



Northumberland

County Council

FAMILY & CHILDREN'S OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3RD FEBRUARY 2022

ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT

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

Cabinet Member: Cllr Guy Renner Thompson

Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of the Annual Engagement Meeting (AEM) held with Ofsted in October 2021.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

1. Consider the contents of the report.
2. Identify any areas that need further scrutiny.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the Feeling Safe and Cared for priority within the Corporate Plan 2018 – 2021.

Key Issues

1. The AEM this year was held in October 2021 which was within the year time frame of the previous meeting.
2. The discussion considered the self-assessment that is produced and updated on an annual basis which helps to drive the continuous improvement of Children's Services. This report and associated action plan were produced in the Spring of 2021 and considered by FACs in the autumn of 2021.
3. Ofsted considered the self-assessment and the only element of development identified is that they would have preferred that we had provided more performance

data in order that they could better understand impact. We were able to provide up to date data as and when this was requested through the meeting.

4. Whilst we understand that this would help Ofsted understand the context, the assessment is primarily for our use to help us to keep track of progress. Data is used to support the process regularly and the work around meaningful measures means that we have up to date quantitative and qualitative data available at all times.
5. Ofsted considered the work undertaken to strengthen the senior management input and oversight around the Front Door and child protection planning.
6. There was particular interest in our work around Public Law Outline and court proceedings through the pandemic and how we have addressed these.
7. Our Looked After Children numbers and sufficiency planning was discussed in some detail and although they have reported that our Looked After Numbers are higher than the national average, we remain the lowest in the region.
8. Although the focus is on social care, the discussion did cover education recovery and school inspections where the progress at Berwick Academy and the outstanding inspection at Corbridge Middle School were highlighted.
9. The next inspection activity for Northumberland will be a focussed visit which will take place at some point in 2022. The theme of the visit was not discussed.

Background

- Children's Services are heavily regulated, and a report has already been presented to FACS in relation to the variety of inspections and regulatory oversight that takes place.
- The ILACS programme details the frequency and type of inspection that should take place.
- Ofsted hold an Annual Engagement Meeting with all Local Authorities each year and as part of this Local Authorities are asked to provide a self-assessment document or information which analyses where the organisation thinks it is relation to the key areas that Ofsted inspects on. This is not mandatory and there is no requirement for a document to be produced just for Ofsted. We can simply provide what we use to evaluate our strengths and areas for development.
- Northumberland have always had a continuous improvement plan and a format has been developed that is used each year to monitor and evaluate progress which is submitted to Ofsted when required.
- Northumberland welcome feedback from Ofsted and always use this constructively to improve services.

Implications

Policy	All Northumberland Children's Services policies consider the impact of inspections.
Finance and value for money	Local Authorities are expected to pay a contribution to Ofsted on an annual basis.
Legal	Inspections of Children's Services are covered in statute and associated regulations.
Procurement	N/A
Human Resources	The recruitment and retention of appropriate staff forms part of the continuous improvement plan.
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	The continuous improvement plan applies to all children but in particular those children who are vulnerable.
Risk Assessment	The continuous improvement plan serves as an effective risk assessment.
Crime & Disorder	N/A
Customer Consideration	Improving access and quality of our services is the main premise of the continuous improvement plan.
Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	The wellbeing of staff and the families we work with is at the forefront of the work we do.
Wards	All

Report Sign Off

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Cath McEvoy-Carr
Chief Executive	Daljit Lally
Portfolio Holder(s)	Guy Renner-Thompson

Author and Contact Details

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