

Ofsted update for Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission - January 2020

Background

Hackney Children's Services was inspected under the Ofsted ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) framework in November 2019.

The final inspection report was published on 20th December 2019 and is available here - <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50135828>

The judgements for this inspection are included below.

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

This service was previously judged as 'good' by Ofsted in 2016.

The inspection report includes 6 recommendations about areas that need to improve and these are included below:

- The quality of information-sharing by partners and decision-making within strategy discussions.
- The assessment of the impact for children of living in neglectful environments to inform authoritative and child-centred practice.
- The quality of assessment and planning for children subject to private fostering arrangements.
- The timeliness and effectiveness of pre-proceedings work, including the quality of contingency planning.
- The welfare of children who are missing education or who are home educated is safeguarded
- The effectiveness of management oversight by leaders and managers at all levels, including the effectiveness of oversight from child protection conference chairs.

The report also highlights areas of good practice, including: services for children in care and those leaving care, early help services, support for foster carers, support for families with no recourse to public funds, and staff morale.

A focused visit undertaken in February 2019 identified areas for priority action because it was judged that some children were living in situations of significant harm for too long before action was taken. The Ofsted ILACS inspection report acknowledged that *'since that time, senior leaders have taken steps to improve services for children in need of help and protection. There has been a positive shift in the practice and management culture so that it is increasingly child-focused.'* but found that practice was not yet consistently good.

Corporate response to Ofsted report

It is our aspiration that services will perform at a level that would be judged 'good' within one year and 'outstanding' within two years. It is an ambitious target but one which the whole Council is committed to. We are clear that this will require every service within the Council to take responsibility and work together to reach this goal.

The Council will involve frontline staff, partners, councillors and stakeholders in developing and delivering an improvement plan. The Children and Families Service will regularly report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission, and will also report back to staff, partners and residents on its progress.

Actions taken since Ofsted inspection

- A number of meetings have taken place with Police colleagues to develop a joint protocol for Strategy Discussions.
- All current open Private Fostering cases have been reviewed and action has been taken to address any required tasks identified. New governance and case management processes for Private Fostering cases have been agreed to strengthen the assessment and oversight of these cases.
- Improvements have been introduced to our pre-proceedings work, including the introduction of a revised PLO (Public Law Outline) letter template to improve clarity of information for parents about concerns for their children, what they need to do now and contingency planning.
- Work has taken place to begin scoping and review the staffing, frontline and senior management capacity required within Children's Social Care to ensure staff are supported to do skilled, direct work with children and families and to ensure that units are structured to support best practice. This work is ongoing.
- The Children and Families Service has worked with the Council's Communications team to arrange a series of staff engagement and consultation activities over the coming weeks and months.

Children's Member Oversight Board and Member updates

A member-led board has been established which, along with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission, will play a key role in monitoring progress against the improvement plan. There will be a range of ways in which Members will be kept informed including open drop in sessions and regular updates via the Members Update.

A Children's Leadership and Development Board has also been established with representation from senior officers to drive progress against the improvement plan. An external challenge partner has been identified to provide external scrutiny and challenge to the service and the improvement plan. Regular updates from the Children's Leadership and Development Board will be provided to the Children's Member Oversight Board.