

Families and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee 5th March 2020

Ofsted: Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services

Report of: Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Children's Services, Cath McEvoy-Carr

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Wayne Daley

Report Summary

To provide an overview of the recent Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services, (ILAC,) that took place in Northumberland in January 2020.

The last full inspection of Children's Services took place in January/February 2016, the outcome of which was that the Local Authority required improvement to be good.

The most recent ILAC identified that the local authority had made significant progress since the last inspection. The judgements are embargoed until the report is published on the Ofsted website on 2nd March 2020.

Background

1. The Ofsted ILAC framework was introduced in 2017 and followed the Single Inspection Framework, (SIF), which had been in place prior to this.
2. Under the last inspection framework, Northumberland was found to be 'requires improvement to be good'. As a result a comprehensive and focused improvement programme was embarked upon in order to improve the services that are delivered. This improvement plan has been regularly reported at various meetings including FACS and the Children's Safeguarding Board where challenge and scrutiny has been offered in order to help improve services.
3. Some of the resource challenges in the last inspection have been addressed and inspected during the ILAC including:
 - Social work caseloads
 - Capacity within the legal services
 - Independent Review Officers numbers

4. In addition, there have been some key areas of practice that have been evaluated:
 - Court work and legal proceedings
 - Direct work with children and social workers who know their children well
 - Planning for permanency for children who are looked after

5. The ILAC inspection framework legislates for Ofsted to have additional oversight of Local Authority Children's Services and since the last inspection within Northumberland this has included:
 - Focused Visit: Front Door arrangements: February 2018
 - Annual Conversation: March 2018
 - SEND Inspection: October 2018
 - Annual Conversation: March 2019
 - Joint Targeted Area Inspection: Child Sexual Exploitation and Criminal Exploitation: June 2019

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