

Ofsted Inspection Findings

Background

- Our first inspection under new Ofsted framework
- Inspectors visited 14 September – 8 October
- Reviewed paperwork, discussed issues with staff at all levels, observed some frontline practice
- Report published 27 November

Inspection Judgements

- Help and Protection Inadequate
- Children Looked After
 - Adoption Requires Improvement
 - Care Leavers Requires Improvement
 - Care Leavers Inadequate
- Leadership, Management & Governance Inadequate

Overall judgement: inadequate

Recommendations

- Leadership, management and governance
- Performance management and data
- Workforce development
- Social work practice: recording, levels of experience, compliance, use of chronologies, diversity, oversight of children in need, use of written agreements, private fostering, permanence, Personal Education Plans

Recommendations

- Independent Reviewing Officers' challenging of practice
- Adoption: drift, delays and sufficiency, timely life story work
- Care leavers: levels of support, entitlements, Employment Education and Training, and pathway plans

Positive findings

Support to frontline staff

- Social workers receive regular supervision and value the support they receive from frontline managers
- Line managers routinely record discussions and decisions regarding individual cases

Educational attainment/attendance

- There are strong indications that as a result of good partnership working the attendance rates and behaviour of vulnerable children, including looked after children, have improved

Positive findings

Support to vulnerable children and young people

- The authority has a coherent strategy to monitor children who miss education
- Training and briefings are available to support professionals and identification of neglect is improving, with an increasing number of children subject to a child protection plan
- In most cases seen, risks to children and young people from child sexual exploitation, alcohol and substance misuse were appropriately identified and relevant help offered

Positive findings

Support to vulnerable children and young people

- Children's centres contribute well to early help provision in Lancashire. They know the population in their areas well, understanding the challenges that the parents and their children face.
- The council, supported by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, has a strong focus on identifying and tackling child sexual exploitation.

Positive findings on Children & Young People's Trust

- The local authority has formed effective working relationships with partners on strategic boards, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board, Children's Trust, and Health and Wellbeing Board. Children's needs are duly considered and priorities across boards are appropriate and well aligned.
- The county council Children's Trust, revised in late 2014, has effective links with other strategic bodies, and appropriate representation from all partner agencies and the Local Safeguarding Children Board

Positive findings on Children & Young People's Trust

- The Children's Trust is the overarching board for the five local partnership boards that operate within Lancashire. The local boards provide an effective structure for partners to consider the priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan and how these relate to young people in their area
- Since being formed approximately 12 months ago, local boards have established effective membership and have developed action plans to identify and respond to the needs of young people in their area, although it is as yet too early for them to demonstrate the impact of their work.

What we have done so far?

- £5m additional investment approved by Cabinet
- Children Awaiting Adoption Service now integrated within the Adoption Service
- Work taking place with New Belongings to improve Care Leavers Service
- Recruited additional 27 social workers and 9 Managers to reduce caseloads in Children's Social Care
- New performance management system with weekly, monthly and quarterly reporting.

What we have done so far?

- Responded to concerns about data quality by commissioning an external provider to review current systems and help improve outcomes
- Monthly Performance Clinics to monitor performance across all areas
- Revised and distributed new social work standards
- Reviewed and distributed guidance on: strategy discussion; written agreements; use chronologies; forced marriage and honour based violence; private fostering; assessments; recording

What we have done so far?

- Aligned our audit grading system in line with Ofsted judgements
- Focus on children in need and care leavers for quality assurance
- Revisited other councils with practitioners to look at how they are using their case management system

Next steps

- Independent chair to oversee an improvement board
- Improvement Plan to be developed and implemented
- Children and young people's views and experiences to be inform improvements
- Regular monthly monitoring of progress by Department for Education
- Further inspection in due course