

## **COMMITTEE: AUDIT**

**DATE: 22 SEPTEMBER 2021**

### **REVIEW OF EXTERNAL INSPECTION REPORTS – ADULTS & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

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

**Cabinet Members:** Councillors Wendy Pattison and Guy Renner-Thompson

#### **1. Purpose of report**

To inform members of the activity pertaining to Adults and Children's Services regarding external inspections and associated actions. This is over the period from 1st October 2020 to 30th June 2021.

#### **2. Recommendations**

Members note the findings and assess the effectiveness of the scrutiny arrangements.

#### **3. Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the Living, Learning and Thriving corporate priorities.

#### **4. Key issues**

- ∕ The Care Quality Commission (CQC) have resumed inspections in Adult Social Care, although services that are Outstanding or Good (i.e. all LA-managed provision), will not be inspected in the short term. Put in context, 83.7% of all Northumberland-based Adults Social Care providers were rated as Outstanding or Good at the end of June 2021. Some inspections are taking the form of focussed visits rather than full inspections and are not rated. CQC is developing its monitoring approach.
- ∕ Inspections of children's residential homes have resumed and two have taken place in the period, both retaining their grades of Outstanding and Good.
- ∕ There have been no published inspections of schools during the period, but monitoring visits have taken place, and details are provided herein.

- € The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) re-visit following the 2018 inspection took place in the period, culminating in findings that sufficient progress had been made in all 3 areas and formal Department for Education (DFE) monitoring has therefore now ceased.

## **5. Background**

The report usually focuses on inspection activity undertaken by the CQC and Ofsted over a six month period. However, on this occasion, its scope is broadened to nine months in order to provide members and the public with the most up to date picture of external scrutiny.

### **5.1 Adult Care CQC inspection status**

CQC have resumed inspections although services that are Outstanding or Good, will not be inspected in the short term. Therefore, all local authority-managed provision remains either Outstanding or Good. Some inspections are taking the form of focussed visits rather than full inspections and are not rated (and previous ratings cannot be changed), but a summary report is provided. Tynedale House received a focussed visit in December 2020 and received good feedback which also stated that they displayed good practice in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC).

To place this information into a wider context, 83.7% of all Northumberland-based Adults social care providers were rated as Outstanding or Good by the end of June, 2021. In that quarter, four providers went from Good to Requires Improvement, one went from Requires Improvement to Good and 1 provider went from Inadequate to unregistered, while another was newly registered as Good. This gives a net reduction of 2 providers being rated as Outstanding or Good. The council has continued to support care homes over the last 12-18 months and much of this support has been targeted to help them deal with the consequences of the pandemic.

The CQC is developing its monitoring approach in three key areas by:

- € improving their ability to monitor risk to help them be more targeted in their regulatory activity.
- € bringing information together in one place for inspection teams, presented in a way that supports inspectors with their decision making.
- € testing elements of how they want to work in the future, including how they provide a more up-to-date view of risk for people who use services.

In adult social care services these changes have been rolled out from July 2021.

The CQC have also launched their new strategy which outlines how they plan to change and transform to deliver more effective regulation. A regulatory model is the end-to-end view of what they do, from registering a provider to enforcement action and is underpinned by their assessment framework.

## **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; schools; early years and the area-wide revisit of special education needs and disabilities provision. As part of the ILACS framework for inspecting local authority children's services, there is an annual engagement meeting with Ofsted which is planned for October 2021, and for which the service is expected to provide a self-assessment of the quality and impact of social work practice. The self-assessment has been completed and will be presented to Family and Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FACS) and there is a continuous improvement plan arising from the findings to ensure we continue to drive practice improvements where needed.

### **5.2.1 Children's residential homes**

Coanwood and Thorndale residential homes had a full inspection in May 2021, with their positive judgements remaining as Good and Outstanding, respectively. Kyo House had an Assurance Visit in November 2020 that raised some concerns and a subsequent monitoring visit took place at the beginning of January 2021 which confirmed all issues had been addressed. Phoenix House is currently graded as Requires Improvement and is awaiting its formal inspection. Previous interim visits to the home concluded that all necessary actions had been taken. Actions arising from these activities continue to be monitored through a centrally-held action plan.

There has been a structural change within the service whereby residential and family placement services are all overseen by the same senior manager with a dedicated residential manager for the homes reporting to that senior manager. Fostering and Adoption services are currently inspected through the ILACS framework.

### **5.2.2 Schools**

Between March 2020 and June 2021, Ofsted did not conduct graded inspections. Graded inspections resumed in July 2021 but outcomes for Northumberland schools will not be made public until late September.

The overall figure for the percentage of first/primary schools judged by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding was 91% at the end of July 2021, which is above the national average (88%). This equates to 111 / 122 schools.

Two first/primary schools were previously judged by Ofsted to be Inadequate but have since converted to academies and have not been inspected since conversion. Those schools are Croftway Academy and Whitfield Church of England Primary School.

The overall figure for the percentage of middle/secondary/high schools judged by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding was 63.3% at the end of July 2021, which is below the national average (76%). This equates to 19 / 30 schools.

There are five secondary/high schools judged by Ofsted to be Inadequate:

- Berwick Academy
- Haydon Bridge High School
- Ashington Academy
- Bedlington Academy
- Duke's Secondary School (academy)

Academies are not in the control of the Local Authority and therefore the LA 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.

Members should note the task of turning round this pattern of under-achievement usually takes at least three years based upon Ofsted inspection schedules, but as the inspection schedule has been put back 18 months by the Covid pandemic any full inspection could be up to four and a half years after the initial inspection.

It is the prime responsibility of the governing boards and head teachers of those schools to improve. The Council commissions School Improvement Partners (SIPs) to monitor and challenge those schools, one of the products being a termly SIP visit report which includes what judgement they conclude the school would receive if they were inspected at that point. Members should note that periods between inspections range from 18 months to three years therefore statistics of this nature are slow to change and short term trend patterns difficult to identify.

The following schools are awaiting the publication of reports by the end of September following inspection at the end of summer term: Haydon Bridge High; Blyth Academy; Amble Links First; and Scremeston First. Therefore, it is their existing inspection grades that are included in the figures above. Members can be provided with an update if any of the reports have been published by the date of the meeting.

For further details on the work done in this year of unprecedented impact on education services, please see the [Education Annual Report for 2020](#).

### **5.2.3 Early Years**

Thirteen Ofsted inspections of childcare settings in Northumberland were carried out during the Summer term 2021. Of these, seven were inspections of childminding settings, six of which received a good grading (one moving from a previous judgement of requires improvement) and one was judged as being compliant. Six private, voluntary or independent (PVI) group settings were inspected, with two receiving outstanding judgements and the remaining four receiving good judgements (one moving from a previous judgement of requires improvement).

To support providers during the summer term 2021 with COVID-19 related issues, the Early Years (EY) team sent out regular updates via email directly to providers which included the most recent guidance and requirements from government in relation to safe practice and reporting cases etc. This information was also uploaded to the Early Years COVID-19 Padlet which providers are able to access in their own time. Members of the Early Years team, specifically the development workers, supported settings on an ongoing basis with other COVID-19 related queries or concerns, or to

provide moral and emotional support to managers and leaders. Information is also shared on the EY Facebook page as well as it being a forum for practitioners to support one another and share ideas.

### 5.2.4 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Members will recall that Northumberland has been subject to ongoing monitoring by the Department for Education since its SEND inspection of October 2018, following which it received a Written Statement of Action (WSOA). All local areas that are subject to a WSOA receive a revisit and Northumberland's took place in May 2021. Positively, sufficient progress was demonstrated on all three areas of the action plan with leadership being commended. There is more work to do, but the publication of the SEND re-visit letter in July marked the end of formal monitoring by the Department for Education. The letter from Ofsted and CQC has been published nationally by Ofsted and locally through the Council's communications network, and is available to read [here](#).

## 6. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	Raising standards in social care and education are Council priorities.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	None
<b>Legal</b>	None
<b>Procurement</b>	None
<b>Human Resources</b>	Regulatory inspections of residential homes assess compliance with HR policies.
<b>Property</b>	None
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A. No groups could be disadvantaged as a result of this report. The report makes specific reference to scrutiny of services for those with SEND.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Audit Committee reviewing a schedule of incoming inspection reports mitigates the risk of the council not taking appropriate action in respect of such issues.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	None

<b>Customer Consideration</b>	Ensuring that external inspections are properly followed up will provide assurance to customers that service weaknesses are being addressed.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None
<b>Wards</b>	All

**7. Background papers:**

None

**8. Report sign off**

Monitoring Officer / Legal	Helen Lancaster
Executive Director Finance & Section 151 Officer	Jan Willis
Executive Director of Adults Social Care and Children's Services	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wendy Pattison and 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](mailto:Alan.Hartwell@northumberland.gov.uk).