

**Children and Young People's
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

23rd September 2022

**Ofsted ILACS Inspection
Durham - May 2022**



Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director, Children and Young Peoples Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the outcomes of the recent Ofsted Standard ILACS Inspection of Childrens Services. Arrangements have been made for the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services to present the accompanying presentation.

Executive summary

- 2 The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for learners of all ages as well as the inspection and regulation of services that care for children and young people.
- 3 The ILACS Inspection Framework is the means by which Ofsted inspect Local Authority Childrens Social Care Services. The Framework focuses on the effectiveness of services and arrangements in relation to the:
 - help and protection of children;
 - experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home;
 - arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption;
 - experiences and progress of care leavers;
 - effectiveness of leaders and managers;

- impact they have on the lives of children and young people;
 - quality of professional practice.
- 4 As part of the Framework, Ofsted Inspectors make a graded judgement on a 4-point scale as below:
- Outstanding;
 - Good;
 - requires improvement to be good;
 - inadequate.
- 5 During the Childrens Services Standard ILACS Inspection in September 2019, the Service was judged as 'requiring improvement to be good'. Following the inspection, the Council implemented a range of improvement actions to address the issues identified by Ofsted.
- 6 In late April 2022, Ofsted announced the next ILACS Standard Inspection of Durham County Council Childrens Services, with the Inspection Team being onsite from the 9th - 20th May 2022.
- 7 The inspection process involved interviewing frontline staff from across the whole service, speaking to significant numbers of young people, parents, and care leavers, holding individual discussions with adopters, foster carers, schools' staff, partners, senior managers, and council leaders. Ofsted also scrutinised strategy and policy documents, audit information and a range of statistics and performance data, as well as reviewing individual child case files.
- 8 Following the completion of the inspection process Ofsted concluded that Durham County Council has improved and expanded services to children since its last inspection in 2019 and has provided swift and purposeful responses to areas for improvement.
- 9 Ofsted provided the following judgments in respect of the Council's Childrens Services in the final report published on the 5th July 2022:

Evaluation Criteria	Ofsted Judgment
Impact of leaders on social work practice	Outstanding
Experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
Experiences and progress of Children in care and care leaver	Good
Overall Effectiveness	Good

Recommendations

- 10 Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny to note the report and presentation.

Background

- 11 The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. They also inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people.
- 12 The ILACS Inspection Framework is the means by which Ofsted inspect Local Authority Childrens Social Care Services and focuses on the effectiveness of services and arrangements in relation to the:
- help and protection of children;
 - experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home;
 - arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption;
 - experiences and progress of care leavers;
 - effectiveness of leaders and managers;
 - impact they have on the lives of children and young people;
 - quality of professional practice.
- 13 Ofsted Inspectors make a graded judgement based on the evidence and findings identified during the inspection period. The graded judgment is on a 4-point scale:
- Outstanding;
 - Good;
 - requires improvement to be good;
 - inadequate.
- 14 During the Childrens Services Standard ILACS Inspection in September 2019, Durham County Council was judged as 'requiring improvement to be good'. Following the inspection, the Council has implemented improvement actions to address the issues identified by Ofsted and also those raised during a further focussed visit in July 2021.

- 15 In April 2022, Ofsted announced the next ILACS Standard Inspection of Durham County Council Childrens Services. The Onsite Inspection activity took place between 9 May to 20 May 2022, with the Inspection Team being based at Green Lane in Spennymoor.
- 16 The ILACS inspection is a rigorous process which requires a major logistical effort by the Council to ensure it is well managed and well communicated.
- 17 This includes both an intensive period of offsite activity by the Council to provide a vast array of data, information, and strategic and policy documents to evidence how Services are lead, managed, governed and outcomes driven.
- 18 This is followed by the onsite activity which was undertaken over a 2-week period and involved:
- Interviews with over 100 members of staff;
 - Onsite visits to First Contact and the MASH to review services;
 - Phone calls with representatives from the Courts and CAFCASS;
 - A significant number of phone calls to children and their parents which require consent;
 - Meeting with Care Leavers at the Care Leavers Hub;
 - Meeting with Children from the Children in Care Council;
 - Interviews with the Councils Leader, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young Peoples Services and the Chief Executive;
 - Phone calls to Adopters and Foster Carers;
 - Discussions with Designated Safeguarding leads and teaching staff in schools;
 - Daily Keeping in touch meetings with the Senior Management Team.
- 19 Ofsted concluded that Durham County Council had ‘improved and expanded services to children since its last inspection. There have been swift and purposeful responses to the areas for improvement in the last inspection and the areas for priority action identified at the last focused visit.’
- 20 Ofsted identified the following as key strengths in County Durham:
- an acute knowledge of the needs of children in Durham and an accurate self-assessment of their service;

- identified the highest areas of need and demand and have built effective and responsive services around them;
- well-designed and improved structures which reflect the ambition to continually improve the response to all children and young people;
- Highly innovative specialist teams which are providing very high-quality support for the most vulnerable children;
- Core social work practice in the majority of service areas is effective, reducing children’s needs and risks and improving their lived experiences;
- Children in need of help and protection, and children in care, are benefiting from relationship-based practice that focuses on children’s needs. This is leading to children and families making sustainable progress;
- The recently strengthened care leavers service and the ‘hub’ are beginning to improve experiences for care experienced young people.

21 Ofsted also identified a small number of areas which the council should continue to improve:

- The response to children who go missing from home or care;
- The sufficiency of short-break placements, respite, and sessional care for disabled children;
- Pathway assessments and planning for care leavers.

22 Ofsted’s conclusion was that the Councils Childrens Services have demonstrated sustained and positive improvement from the previous ILACS Standard Inspection in 2019 and as a result agreed the following judgments which were published in the final inspection report on the 5th July 2022:

Evaluation Criteria	Ofsted Judgment
Impact of leaders on social work practice	Outstanding
Experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
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Overall Effectiveness	Good

Conclusion

- 23 It is pleasing to note that the investment, prioritisation and hard work of Durham County Council and its staff and the improvements made have been recognised through the Ofsted ILACS inspection process. The report provided by Ofsted acknowledges the significant improvement to children's services since the previous inspection in September 2019 and most importantly that this is leading to children and families making sustainable progress.
- 24 The Ofsted report and findings provide a strong foundation for the Council to further develop its services to children moving forward.

Background papers

- 25 The full report is accessible on the link below:

[50187560 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspections/50187560)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable