



Update to Children and Young People's Scrutiny Ofsted Focused Visit Care Experienced Young People

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Focused Visit – Overview

Focused visits evaluate an aspect of service, a theme or the experiences of a cohort of children. This one was considering the 'Experience & Progress of Care Leavers'.

First focused visit since the full ILAC Inspection in December 2022, when the quality and consistency of services for care-experienced young people in Trafford was identified as an area for improvement.

Week 1

- 5 working days' notice of site visit
- Tuesday – Call to DCS to notify and arrange a 'set up' call later that day.
- Wednesday – We had to submit child-level data, information about audits and performance and management information by midday.
- Thursday & Friday – Inspection team evaluated our evidence
- The inspection team identified 15 folders out of those listed within Annex A of the Framework that they wanted information in respect of, as well as the routine data lists that capture the details of all the young people in scope.
- We submitted over 50 documents, with a detailed contents sheet, explaining what each document was evidencing. The information submitted included our service specific Improvement Plan, the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan and a number of position statements that were written for the process providing a summary of the current 'position'.





Focused Visit – Overview

Selected cases

The team also selected 6 young people who have had their records audited internally. They were provided with copies of our audits and a number of records from their case files.

Week 2

- 2 & 3 July 2024 Onsite days - Full team on site gathering evidence and providing feedback. The team met with all the aftercare workers who were in work, each session having a different area of focus. They also had dedicated sessions on Housing and EET.
- We had two HMIs and an additional HMI who was shadowing the practice of the inspection team.
- At the end of day 1, the HMIs went to Gorse Hill Studios to meet with care experienced young people.
- Our Lead QA HMI joined us for the final day.
- There were a number of touch points / KiT throughout the process with DCS and Director, including a meeting in week 1.





Focused Visit – Overview

Inspectors evaluate the effectiveness of:

- Performance management
- Management oversight
- Supervision
- Quality assurance
- Continuous professional development of the workforce

Inspectors do not make graded judgements at the outcome of a focused visit. Nor do they indicate what the grade may have been if the visit had been a short or standard inspection. The outcome is presented as findings about strengths and areas for improvement, reported in a published letter. (Trafford's published 1 August 2024)

If inspectors find serious weaknesses, they will identify areas for priority action. An area for priority action is either:

- An area of serious weakness that is placing children at risk of inadequate protection and significant harm
- An unnecessary delay in identifying permanent solutions for children in care that results in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted
- A failure to keep in touch with care leavers, or provide them with support and services, that results in their welfare not being safeguarded and promoted






Headline findings

Throughout the course of the process the Inspection Team provided us with lots of detailed feedback which is really helpful for us as not all of that is then in the final letter.

They recognised the things that we have done to strengthen the quality of service.

The headline findings in the feedback and final report were:

- Senior Leaders have welcomed external scrutiny from a sector led improvement partner which contributed to the implementation of a service improvement plan
 - There is a council wide commitment to improving the services for Care Experienced Young People
 - The corporate parenting strategy has been developed with a new fifth priority – preparing for Adulthood
 - For some young people, their needs are understood and well met by after-care workers who take the time to get to know them and social workers who work with kindness and sensitivity
 - Other young people do not always benefit from proactive, meaningful relationships with aftercare workers
 - This is sometimes compounded by a lack of consistent and effective management oversight which means that care experienced young people are not always receiving the support they need
 - Practice has been strengthened in some areas, but pace has been too slow and practice is too variable
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Areas which need to Improve

There were no areas for priority actions identified.


5 areas of improvement were identified as part of the visit and are reported in the published letter:

- Quality and impact of relationships with young people and their After Care Worker
- Quality of pathway plans
- Effective co-ordination of joint working to prevent homelessness
- Quality and frequency of supervision and management oversight, including the management of risk
- Support to care experienced young people in preparing their transition to independence.






Main Findings

- For most 16- and 17-year-olds, who are about to move out of care, their social workers know them well and speak about them with kindness and sensitivity
 - Social workers have a good understanding of the needs of 16- and 17-year-olds and they take appropriate action to safeguard and promote these care-experienced young people's well-being
 - Most pathway plans for children aged 16 and 17 are well written, comprehensive, and timely
 - Plans are co-produced with children and set out what needs to happen to prepare them for independence.
 - Other professionals involved with the child contribute to these plans, and this is a strength.
 - Children are encouraged to attend and contribute to their reviews. They benefit from independent reviewing officers (IROs) who visit them and make sure that their plans are made with transition to independence in mind.
 - Some after-care workers develop trusting and meaningful relationships with young people, visiting them regularly and in line with their assessed needs.
 - Most after-care workers have a clear understanding of young people's journey into care and of their support needs
 - Most children aged 16 and 17 are receiving some form of education and training which reflects their interests and encourages their development
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Main Findings

- The quality of Pathway Plans for care experienced young people is variable.
 - Most plans acknowledge identity and cultural needs well and reflect social and family networks. This is an area that has been strengthened since the last visit
 - Plans are not consistently updated in a timely manner, or when there has been a significant change in circumstances
 - After care workers are not always alert to issues of exploitation and risks to vulnerable young people
 - For a small number of care-experienced young people, their after-care workers are not persistent enough in maintaining meaningful contact and do not consistently demonstrate an interest or professional curiosity in their lives.
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Main Findings

- Inconsistent management oversight is not cognisant of risk and does not ensure that action is being taken and plans are in place to safeguard these young people
 - The health and emotional well-being needs of most care-experienced young people are considered appropriately in their pathway plans. All young people are actively encouraged to access universal services, and most are registered with GPs and dentists
 - After-care workers understand that most care-experienced young people have experienced significant trauma and recognise when they would benefit from accessing specialist support services. Some care-experienced young people are able to access services such as counselling through university or college, but for others access to specialist support is not always timely
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Main Findings

- When young people are not ready to live independently, they are supported to stay with their former carers under ‘staying put’ arrangements. Some young people moving on from residential homes benefit from staying close support.
 - There are a range of accommodation options available for care-experienced young people in Trafford and most are living in accommodation that is safe and supports their needs
 - A small number of young people have benefited from the implementation of the House Project in Trafford and have been supported as they successfully transition to independence and having their own tenancy
 - For some young people, joint working with housing is not effective and they are left at risk of homelessness
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Main Findings


- When young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers leave care, their aftercare workers support them to explore their culture and integrate into the local community. Most of these young people are provided with appropriate accommodation and support that is in line with their identified needs
 - For Trafford care-experienced young people who are in custody, after-care workers make persistent efforts to maintain contact and see them regularly, even when visits have been declined by the young person. For most of those in custody, after-care workers understand the risks to them from gangs or other risks related to criminality, and this is considered in planning for their safe release
 - For some young people who are parents, after-care workers maintain regular contact, and recognise their additional vulnerabilities and support needs. This level of understanding for both the parent and their children is clearly reflected in children's plans, and they are provided with the appropriate support they need. A very small number of young people who are parents do not benefit from this, and their aftercare workers do not consistently and effectively consider their needs or the needs of their children
 - Since the last inspection, there has been a review of the service operating model and care-experienced young people over the age of 21 in Trafford are now made aware that they are entitled to receive a service until they are 25.
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Some of the things we have done

- Redesign – brought Cared For service and Care Experienced service together into a single service. The rationale included need to have seamless approach to how we support our children and young people.
- Undertaken **bespoke and targeted recruitment for the service** – response to After Care Workers has been positive and new people are bringing balance and new ideas.
- Implemented **dedicated training programme** linked to the unique elements of the Aftercare role and skills that are needed.
- Strengthened our **Corporate Parenting governance**, added Preparing for Adulthood as a strategic priority following feedback from young people, established Corporate Parenting Leads meeting and a dedicated assurance meeting on Care Experience chaired by DCS.
- Worked on culture change, and service identity. Dedicated programme with DfE advisor. Care Experienced service - saw themselves as distinct and unique service; lack of connectivity.
- In line with our commitment to being open and developing learning culture, welcome **external scrutiny and support** (SLIP).

Throughout our improvement work to date, there have been some both strategic and service level challenges, and in some areas it is acknowledged that the breadth and depth of the improvement required was actually greater than we had first understood.





Next Steps

- **REVIEW AND UPDATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN** -, ensuring all areas from the Focussed Visit are incorporated. Plan to be strengthened by reviewing timescales and increased ownership, which will improve pace and traction. Include a re-focus on impact and we will test this without young people. A priority must be looking at the transition from social worker to aftercare worker, and ensuring our aftercare workers are consistently passionate & advocate for our young people.
- **INVOLVE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE** –We must accelerate our work in respect of participation and engagement, and our work around Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic. We will talk to our young people about the improvements needed and the areas that they have identified.
- **PARTNERSHIP** – We will continue to engage our partners to ensure that we have robust and specific offers for Care Leavers over and above universal services recognising that much of this has commenced and must continue to be undertaken through a partnership approach.
- **RECONSIDER SERVICE STRUCTURE** – A detailed options appraisal with consider different options for the service. During August 2024 we will complete informal consultation via face to face workshops to seek views about what has worked well
- **IMPROVE MANAGEMENT OF RISK** 18+ - Implement bespoke tools for the management of risk and safety planning. A 'clinic' approach will be undertaken in August 2024 to ensure all aftercare workers area able to talk about the young people and adults that they are worried about
- **SUPERVISION & LEADERSHIP** - Continue with programme of strengthening supervision and leadership at every level to ensure we create the environment for the service to flourish including how we undertake quality assurance.



Any Questions?

