working days EH 2 working days
	Embed new 'Early Help' front door processes within Starting Point		March 2020
	Explore further improvements to live performance dashboard reports		March 2020
The quality and timeliness of assessment and planning for children in need, including disabled children, those in private fostering arrangements and young people who present as homeless	Private fostering lead to offer advice and support to allocated workers for all private fostering cases and review the quality of assessments and plans	Rod Duncan Senior Team Manager	November 2019
	Audit programme to incorporate an annual audit of all private fostering cases	Emma Steeples Assistant Head of QA	November 2019
	Launch new joint protocol and pathway with District and Borough councils for 16/17 year olds who present as homeless	James Gracey Commissioning Manager	February 2020

	Leads within Social Care ensure pathways are understood and followed consistently across the county, ensuring young people presenting as homeless receive an appropriate and timely response in order to meet their needs.	Ann Coverley Head of Service, Chesterfield & Louise Ryan Team Manager, Erewash	February 2020
	Homelessness leads to regularly audit the quality of casework and adherence to the pathway	Ann Coverley Louise Ryan	February 2020
	Review team structure within Disabled Children's Service to strengthen management oversight of case work	Diana McKenna Head of Disabled Children's Service	December 2019
The consistency of the quality of recording of strategy discussions	Specific training for Team Co-ordinators on minute-taking for strategy discussions	Sharon Elliott Business Services Manager	January 2020
	Monthly sampling of quality of strategy discussion records	Emma Steeples Assistant Head of QA	January 2020
The timeliness of initial personal education plans (PEPs) and initial health assessments for children newly into care.	Implement manual system to identify new entrants to care on a daily basis.	Helen Moxon Headteacher, Virtual School	Achieved - with early improvement in % of PEPs initiated within 10 days as below:  <i>July 2019 – 14%</i> <i>Sep 2019 – 73%</i>
	Introduce and embed longer term arrangements for initiation of PEPs following implementation of ePEPs		January 2020
	Children in care health outcomes group to oversee root and branch review of the process, performance managing and accountability for health assessments for children place in and outside of the area.  SMART Targets to be set for each stage of the initial health assessment process.  LEAN methodologies to revise the current administrative processes.  Additional scrutiny to be included in the performance reporting to the Corporate Parenting Board.	Isobel Fleming Service Director, Commissioning & Transformation	March 2020
	Increase clinic capacity for initial health assessments	Derby and Derbyshire CCG	March 2020

The consistency of practice, including the effectiveness of front-line management oversight and supervision	Commission external peer challenge, diagnostic and support to improve consistency of practice, potentially via the 'Partner in Practice' programme	Alison Noble Service Director Early Help & Safeguarding	March 2020
	Review respective roles and embed clear expectations of Senior Team Managers, Team Managers and Practice Supervisors	Pete Lambert Assistant Director Early Help & Safeguarding	March 2020
	Principal Social Worker role to focus specifically on practice improvement and consistency	Tracey Hyslop Principal Social Worker	November 2019
	Develop and implement team level performance and quality 'scorecard'	Sara Lewis Assistant Head of Performance	March 2020
	Organise regular, Locality-wide practice development days for all social work staff. The first sessions to take place early spring 2020 and to focus on analysis and assessment.	Pete Lambert Assistant Director Early Help & Safeguarding	By March 2020 (rolling programme thereafter)

## **APPENDIX 2: DRAFT SUMMARY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **What Ofsted said about the Derbyshire County Council services that help and look after children and young people**

**In July 2019 the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspected the Children's Services provided by Derbyshire County Council.**

This is a summary of what the Inspectors said and our plans to help children and young people who receive our support.

#### **Question 1: How well does Derbyshire County Council support its social workers to care for children and families?**

**The Inspectors rated Derbyshire as 'Good' at doing this.**

Senior managers know which services are working well and what needs to improve.

We have increased the number of social workers and made changes to social work teams to give workers more time to spend with children and families.

Managers and workers really want to make a difference to children's lives, make sure that they feel safe and are achieving their best.

Managers really listen to children and young people and make decisions based on their views.

The Virtual School helps children in care develop social skills and confidence.

#### **Question 2: How do we help children who need our support and protection?**

**The Inspectors rated Derbyshire County Council as 'Requires Improvement to be good' at doing this.**

Everyone is working hard to help and protect every child and young person. Sometimes it takes us too long for children to get the help that they need.

Workers are doing a great job working with children and their families but sometimes they need to be clearer about what help is needed and keep a better record of their decisions.

When children go missing workers need to understand why, and work with them to make plans to keep them safe.

Great work is done to safely keep families together. The Virtual School also helps young people access their learning and build their social and cultural experiences.

### **Question 3. How does Derbyshire County Council help children in care and care leavers?**

**The Inspectors rated Derbyshire as 'Requires Improvement to be good' at doing this.**

Children in care receive good support from social workers who are dedicated to helping them, and want them to achieve their best.

Following widespread consultation with care leavers and a comprehensive service review the service for care leavers has been changed so it's provided by the council now instead of another organisation.

This will provide a better service and there are early signs of some improvements. However, it is too early to demonstrate positive impact as this service was only just launched at the time of the inspection.

### **What more is Derbyshire County Council doing to help children and young people?**

- We've changed how teams work together to help children and recruited more social workers so workers can spend more time listening to children and working with them on their plans for the future.
- We're providing more training and support for social workers so that all children and families get the right help quickly.
- We've changed our Leaving Care Service to help young people from age 16 and to provide better support after listening to their views.
- We're finding out quickly what help children need to be healthy when they come into care and what help they need for their emotional health.
- We're working really hard to support children in care with their education through the Virtual School.
- We will listen to children and young people and design services to help them be the best they can be.

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