



TRAFFORD  
COUNCIL

# Ofsted Monitoring Visit July 2022 Update to Overview & Scrutiny September 2022

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# Our Ofsted Journey So Far

**March 2019** – Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) - Inadequate Judgement. AS our 20115 inspection graded us as ‘GOOD’ the ILACS inspection in 2019 was a short inspection.

**October 2019** – First monitoring visit (with a focus on the Front Door)


**March 2020** – What was planned to be the 2nd monitoring visit was cancelled due to the pandemic

**February 2021** – Covid Assurance Focussed Visit that considered all aspects of CSC delivery and included an Her Majesty’s Inspector (HMI) for Education – Local Authorities would usually have between 4 and 6 visits before reinspection, at least 6 monthly. We went over a year without any monitoring activity.

**September 2021** – Second monitoring visit. Inspectors reviewed the progress made in all areas of concern identified at the last inspection including the quality of social work assessment and plans

**March 2022** – Third monitoring visit. Inspectors were focused on children in care and ensuring that effective support was being provided to enable them to achieve better outcomes.

**July 2022** – Fourth monitoring visit. The focus of this visit was Children in Need, considering specifically: assessments, plans, consistency, and the impact of CIN journey for children and young people.





# Purpose of Monitoring Visits

- Monitoring visits focus on where improvement is needed the most.
- Inspectors monitor and report on the local authority's progress since the inspection.
- Inspectors also check that performance in other areas has not declined since the inspection.
- If new concerns emerge, inspectors are likely to look at these on the monitoring visits.
- Ultimately, they are to support, challenge and assess whether progress is being made





# Focus of this Monitoring Visit


The focus for this visit was **children in need and within this there was consideration of the effectiveness of assessment and planning and with the golden thread of the impact of managers and leaders.**

The specific areas the lead inspector identified were:

- The quality of social work assessment and plans to ensure that they are effective in meeting children's needs.
- The way in which all staff and managers listen to the voice of children to inform individual work and wider service development.
- Management oversight at all levels of social work practice with children, to ensure that work is effective and is helping them to achieve better outcomes.
- Senior leaders' understanding of the quality of social work practice, through accurate evaluation of performance information and implementation of an effective quality assurance framework.
- General experiences and progress for children in need

The additional areas the lead inspector identified were: Performance management, Management oversight, Supervision, Continuous professional development - Ultimately they were looking to know if what we do is making a difference to Children and Families

Throughout the visit they looked at some key areas of the records: Decision making, Thresholds, Assessments, Plans, Child in Need meetings, Visits & Supervision.

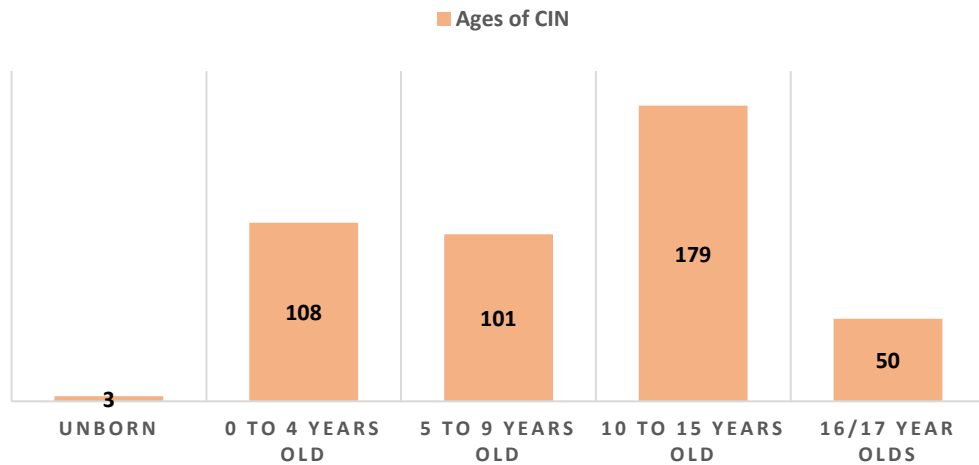




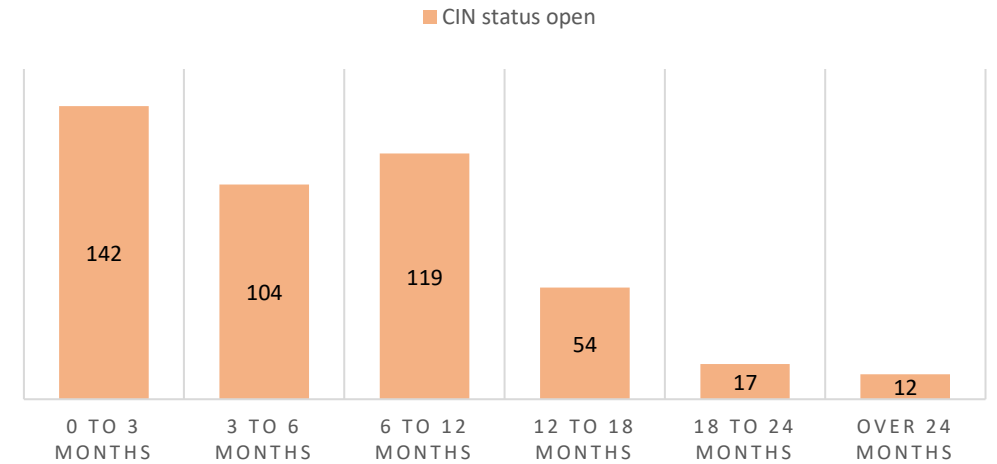
# Our Children In Need

Our Child in Need cohort of children and young people is our largest – 453 children & young people have CIN plans

### AGES OF OUR CHILDREN IN NEED



### LENGTH OF TIME AS A CHILD IN NEED



- 179 of our children being supported at Child In Need are 10 -15 yrs. 50 of these are 16 & 17 years old.
- 43 young people (9%) of our children that have a child in need plan have exploitation as a feature
- 9% of our children in need have a disability and are open to the CAN team
- 113 of our CIN are sitting within Support & Protection (54 of these have been stepped down from a Child Protection Plan)

# Key Areas of Improvement Activity in Relation to CIN

Held Neglect Conference and launched refreshed Neglect Strategy

Rolled out Child Impact Chronology Training

Reviewed all of our CIN children in case progression clinics to establish the right decision for the child & family in terms of ongoing support

Launched newly structured service with a dedicated service for supporting Child In Need, with its own Head of Service. Internally recruited to the Permanent Head of Service Post

New service supported with dedicated Implementation Plan, and safe & efficient transfer of case responsibility enabled through daily Resource and Allocation meetings.

**Recruitment activity – Engaged with external recruitment Agency. IIP Steering Group**

Held our first Practice Fortnight.

2<sup>nd</sup> Live Multi Agency Audit at the front door considering quality of referrals and applications of thresholds.

Refreshed exploitation strategy involving our young people

Strengthening Practice Care & Confidence Sessions

**Recruitment activity – Recruitment campaign went live**

Nov  
Dec 21

Apr –  
July 22

Jan –  
Mar 22

Launched Participation & Engagement Strategy

Consultation with partnership re Step-up step-down refresh

Agreed extension of DSL Supervisor Pilot

Repeat survey with our Schools and update Action Plan

Refreshed SHINE processes and launched.

Strengthening Practice Core Skills commenced Assessments Module

**Recruitment activity – Recruited 14 permanent social workers**

**Permanently recruited to Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents**

Developed a CIN tracker and used it to become more data intelligent.

Carried out targeted work in respect of the themes coming out of the tracker (meaningful visits)

TSSP hosted 4 locality-based workshops on Trafford Levels of Need

External review of our Liquid Logic Systems with practitioners.


Revised Proactive Pick-Up Policy

**Recruitment activity – 4 perm SWs & 1 AP recruited**



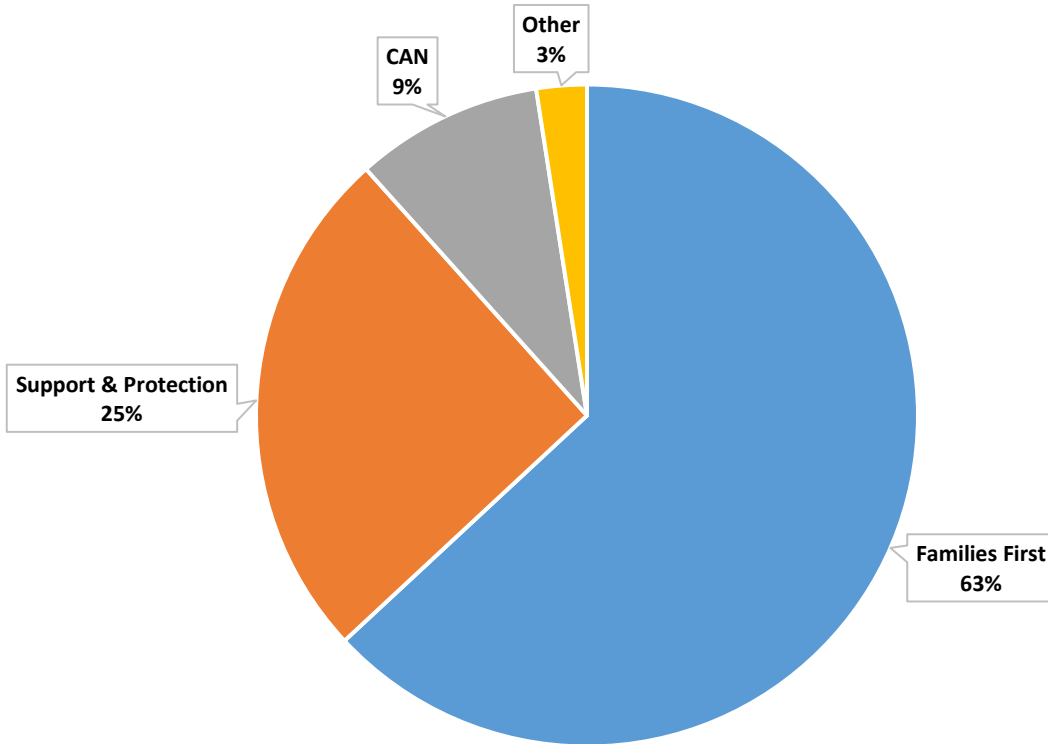
# What We Told Them (1)

In our context setting meeting with Ofsted we were honest about what we knew they would see within the CIN arena. Amongst other things, we told them:

- We have revised and refreshed systems and processes following Family First Service being established – dedicated service implementation plan.
  - Families First initially experienced the most amount instability once we moved into our new service arrangements. They had the most amount of churn across ALL layers – social worker and managers
  - A CIN tracker has been developed & implemented as a management tool to understand our cohort of Children in Need and the actions we need to take e.g. timeliness and quality of assessments
  - There has been a continued focus on Child impact Chronologies but we know we have more to do to embed consistently. Recent dip sampling showed that there was a meaningful chronology in 76% of cases reviewed, but that this was not consistently being recording in the dedicated CIMC space
  - The Missing from Care & Home services, Exploitation Team and Youth Justice Service have been brought together to form our 'Vulnerable Adolescents Service' under a single Head of Service. We had a bit of rocky start but our Head of Service recruited on a permanent basis started 11<sup>th</sup> July 22.
  - There are a number of our CIN children sitting within Support & Protection (see over) but we know why and have a dedicated action plan in place.
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# Child In Need – Support & Protection

Numbers of our CIN within each service area





Background to those children in need being supported within Support & Protection service:

- 113 of our CIN are sitting within Support & Protection
- 54 children have been stepped down from a Child Protection plan
- 27 children are being supported through supervision order
- 33 children have not had a CP plan or been in care proceeding prior to this CIN period.
- This is as a result of the majority of those children being allocated to workers who moved to Support and Protect during the re-design in October 2022 to maintain consistency of relationships.





## What We Told Them (2)

- The targeted recruitment approach has continued – 16.7% turnover, exit interviews in the second half of the reporting year significantly reduced, and rate of agency staff is 39%. 63% of agency staff however have been with us 6 months or longer and some are wanting to join us permanently.
  - We have started to look at improved quality assurance systems. We have undertaken an audit of Return Home Interviews with a multi-agency agency perspective & are seeing some creative ways of undertaking RHI
  - 12 cases referred for RR in last 2 years, 6 progressed to CSPR with 4 of those being completed, 6 did not progress but 4 resulted in local lesson learning review
  - We have progressed our Neglect Strategy – call to action holding each agency to account; starting to develop our approach to CimC across the partnership; working with neglect a key element of the SP programme; task and finish work in respect of GCP2 as well as use of other tools
  - The quality of assessment & planning is improving but we know we have more to do. We still have some variability.
  - Overall audit judgements in terms of quality of practice indicate that 73% are requires improvement or better.
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# What Ofsted Saw....

- The key headline was **variability** of practice. Whilst they saw lots of examples of good practice, it is not yet consistent across the service. There is too much variability in practice for children in need in Trafford, compared to other cohorts of children.
- **Visits to children:** *“Children in need (CIN) are regularly visited by social workers, and some assessments and plans are effective at identifying needs and achieving change in children’s lives.”*
- **Direct Work:** Children and young people are seen regularly by social workers who know them well. Social workers spend time developing relationships...leads to some purposeful wishes and feelings work with children, which then informs future plans. These conversations are highlighted clearly on the child’s record, although this work is not always supported by a range of tools... that could engage children in a more meaningful way. Senior leaders understand that this is an area for development and are seeking to promote greater use of direct work tools to skill up social workers as part of delivering their chosen social work model..
- **Assessments:** That assessments for children continue to be of variable quality and are not always completed in timescale, or updated, when children’s circumstances change. They agreed there was still more work to do to strengthen this area of practice and build on recent improvement.
- **Workforce:** They acknowledged that we recognised the importance of creating a more stable workforce, and have invested in training to ensure that staff receive appropriate input to strengthen their practice with children and their families. Practitioners reported liking working in Trafford.
- **QA Activity:** They felt our thematic audits were strong and linked to performance information; Moderations were positive but there were some missed opportunities e.g. could be improved if we involved families. Actions often focused on compliance and didn’t include how to further improve.





# What Ofsted Saw....

- **Supervision:** Supervision of social workers is mostly regular, although there have been some gaps in frequency across the service. Supervision records contain appropriate detail about the current situation and risks to children. Supervision sessions are not always sufficiently reflective to help social workers to explore what strategies might work.
- **Partnership Working:** They saw examples of co-working being used effectively to make a difference for children and families, and quoted an excellent example of working with probation.
- **Cultural Diversity:** They saw that children's views and cultural factors are mostly taken into account appropriately when understanding family circumstances in the context of domestic abuse or neglect. This informs a broader understanding of children's lived experience.
- **Plans:** They said that sometimes, plans for children are not updated regularly or in line with children's circumstances. Management oversight does not always have sufficient impact on the quality of planning to avoid drift.
- **Thresholds:** They saw evidence that thresholds for children in need are appropriately applied and social workers escalate cases when risk of harm increases.
- **Step Down** – For some, CIN planning following step-down decision-making is not always sufficiently focused,.





# CIN - Children with Complex Needs

## What We Told Them

40 of our Children in Need also have a disability and sit within our Complex Needs Service so we knew this was an area that Ofsted would consider.

- We have continued to use a project team approach within Children with Additional Needs – some success with this approach e.g. completed and updated assessments but has created some fragmentation in the service
- There is an interim DSCO / Head of Service in place
- Moving to progression of plans for the CIN in Complex Needs Service but there is some drift
- Produced a dedicated plan to address all aspects of practice as well as strategic transformation and direction for this service area
- Implemented changes to system & processes – starting with the co-working of s47s and increasing the skill base for CP within the team
- Undertaken a review of short break offer which has included Lived Experience Advisory Panel and starting to progress the recommendations
- Working hard to develop single service approach to children with additional needs – e.g. have a dedicated workstream to raise the status and quality of EHCPs – one child, one plan; same QA approach





# CIN - Children with Complex Needs

## What They Saw

- They observed the challenges that we had told them about.
- They saw the additional Project Team and Advanced Practitioner that had been put in place to improve practice & capacity.
- They felt that we needed to develop the skill set in this area.
- They saw lots of variability & noted that some children's experience has not been improved despite our involvement.
- There were some examples where assessments were not completed in a timely way and/or were out of date.
- Some plans were up to date and had been reviewed recently, but some were not.
- Some children are not being seen regularly, and the records don't explain this rationale.
- Some children's records are focused on adults.
- They saw occasions where there was good engagement with partners.





# Comparing 2019 ILACS Findings in relation to CIN

- “The quality of social work assessment and plans to ensure that they are effective in meeting children’s needs needs to improve.” 2019

In July they observed that “for the majority of children, the quality of the assessment and the plan to support them is not good”


This is being further addressed through the next phase of our Strengthening Practice programme.

- “More positively, children do have their needs assessed in a timely way, and for many this results in effective support being provided” 2019

The timeliness of the completion of assessments has declined but this was part of a conscious effort to improve the quality of the assessment – Practitioners were given permission to delay completion if it was in the best interest of the child and family (e.g. waiting on further information, to make an assessment more meaningful and helpful to the family)

- “Chronologies are not routinely used to understand the impact of past events. There is insufficient analysis of the impact of children’s experiences” 2019

During the MV, they observed that Impact Chronologies are not consistently used or kept up to date. They reported that they did see impact considered and recorded in different parts of the system but the issue was consistency. This is an area of priority focus for leaders.

- “A minority of children spend too long subject to child in need or child protection plans, and others experience repeated periods of child protection planning with little improvement in their lives”
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# Priorities Moving Forward

## Workforce

- Continue with our Investing in our People strategy, understanding that our people will make a difference to children & families. Our priority now as we progress must be on developing our workforce to get us to the point where GOOD practice is the norm
- Progress our Strengthening Practice Core skills programme
- Accelerate the implementation of the management programme that is in place, ensuring it includes those new to post. Support our managers developing further to maximise their impact on practice improvement & workforce stability.
- Progress with bespoke development plans for all service areas, with Complex Needs Team as a priority– External support will be required to support us overcoming the ongoing issues within this service.

## Quality Assurance

- Continue to strengthen our QA processes to influence practice – progress Live Audit & Closing the Loop in real time
- Embed multi-agency audit & learning across all service areas including our children who are missing
- Embed bespoke quality assurance in certain areas.
- Develop the approach to understanding the lived experience of children and families in quality assurance
- Audits and moderations to be dip sampled by DCS and Director and feedback given via reflective conversation
- Target setting against the performance of audit judgements

## Quality of Practice / Management Grip

- Managers that influence practice
- Continue to strengthen reflective supervision within all teams and audit to understand impact
- Have a forensic focus on strengthening the quality of practice for children where risk is reducing (step down) - especially in Support and Protect teams
- Embed our multi-agency planning processes as the norm, regardless of case status.
- Progress with the agreed changes to system to support practice improvement
- Continue to develop & use our data intelligently to influence practice.

## Communication & Engagement

- Co-produce our vulnerable adolescent strategy and approach – more than missing and exploitation
- Continue to progress a partnership approach to our work e.g. progressing whole system approach to tackling Neglect and DA under Ambitions plan & TSSP work programmes
- Listen to and act upon the voice of our children and families & look to include this in our routine audit processes.
- Work with our partnership and stakeholders regarding their role in supporting further improvements to the quality of assessments and planning to ensure that their plans are helpful and support positive impact on our children & families.



Questions



[Link to Ofsted Published MV Letter](#)