

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

Date: 26 May 2020

Title: The findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services

Portfolio(s): Children, Young People and Learning	Cabinet Member: Councillor Peter Earley	
Report from Service Area:	Health, Education, Care and Safeguarding	
Responsible Officer:	Jacqui Old, Director of Children's Services	Tel 0191 643 7317
Wards affected:	All	

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

Between 09 March 2020 and 13 March 2020 North Tyneside Council's Children's Social Care Services were inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (hereafter 'Ofsted') as part of their national programme of three yearly inspection. The Inspection, following a five-day notice period, focused upon effectiveness of the Council's Children's Social Care Services in relation to three areas: the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families; the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection and; the experiences and progress of children in care and care.

Ofsted published their findings by way of a written report on 15 April 2020. Ofsted judged the overall effectiveness of Children's Social Care Services in North Tyneside to be 'Outstanding'. This overall judgment was based on the following findings:

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	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding

This places North Tyneside Council within the small group of top performing Children's Services within the country.

Ofsted made just two formal recommendations to the Authority about areas for development. Both areas were known to Officers prior to inspection and improvement work was on-going at the point of inspection. The Authority is required to provide an 'Action Plan' relating to the recommendations for approval by the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, no later than 21 July 2020.

A copy of the proposed Post-Inspection Action Plan developed by Officers and endorsed by the Head of Service and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning is appended.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet note:

1. the positive findings of Ofsted, including the overall effectiveness of services being graded 'Outstanding'
2. the areas for development identified by Ofsted and the commitment by the Service Area to address these and to continue to improve and develop services for children and young people, parents and carers.

1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty-eight days notice of this report was provided. It first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 16 April 2020, immediately after publication of the Ofsted Report.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

The 2018-2020 Our North Tyneside Plan states that 'Our people will':

- Be listened to so that their experience helps the Council work better for residents.
- Be ready for school – giving our children and their families the best start in life.
- Be ready for work and life – with the right skills and abilities to achieve their full potential, economic independence and meet business needs.
- Be healthy and well – with the information, skills and opportunities to maintain and improve their health, well-being and independence, especially if they are carers.
- Be cared for, protected and supported if they become vulnerable including if they become homeless.
- Be encouraged and enabled to, whenever possible, be more independent, to volunteer and to do more for themselves and their local communities.

The Ofsted Inspection of the Council's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers confirms the quality and performance of Children's Services' contribution to these priorities.

1.5 Information:

Background and Scope of the Inspection

In January 2018, Ofsted introduced the 'ILACS' (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) national inspection framework to replace the 'SIF' (Single Inspection Framework) inspection process by which North Tyneside Council's services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers were inspected in March 2017.

The published guidance for the ILACS framework notes that the framework maintains its predecessors focus on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements:

- to help and protect children;
- the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home;
- the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption;
- the experiences and progress of care leavers.

Additionally, the ILACS Framework also evaluates:

- the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people, and the quality of professional practice.

Inspectors are noted to seek answers to three questions in relation to the progress of Children's Social Care Services since the preceding inspection:

- Has the quality and impact of practice been maintained?
- Are there any areas where the quality and impact of practice have improved?
- Are there any areas where the quality and impact of practice have deteriorated?

Relevant to North Tyneside, ILACS introduced, for the first time, different time lengths of inspection dependent upon the findings of the preceding assessment. As North Tyneside was graded 'Good' by the March 2017 Inspection, North Tyneside was subject to a 'Short' Inspection – five days fieldwork rather than ten days by Inspectors following five-days' notice.

The Inspection

On Monday 02 March 2020, the Head of Service was notified by Mr. Nigel Parkes, her Majesty's Inspector, that Ofsted would commence their Inspection of North Tyneside Council Children's Social Care Services on 09 March 2020. This was the first full inspection of North Tyneside's services since March 2017.

The inspection took place between 09 March 2020 and 13 March 2020. The inspection team consisted of four of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted and two additional Inspectors for Fostering, Adoption and Residential Care and for the Virtual School respectively.

The inspection team were onsite for five working days and read case files, observed staff working with children and families and other professionals and discussed with staff and safeguarding partners the help and care given to children and young people. They also

talked directly to children, young people and their families, including the Children in Care Council and SEND Youth Forum, Foster Carers and Adopters. They visited a range of Council venues where services for children and young people are based and delivered, including Quadrant, the Oxford Centre, Riverside Children's Centre, Whitley Bay Customer First Centre, Balliol Wing (Adopt North East) and The Lodge (Leaving Care).

Outcome of Inspection

Ofsted published their findings by way of Report on 15 April 2020. The Summary of findings is taken verbatim from the full Report and is as follows:

Senior leaders share a relentless commitment to continuous improvement. Outward looking and open to challenge, they have succeeded in creating a learning environment in which social work is thriving. Strategic partnerships are mature, well developed and highly effective. The quality of performance management information is excellent. The reach of the quality assurance framework is extensive. Using a rich combination of facts, figures and findings", senior leaders are proactive in responding to shortfalls in practice and performance. They are daring and imaginative in pushing the boundaries in order to improve the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers.

Partner agencies have enthusiastically embraced early help. Further changes to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) have significantly increased its impact and effectiveness. The interface between children's social care and early help has been strengthened. The local authority's preferred method of social work has transformed the way in which they, and their partners talk with children and families and to each other about what worries them, what is working well and about what worries them, what is working well and what they need to do about it. As a result, most children get the right level of the right level of help and protection help and protection at the right time.

When it is no longer possible for children to live safely at home, the local authority pulls out all the stops to try to make sure that children stay connected with their friends, families and communities. Most children in care live in good-quality placements within a 20-mile radius of their family homes. The local authority is in touch with virtually all of its care leavers, the vast majority of whom are living in safe and suitable accommodation.

Ofsted report that it judges the overall effectiveness of Children's Social Care Services in North Tyneside to be 'Outstanding'. A comparison with the graded judgments of other local authorities that have been inspected to date by Ofsted establish that North Tyneside Council is one of only fourteen Local Authorities to be graded Outstanding in the country.

Formal Recommendations resulting from the Inspection to North Tyneside Council

Two formal recommended areas for development were made by Ofsted and are taken verbatim from the Report as follows:

What needs to improve:

- 1. Supervision and management oversight are not of a consistently high quality or always clearly recorded.*

2. *In the absence of good-quality life-story work, children and young people are not routinely getting the help they need to make sense of their, and their families', histories and better understand why they are in care.*

The Authority is required to submit copies of the post inspection action plan to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector no later than 21 July 2020.

Response by the Authority

Officers have devised and will submit a Post-Inspection Action Plan to address the two recommendations to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector within the prescribed timescale.

Additionally, other areas identified for development but not subject to formal recommendations, not least the judgment that the experience of children in care and care leavers is 'Good but not 'Outstanding', will be subject to relentless and focused improvement work by Officers in the coming twelve months.

Governance of Delivery of the Plan

Delivery of the Plan will be subject to regular scrutiny and review by the Senior Management Team for Children, Young People and Learning. The Plan is owned by the Jacqui Old, Director of Children's Services.

Monitoring of Progress under the Plan by Ofsted

It is anticipated that progress by the Authority in relation to the two recommendations will be part of future Annual Conversations, meetings between the Regional Director of Ofsted and the Head of Service, scheduled for May of each year. Additionally, it is anticipated that progress in relation to the recommendations will be part of any subsequent inspection of Children's Services by Ofsted.

1.6 Decision options:

The following options are available for consideration by Cabinet

Option 1

Cabinet accepts the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2 above.

Option 2

Cabinet does not accept the recommendation set out in paragraph 1.2 above, and provides an alternative response to the Report by Ofsted following the Inspection of Children's Services.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

The recommendation affords an acknowledgement by Cabinet of the positive findings by Ofsted and endorses the actions identified by Officers to respond to two areas of development recommended by Ofsted.

1.8 Appendices:

- I. Ofsted Report on the Inspection of North Tyneside Council's Children's Social Care Services published 15 April 2020.
- II. North Tyneside Council Post-Inspection Action Plan

1.9 Contact officers:

Jacqui Old, Director of Children's Services, Tel. 0191 643 7317
Julie Firth, Assistant Director of Children's Services, CYPL Tel. 0191 643 5943
Nik Flavell, Senior Manager for Quality Assurance, CYPL. Tel. 0191 643 7219

1.10 Background Information

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author. This report is appended and is also available electronically at:

[Ofsted Report](#)

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

There are no direct financial implications as a result of implementing the proposed recommendations. It is anticipated that the Post-Inspection Action Plan will be delivered from within the existing resources allocated to Children, Young People and Learning.

2.2 Legal

The inspection of North Tyneside Council by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The Authority is required to submit copies of the post inspection action plan to the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector no later than 21 July 2020 (The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007).

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Consultation and Community Engagement during Inspection

The Ofsted Inspection process itself was fully participative, involving the Cabinet Member, Chief Executive, staff, children, young people, parents, carers and adopters as well as relevant partner agencies.

2.3.2 Consultation and Community Engagement following Publication

Ofsted published the report on their website following a factual accuracy consultation with the Council.

A detailed Communication Plan was developed (March 2020) and has been implemented by the Authority's Communications and Marketing Team from 15 April 2020, including press, partner and Member briefings and social media messaging.

2.4 **Human rights**

There are no direct human rights issues arising from this report.

2.5 **Equalities and diversity**

There are no direct issues of equality and diversity arising from this report.

2.6 **Risk management**

The Ofsted Inspection of North Tyneside Council's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers focused on the management of risk to children and young people. The report found services manage risk well, including responses to child abuse and neglect, child sexual exploitation, missing children, and radicalisation.

2.7 **Crime and disorder**

There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report.

2.8 **Environment and sustainability**

There are no environment and sustainability issues arising from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive X
- Head(s) of Service X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Head of Corporate Strategy X