



Northumberland

County Council

COMMITTEE: AUDIT

DATE: 29TH MARCH 2023

Review Of External Inspection Reports – Adult Social Care and Children’s Services

Report of Councillors: Guy Renner-Thompson and Wendy Pattison.

Lead Officers: Audrey Kingham, Executive Director of Children, Young People and Education and Neil Bradley, Executive Director of Adults, Ageing and Well being

1. Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the activity pertaining to Adults Social Care and Children's Services regarding external inspections and associated actions. This covers the period from 1st July 2022 to 31st December 2022.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

1. To assess the effectiveness of the actions the Council takes in response to external inspections, and confirm an assurance that the Council is taking appropriate action in respect of any issues.

3. Link to Corporate Plan

This report relates to the Living, Learning and Tackling Inequalities elements of the Corporate Plan.

4. Key issues

- 84.8% of all Northumberland-based Adults Social Care providers were rated as Good or Outstanding at the end of December 2022, very similar to the position in the last report (84.9% at 30th June 2022).
- Inspections of children’s residential homes have continued and there have been 3 inspections during the period. All 5 units are judged to be Good or better, with Kylee secure unit judged as Outstanding on all criteria when it was inspected in the autumn. Children’s Social Care received a positive focused visit in July relating to planning and achieving permanency.

- Inspections of schools recommenced in the summer term of 2021 and the findings have been positive overall, leading to an increase in the proportion judged Good or Outstanding in both the primary and secondary sectors (92% and 83%, respectively).
- Inspections of early years providers continue, and the vast majority are judged to be Good or Outstanding (97%), similar to the national average.

5. Background

The report focuses on inspection activity undertaken by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted between July 2022 and December 2022.

5.1 Adult Social Care CQC inspection status

84.8% of all Northumberland-based Adults Social Care providers were rated as Good or Outstanding at the end of December 2022, compared to 84.9% at the end of June 2022.

The table below describes the new registration and published inspection activity that has taken place between July and December 2022. It provides the detail of what settings / services have been inspected so that Elected Members can see where the changes have taken place.

Where ratings have deteriorated from Good to Requires Improvement, the local authority is working with the management of the settings to implement the actions required. This involves Council officers working to support the provider on whatever the issues are that have led to the deterioration in rating. This can be any one of the five domains that CQC inspect although the management of the home and the assessment of whether it is 'well led' is the most common area for care homes to struggle with compliance.

Where a service has been rated Inadequate, the volume and complexity of issues requires more intensive and prolonged officer input. It may also require the Council to restrict new placements into a service for safety reasons and to ensure the service can direct resources to rectifying problems. In the case of the two homes that are currently rated as Inadequate, CQC has escalated its regulatory action and proposed the removal of the homes' registration, which would effectively prevent it from operating. Council officers are offering support to try to avert this action.

This work is achieving positive results and we can see improvements where the work has been put in to rectify adverse ratings. Council officers are returning to their more proactive monitoring activities which aim to identify issues in advance of CQC inspections and enable providers to take remedial action prior to formal inspection. In addition, there are a series of proactive training and development events planned over the next 6 months which are aimed at improvements in service quality. The recruitment and retention of staff in social care services continues to cause challenges and is a significant drain on provider resources and the Council continues to support with local and national initiatives to resolve this although it remains a problem throughout the country.

CQC-registered locations in Northumberland - newly registered or with an inspection published July-December 2022

Rating Status	Location Name	Location Primary Inspection Category	Location Latest Overall Rating (December 2022)	Location Overall Rating (July 2022)
Changed	Hepscott Care Centre	Residential social care	Good	Requires improvement
Changed	Haydon View Residential Home	Residential social care	Good	Requires improvement
Changed	Tweedmouth House	Residential social care	Good	Requires improvement
Changed	Mrs O's Caring Hands Homecare Limited	Community based adult social care services	Good	Requires improvement
Changed	Cavendish Homecare Ltd	Community based adult social care services	Good	Requires improvement
Changed	Birkinshaw Manor	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Changed	The Old Vicarage	Residential social care	Good	Outstanding
Changed	Summerhill	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Good
Changed	Wilkinson Park	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Good
Changed	Wansbeck Supported Living Service	Community based adult social care services	Requires improvement	Good
Changed	Aurora Home Care Ltd	Community based adult social care services	Requires improvement	Good
Changed	Dolphin View Care Home	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Good
Changed	Dene Grange Care Home	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Good
Changed	East Riding Care Home	Residential social care	Inadequate	Requires improvement
Changed	Alexandra Park	Residential social care	Inadequate	Requires improvement
Newly published	Best Options Agency	Community based adult social care services	Good	
Newly published	Brightside Supported Living Services	Community based adult social care services	Good	
Newly published	Lifeways Community Care (North of the Tyne)	Community based adult social care services	Good	
Newly registered	Rothbury Cottage Care Ltd	Residential social care	Not yet rated	
Deregistered	Ballifgate	Residential social care		Good
Deregistered	Sixth Avenue	Residential social care		Requires improvement
Deregistered	Aspire Supported Living	Community based adult social care services		Good
Deregistered	Home & Where the Help Is Ltd	Community based adult social care services		Good
Unchanged	Berwick Crescent	Residential social care	Good	Good
Unchanged	Eleanor Nursing and Social Care Ltd - Northumberland Office	Community based adult social care services	Good	Good
Unchanged	Abbeyfield House - Alnwick	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Unchanged	The Grange Nursing Home	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Unchanged	Beresford Lodge Residential Care Home	Residential social care	Not yet rated	Not yet rated
Unchanged	Sphere Specialist Healthcare	Community based adult social care services	Not yet rated	Not yet rated
Unchanged	The Wilbys Home Care North East	Community based adult social care services	Not yet rated	Not yet rated

5.1.1 Local authority-managed inspected services

At the time of the last report, Wansbeck Supported Living Service (Hatfield Chase) had received an inspection by CQC and the draft report was still awaited. The report was returned as Requires Improvement and an action plan was put in place to address the issues found, which were predominantly around processes and the lapse of time between reviews. The service acknowledged that there had been some slippage due to COVID and staff shortages. All other Local Authority-managed provisions that have an inspection rating, are currently judged as being Good or above.

SERVICE	DATE LAST INSPECTED	INSPECTION OUTCOME
Chibburn Court	8.12.17	Overall Good
	2.2.22 (IPC)	Inspected but not rated (no issues observed)
Hatfield Chase	15.6.22	Requires Improvement
Sea Lodge	14.11.18	Good
	31.8.22 (targeted inspection for safe and well led)	Inspected but not rated. No areas for concern identified
Shared Lives	9.5.18	Good
Tynedale House	4.12.19	Overall Outstanding
	9.12.20 (Focused Visit)	Good practice in Infection, Prevention & Control (IPC)
STSS - Alnwick	20.12.18	Overall Outstanding
STSS - Berwick	27.6.17	Overall Outstanding
	18.2.20	

		Inspected but unable to complete due to COVID restrictions – will be re-inspected at some point
STSS – South / Central	29.8.17	Overall Outstanding
STSS - West	4.7.17	Overall Outstanding

It is also to note that Chibburn Court has now been de-registered and the last resident moved into Hatfield Chase, which more appropriately met the gentleman’s needs.

In the summer the CQC carried out 2 local authority “test and learn” projects with Hampshire and Manchester on how well local authorities are delivering part 1 of the Care Act. They also wanted to test the methodology for Integrated Care Systems (ICS’s) North East London and South Yorkshire.

There is still the expectation by CQC that local authority inspections will commence from April 2023. However due to the CQC timeline for rolling out their new regulatory model slipping, this may now be rolled out later in 2023 and our provider services (Registered services) will no longer be inspected from January 2023 but later in 2023 with the new regulatory framework (no exact date has been given as yet). Until then they will continue to regulate using their existing approach, including registering, monitoring and inspecting against existing key questions and key lines of enquiry (KLOEs). They will continue to carry out monthly reviews and monitoring calls.

As part of their monitoring approach the CQC carried out a review in January 2023 of the data available to them about the following services: North STSS (Short Term Support Service) Alnwick; North STSS Berwick; Northumberland Supported Living Service; Shared Lives Northumberland; Southeast STSS; Tynedale House; West STSS Hexham. They found no evidence that they need to carry out an inspection or reassess the rating of each of the services.

5.2 Children's Services

This report features several types of Ofsted activity in Children's services: notably the Council’s residential homes for children; the focused visit relating to Children’s Social Care; schools and early years provision; and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

5.2.1 Children's residential homes

Inspections of children’s residential homes have continued and there have been three inspections during the period 1st July – 31st December 2022. The findings have been positive and the detail of the judgements and associated comments are in the table overleaf:

HOME	JUDGEMENT	COMMENTS
KYLOE	Outstanding (prev Good)	Judged Outstanding on all criteria Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's education and learning outstanding Children's health outstanding How well children and young people are helped and protected The effectiveness of leaders and managers
BARNDALE	Good (prev Outstanding)	At the most recent inspection there were no Recommendations or Requirements. When asked why the home was no longer judged as "Outstanding", the response was that it was due to the shared space and the building's appearance preventing a homely environment.
COANWOOD	Good (prev Good)	During this reporting period our open residential homes have experienced staffing shortages. Therefore, their ability to maintain a Good judgement is testament to the resilience, skills and commitment of our staff teams.
PHOENIX	Good (prev Requires Improvement)	
THORNDALE	Good (prev Outstanding)	

5.2.2 Focused visit

In July, Children's Social Care received a focused visit from Ofsted relating to the Local Authority's arrangements for planning and achieving permanence. The findings were positive and the report can be found [here](#). The headline findings include the statement: *"Social workers identify permanence plans for children at the earliest opportunity. This helps most children to achieve permanence in a timely way. Social workers know their children well. They use personalised and sensitive tools to communicate effectively with children and prepare them for permanence. An established quality assurance framework assists senior leaders and managers in monitoring the progression of children's plans and the quality of social work practice."*

It is anticipated that the next activity under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services framework (ILACS) will be in the form of a full inspection of the Council's Children's Services which will involve 5 days preparation following notification and then 5 days of fieldwork. The Youth Justice Service is also expecting its inspection this year, for which Her Majesty's inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) provides five weeks' notice.

5.2.3 SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

Between 1st July and 31st December 2022, 19 inspections took place. Schools that have no previous grade have academised since their last inspection.

Primary/First schools:

	Previous Grade	Current Grade	Report
Morpeth All Saints First School	Good	Good	Here
Stakeford Primary School	Good	Good	Here
Thropton Village First School	Good	Good	Here
Norham St Ceowulf's First School	Outstanding	RI	Here
Seaton Delaval First School	Good	Good	Here
Northburn Primary School	Good	Good	Here
NCEA Bishop's Primary School	-	Good	Here

Wooler First School	Good	Good	Here
St Michael's C of E Primary School	Good	Good	Here
Whittonstall First School	-	Good	Here
Stannington First School	Good	Good	Here
Whalton C of E Primary School	Outstanding	Good	Here
Morpeth First School	Outstanding	Good	Here
Otterburn Primary School	Good	Good	Here

The overall figure for the percentage of first/primary schools judged by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding was 92% at the end of December 2022, which is above the national average of 90%. This equates to 113 / 123 schools.

Secondary/High schools:

	Previous Grade	Current Grade	Report
Dr Thomlinson Middle School	-	Good	Here
The Duchess's Community High School*	RI	RI	Here
Bedlington Academy	-	Good	Here

* *Duchess's Community High School received a monitoring visit and were deemed to be Taking Effective Action. This does not change their grade.*

The overall figure for the percentage of secondary schools judged by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding was 83% at the end of December 2022, which is above the national average of 81%. This equates to 25 / 30 schools.

Special Schools:

	Previous Grade	Current Grade	Report
NCEA Castle School	-	Good	Here
Hillcrest School	Good	Good	Here

The overall figure for the percentage of special schools judged by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding was 80% at the end of December 2022. This equates to 8 / 10 schools (including the Pupil Referral Unit).

Academies are not in the control of the Local Authority and therefore the Local Authority cannot intervene easily to drive forward improvement. However, we offer the same level of support to academies as maintained schools should they wish to accept it.

A list of Northumberland schools that have been inspected since September 2022 to mid February 2023 is available [here](#).

5.2.4 EARLY YEARS

22 Ofsted inspections of childcare settings in Northumberland were carried out between 1st July and 31st December 2022. Of these, thirteen were inspections of childminding settings, eleven of which received a Good grading, one Outstanding, and one Inadequate. Nine private, voluntary or independent (PVI) group settings were inspected, six gaining Good and three Outstanding. All settings receiving a less than

Good outcome are visited by the Early Years Team to address issues. An Inadequate judgement means the setting is in breach of their funded hours contract and there will be no more funded children admitted until the grade has improved. Currently 97% of early years provision is graded as being Good or Outstanding, and this is similar to the latest all-England figure of 98%.

5.2.5 SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

The new Area-wide inspection framework was released by Ofsted in November, 2022. It has been shaped by the pilot that Northumberland participated in back in March 2022. It is a graded inspection that focuses on the lived experience of children and young people with SEND, and their families. The first of these inspections in the north east region was announced on 27th February, 2023 (Hartlepool).

6. Implications

Policy	Raising standards in social care and education are Council priorities.
Finance and value for money	None
Legal	<p>The committee's terms of reference state that it has a function to consider the Council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the Council. The results of external inspections are an independent view on an aspect of the County Council's framework of governance and the external inspections referenced in this report are included in the Annual Governance Statement which this committee reviewed in January.</p> <p>Inspections are carried out under the legislative framework set out in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For educational provisions section 5 of the Education Act 2005, section 125 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and Childcare Act 2006. 2. For Adult Social Care under the Care Quality Commission regulatory framework. 3. For Children's Social Care under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) regulatory framework.
Procurement	None
Human Resources	Regulatory inspections assess compliance with HR policies.
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A x	N/A. No groups could be disadvantaged as a result of this report.
Risk Assessment	Audit Committee reviewing a schedule of incoming inspection reports mitigates the risk of the Council not taking appropriate action in respect of such issues.
Crime & Disorder	None.

Customer Consideration	Ensuring that external inspections are properly followed up provides assurance that service weaknesses are being addressed.
Carbon reduction	More meetings are taking place virtually and hence the need to travel is less.
Health and wellbeing	Inspections take health and wellbeing into account when making judgements about their findings.
Wards	All

7. Background Papers

Ofsted focused visit (link inserted)

8. Report Sign Off

Interim Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Resources & Transformation [Section 151 Officer]	Jan Willis
Executive Director of Children, Young People and Education	Audrey Kingham
Executive Director of Adult, Ageing and Well being	Neil Bradley
Chief Executive	Audrey Kingham [covering during Helen Paterson's annual leave]
Portfolio Holder(s) Councillor Wendy Pattison – Adults' Wellbeing Councillor Guy Renner-Thompson – Children and Young People	Wendy Pattison Guy Renner-Thompson

9. Author and Contact Details

For more information, please contact: Alan Hartwell, Senior Manager Performance and Systems Support at:

Alan.Hartwell@northumberland.gov.uk. Tel. 07876131410