



Trafford Children's Social Care ILACS Reinspection November & December 2022 Summary of Findings & Next Steps



CYP Scrutiny Committee

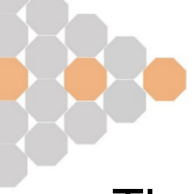
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Overview

- Inspection was carried out under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services Framework (ILACS). This is the first standard ILACS Trafford has had – Our previous ILACS in 2019 was '**short**' (**2 days**) due to our 'Good' judgement at the time
- Inspection was a **3 week process**: 1st week off site & involved data & evidence submission, 2 weeks on site
- Core team of inspectors of 4 His Majesty's Inspectors who were then joined by 2 regulatory inspectors (looking at fostering and adoption) and a Schools HMI
- The process involved meeting with **practitioners and some managers**. The inspection team talked to **parents and carers and to some children and young people** (Children in Care Children council & After Care forum) as well as some teachers
- They looked at **partnership working** through the evidence that we presented but primarily through children's records and what the team could see about interventions and effectiveness
- The inspection covered every aspect of Children's Social Care – right through from **Early Help to Adoption**.
- It was '**unannounced**' with the three week process commencing on Monday 14th November when we received formal notification via a phone call.



General Feedback


- The lead inspector, in the initial set up meeting, outlined that the team would approach this inspection from a **strength-based** perspective. Our experience of the inspection process was exactly as outlined.
- Similar to in the Monitoring Visits, the team **did not tell us anything we didn't already know**
- Our self assessment was clear, and the Inspection Team's observations and judgement aligned with our own - this is a significant change from 2019. As a team of inspectors from outside of the region they worked hard to understand our context and journey. The self assessment and our approach to inspection helped with this.
- They recognised the significant journey we have been on including the **culture change** across the service
- Daily Keeping in Touch (KIT) meetings took place with the Lead Inspector where very **detailed feedback** was given which isn't able to be fully reflected in the final report; however we are taking account of *all feedback* in the next steps





The Judgement

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





The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families – Key Headlines

- The reason for the 2019 Inadequate judgement was due to the leadership elements of the inspection framework
- Improvements since the last inspection;
 - There is a strong **Corporate and Political oversight** and ownership. The local authority now knows its children's services well. The leader, lead member and Chief Executive understand and challenge children's services and their work effectively.
 - Senior leaders have created **stronger foundations in practice** to begin to support improvement.
 - The **cultural change** in children's services in Trafford is tangible and there is now a much clearer focus on understanding the needs of children
 - The senior leadership team is more **visible and accessible** to the staff group. Senior leaders have been open and transparent with inspectors about the remaining shortfalls in practice.
 - Practitioners are overwhelming positive about working in Trafford





The experiences & progress of children who need help & protection – Key Headlines (Strengths)

- Children's needs are identified promptly on a **partnership basis** in the first response service at the front door and managers have oversight at key decision-making points
- The need for early help services is **promptly identified** ensuring that families receive early support as difficulties emerge
- The assessments undertaken by social workers provide a clear **evaluation of strengths and risks** surrounding the child and most children benefit from child in need plans that are largely focused on what needs to happen to improve their circumstances
- Children are stepped up to child protection plans **appropriately when risks escalate**, or when their circumstances do not improve
- The **relational approach** to social work practice is increasingly well-embedded across the service, although it has been impacted, until recently, by frequent changes of social worker
- The child exploitation team 'SHINE' is a strength, due to the establishment of **effective working relationships** with key agencies who advocate for children who are hard to engage
- There is **strong oversight** of children who are missing from education



The experiences & progress of children who need help & protection – Key Headlines (Areas for Improvement)

- The **out-of-hours service** is not sufficiently proactive in evaluating contact and referrals, which can lead to some delay in needs and risks being assessed by daytime services.
- Most children who have **complex and additional needs** are not receiving the right service at the right time. Some children experience drift and delay in the progression of their plans
- When children aged **16 and 17 present as homeless**, the approach from the local authority is inconsistent
- Arrangements to ensure children are progressed into **pre-proceedings** at the right time are underdeveloped, due to insufficient scrutiny of children on child protection plans
- The absence of **legal input into the pre-proceedings** process can also cause delay for children



The experiences & progress of children in care & care leavers – Key Headlines (Strengths)

- Decisions for children to come into care are **appropriate and timely**
- Social workers give **careful consideration** to supporting children to have positive family time with significant family members.
- Most children live in **stable placements with carers who meet their needs well**, and are making positive progress
- Children in care have their **physical and emotional health needs** identified and well met.
- **Visits are purposeful** and when children have the opportunity to develop a trusting relationship with their social worker, this contributes effectively to assessments and plans for permanence.
- The recent redesign of fostering services in Trafford is beginning to **positively impact** on the recruitment of foster carers.
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are **well cared for**.





The experiences & progress of children in care & care leavers – Key Headlines (Areas for Improvement)

- Too many children have experienced **changes of social worker**, which impacts on the quality and frequency of direct work completed.
- The assessments of children in care are **not routinely updated** when children's circumstances change, which means that care plans do not always reflect the child's changing needs.
- Children in care with additional and complex needs, experience **significant gaps** in the quality of service they receive.
- Care leavers have up-to-date pathway plans, although the quality of **the detail in plans can vary**. Pathway plans are not always informed by the active involvement of the young person or take into account where the care leaver **is also a parent**
- When care experienced young people are in **custody, the ability of the care leaving team to keep in touch** with them is hindered by changes of after-care worker
- Driving **permanence for children** needs further development
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking care leavers receive a variable service. For younger care leavers, there is a sensitive consideration of their religious and cultural needs by the local authority. For older care leavers, there is a lack of focus on ensuring their immigration status is settled by after-care workers.



Priority Areas Identified Our Plans for Continuous Improvement





What Ofsted Said Needed to Improve

The report specifies 6 areas that have been identified as needing to improve:

- The quality of out-of-hours service provision to offer a more comprehensive and timely service for children.
- The support for homeless children over 16.
- The support to children in care to help them understand their entitlements and how they can influence the shaping and developing of children's services.
- The use of direct work and life-story work to gain the voice of the child and to support children's understanding of their life history.
- The support for care leavers in preparing for their transition to independence.
- The quality and frequency of supervision.

There will be an action plan for each area





Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team

- Our self assessment was clear that our **Emergency Duty Team (EDT)** model needs a full review, with consideration being given to increasing the capacity of the offer for children.
- The fragility of the service had **already been recognised** resulting in an increase in the staffing complement to ensure that the service to our children and vulnerable adults improved, and to ensure the support the wellbeing of team members. The team has a good reputation and as a result have managed to successfully recruit to all vacancies in the service, including the newly created posts.
- A report was submitted to our **Quarterly Assurance Meeting** with the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and Lead Member for Children in January 2023 to outline the current position and to keep them sighted on the developments
- A **Peer Review** of the service is planned for March 2023
- Whilst it is acknowledged that further work is required to support the growth of the service, colleagues in Adult and Children's Social Care are **working closely together** to improve the knowledge, skill & experience of the workforce alongside working to establish robust management oversight and grip via a performance management & quality assurance framework



Complex & Additional Needs Service

- We were open about the work **still required to strengthen this service**, but the difference the new manager and changes are having has been recognised:.

“Most children who have complex and additional needs are not receiving the right service at the right time. Some children experience drift and delay in the progression of their plans. This is due to frequent changes in social worker, lack of supervision, and, until recently, weaker social work practice. Some social workers have not been appropriately supported to develop the relevant skills to enable them to undertake direct work with children with additional needs. Senior leaders understand this and have developed an action plan in response, which has led to the establishment of a managed social work team of interim social workers. This team works within the management arrangements of the local authority.”

- The Head of Service and the Practice Manager meet and discuss the CAN Service performance on a weekly basis. Data that is received from the business intelligence unit is utilised to track basic compliance with standard KPI's and audit and dip sampling of cases provides a window onto the quality of the work being undertaken. We have seen improvements
- Detailed service specific Improvement Plan in place which is being tracked and monitored
- Meeting scheduled for March 2023 to bring together key leaders across the system to agree how we work together to stabilising and develop the service.
- Partnership Summit later in the year





The support to children in care to help them understand their entitlements and how they can influence the shaping and developing of children's services.

The support for care leavers in preparing for their transition to independence.

- Review of the Corporate Parenting Board **Strategy, Action Plan and Terms of Reference** is underway. This will include key actions to drive forward involvement and engagement of our cared 4 and care experienced young people and adults.
- Cared 4 Children and Care Experienced young people **attended the full meeting** of the Corporate Parenting Board in March 2023 which has given this a **new emphasis**
- Cared 4 and Care Experienced Service **Development plan in place**, workshops having been facilitated with the service by our DfE advisor and Practice Improvement colleagues
- Review of our **Care Leaver Offer is underway** (being co-produced with our cared 4 and care experienced young people) and will be presented at the Corporate Parenting Board in March 2023.





The use of direct work and life-story work to gain the voice of the child and to support children's understanding of their life history.

- Through our review of the Improvement Plan Ambition 4 workstream we have put in place **clear actions to strengthen our approach to life story work** for children so that they understand their story and the reasons for decisions
- We will be utilising the **skills of a qualified life story practitioner** from within the service to deliver core training to practitioners across the service so that life story work starts at the earliest opportunity
- Continue to roll out our **Case Recording approach** with reports, visits and plans written o children and young people in language that they can understand
- **Later life letters** for children are also being developed and some minimum practice standards will be agreed



The quality and frequency of supervision

Whilst Ofsted recognised that:

“There has also been an imaginative range of peer and group supervision, which aids social workers in progressing their learning and development” they also recognised that the quality & frequency of supervision remains an area that requires further improvement

"There is improvement in the quality of social work in Trafford.

They also advised that:

children in the local authority still experience too much inconsistency in the service that they receive. This situation is exacerbated by the variable frequency and quality of supervision for social workers from their team managers. Despite the relaunch of the supervision policy earlier this year, this is still an area for development

- Introducing a **Management Accountability Framework** - monthly submission by each manager across a range of measures
- Implementing revised **recording of Supervision** in Children's Files
- Commissioning a further Leadership Development Programme which will include **Coaching and Mentoring**

What Next?

- Whilst we are delighted that Ofsted have recognised the progress that we have made there is still **lots to do on our Continuous Improvement Journey** and we have already started progressing at pace the work in those priority areas
- We remain committed to our Improvement Plan' 'Our 8 Ambitions' & **still have work to do** to achieve them. .
- The **strong governance arrangements** that are in place through our Improvement Board have added value and ensured that there is regular challenge and scrutiny, and we are keen to retain some of these arrangements. We do not want to revert back to a position where we are reliant on a self-view of the service we are providing.
- A discussion paper was submitted to our Improvement Board in January 2023 as, as we move out of intervention, there is an opportunity for board members and the partnership to consider the arrangements that are going to support the ongoing improvement journey and how as a system, we can achieve a self-improving system that puts outcomes for children and families at the heart.
- Proposals for the development of an Ambitions for Children Board that would continue to oversee progress against the Ambitions Plan - our DfE Adviser continues to support the work with our partners
- We will now continue to build on the strong foundations that are in place, and are proud of the strength of the positive feedback that we received from Ofsted:

“The care and the passion for children and families seeped out of the walls at every level”

“Seen some of the best child centred case recording”



Any Questions

