

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 17 September 2024

Report Title

Ofsted Focused Visit to Rotherham's Children's Services

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley – Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report outlines the findings from the Ofsted Focused visit to Rotherham Children's Services on 14th & 15th May 2024.

Recommendations

For Improving Lives Select Commission:

1. To note this information and the progress made.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Ofsted Focused Visit Summary of Findings Letter

Background Papers

No

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Ofsted Focused Visit to Rotherham's Children's Services

1. Background

1.1 Local Authority Children's Services are regulated by Ofsted.

1.2 The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) system includes:

- local authorities sharing an annual self-evaluation of the quality and impact of social work practice
- an annual engagement meeting between our regional representatives and the local authority to review the self-evaluation and to reflect on what is happening in the local authority and inform how they would engage with each other in future
- our local authority intelligence system (LAIS) which brings data and information into a single record
- focused visits that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children
- standard and short inspections where we make judgements using our 4-point scale
- joint targeted area inspections (JTAI)

1.3 Robust performance management and quality assurance processes provide assurance to senior leaders and is used to inform service development. This includes the CYPs Performance Board, chaired by the Director of Children's Services and Assurance Board including work undertaken by the Young Inspectors, the Practice Learning Days (PLDs) and the monthly audit programme. Scrutiny is also provided by Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC), the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board (CPPB) and Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP).

1.4 Residential children's homes are also regulated by Ofsted. The Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) system focuses on evaluating the impact of care and support on the experiences and progress of children. These inspections are annual.

2. Key Issues

2.1 On 14th and 15th May Rotherham received a focused visit as part of the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. There are 7 possible topic headings for a focused visit. This focused visit was under the heading of 'Child in Need and children subject to a child protection plan'.

2.2 The Inspectors were Rachel Fairhurst and Catherine Heron. Tracey Metcalfe was the Quality Assurance lead.

2.3 The focused visit involved 2 weeks of engagement with Ofsted including consideration of performance management information, quality assurance, case

audits and children's files. This also included 2 days on site in the second week where inspectors held case discussions with social workers and managers, as well as reviewing children's records.

2.4 Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of:

- performance management
- management oversight
- supervision
- quality assurance
- continuous professional development of the workforce

2.5 Inspectors were positive about their experience in Rotherham during the inspection, praising the timely provision of all requested information and the welcome they had received from friendly staff. The resulting report is reflective of an extremely effective service which is delivering consistently good outcomes for children.

2.6 The report was published on 12th July 2024 (Appendix 1) and the 'Headline Findings' record that *"the response to children who are subject to child-in-need and child protection planning is very effective... Strong corporate support ensures a whole-council approach to understanding children's vulnerability and responding to risk and need."*

2.7 *"Senior leaders and council members are ambitious and aspirational for children who are subject to children in need and child protection planning. There is a 'whole council' response to making vulnerable children a priority."*

2.8 We have a strong CIN and CP service that appropriately and effectively assesses children and applies the right thresholds to ensure that children are protected, and needs are met. Extensive targeted support and early help underpins services. Partnership services are good and multi-agency staff play an appropriate part at all stages of intervention. When immediate action is required to safeguard children, this takes place swiftly.

2.9 To support further improvement Ofsted identified that children's unique needs and individual characteristics could better inform their plans. Senior leaders were already aware of this area for further development following activity to improve the identification of children's identity needs when planning for their future. This is corroborated in the report, *"Senior leaders know themselves well. They have a solid understanding and a good line of sight to frontline practice. They know the strengths and areas for improvement in this practice area. This is reflected in their self-assessment."* Inspectors did not find any area for improvement in this practice area that senior leaders were not already sighted on.

2.10 Action planning following the visit is overseen by senior leaders during change management board with a clear focus on impact monitored via performance management and quality assurance.

2.11 The Ofsted ILACS Evaluation criteria and grade descriptors state *"The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' is likely to be judged*

outstanding if the response to children and families is consistently good or better and results in sustained improvement to the lives of children, young people and their families.”

- 2.12 The headline findings from the focused visit in May state [our response to children] *“is resulting in sustained improvement to the lives of many children and their families.”*

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 It is not appropriate as this report is for information purposes only.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 It is not appropriate as this report is for information purposes only.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Children’s Services will be due a judgement ILACS visit at some point in 2025. There is also the possibility of an Area SEND Inspection, run jointly by OFSTED and CQC, and a Youth Justice Service Inspection, led by HMIP. More information may become available at next Annual Engagement Meeting which is due around Feb 2025.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 It is not appropriate as this report is for information purposes only.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 It is not appropriate as this report is for information purposes only.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 It is not appropriate as this report is for information purposes only.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 It is very reassuring to have such positive feedback:

“the response to children who are subject to child-in-need and child protection planning is very effective... Strong corporate support ensures a whole-council approach to understanding children’s vulnerability and responding to risk and need.”

This puts us in a very strong position for our full ILAC, which is due in the early summer of 2024.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 NA

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 NA

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 NA

13. Risks and Mitigation

Accountable Officer(s)

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director, Children and Young People Service

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley – Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service	08/08/24
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Please select the relevant Cabinet Member	14/08/24

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