



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 7 November 2024

Ofsted Action Plan

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Shirley Reynolds - Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills
Lead Director:	Darren Knibbs - Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support, Jo Britton - Executive Director: Children's & Family Services
Service Area:	Children's Safeguarding & Family Support
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	SMT – 24 th September 2024 Cabinet – 7 th November 2024 Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 7 th November

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee:-

- 1.1 Notes the content of this report.
- 1.2 Notes the final action plan shown at Appendix 2.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To present the findings from the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), which took place between 29th April and 3rd May 2024. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 1.

3.0 Background

3.1 Ofsted in the inspection of children services use the ILACS- (Inspection of Local Authority Children Services) framework across England to inspect children services. An ILACS inspection of children services will usually be undertaken every three years. The ILACS inspection framework was introduced in 2017.

3.2 Prior to the most recent inspection, children services last received an ILACS inspection in January 2020. The outcome of that inspection in 2020 was children's services were judged to be '**Outstanding**'. Telford and Wrekin Council were the only local authority in the region to be judged as outstanding at the time. Prior to the inspection in 2020, children's services were judged by Ofsted in 2016 as '**Requires Improvement to be Good**'.

3.3 **The recent Ofsted inspection between April 29th and 3rd May 2024 concluded that the council's children services had maintained its Outstanding judgment and we continue to be the only outstanding authority in the region.** Additionally, Ofsted have also introduced a new addition to the inspection framework, which includes an additional focus the experience of care leavers and the services they receive.

3.4 At the time of writing, Ofsted's official statistics note that **as of 31st March 2024 of the 151 local authorities inspected only 30 (20%) were judged as outstanding at their most recent inspection.**

3.5 Moreover, Ofsted go on to note that **the number of local authorities who were successful in maintaining their subsequent outstanding judgement was 5.** Their pertinent figures emphasise the success of achieving and maintaining outstanding, but also the scarcity of local authorities achieving such a positive judgement.

3.6 Out of the four judgement areas (The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, The experiences and progress of children in care and The experiences and progress of care leavers) were all judged to be Outstanding. The experiences and progress of care leavers judgement area is a new addition to the inspection framework with the council not previously having a standalone judgement in this area. Ofsted noted that "**Care leavers benefit from an extremely comprehensive and generous local offer... The exceptional local offer includes an enhanced setting-up allowance...These are improvements since**

the last inspection. This is having a significant impact in ensuring that care leavers have priority across a range of services.” The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection were judged to be good. The full report from Ofsted can be found at Appendix 1

- 3.7 There are only two areas under the heading ‘what needs to improve?’: *The management of contacts within Family Connect* and *The consistency of making children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless aware of their rights and entitlements.*
- 3.8 With regards to the management of contacts with Family Connect Ofsted found numerous strengths with the service including, how thresholds are understood and applied correctly, where there are concerns involving risk of exploitation they are screened promptly and support and advice from CATE team is used to inform analysis, consistent approaches to information sharing mean prompt responses to children exposed to domestic abuse are proportionate and ensure their well-being and safety.
- 3.9 Ofsted identified some contacts are closed and then reopened to be reviewed, when the necessary information is received to allow for informed decisions to be made. The service is exploring options around how contacts can be managed moving forward, with further detail provided in the action plan at Appendix 2.
- 3.10 In relation to the consistency of making children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless aware of their rights and entitlements, work is underway. A senior lead within the service has been appointed to lead on this aspect of work. Children when presenting in such situations are made aware of the option to be accommodated but the process will be refined so they understand this immediately at the point of this being an option and there is age-appropriate literature to help inform them. Further detail of this can be found in the action plan in Appendix 2.
- 3.11 As an authority we are required to submit an action plan to Ofsted, responding to the findings in the inspection report within 70 working days of receiving the said report.
- 3.12 The overarching themes of the report are wholly positive and are reflected in the totality of the Ofsted report and final grading of outstanding. This is testament to the continued hard work and support that has taken place. The report recognises numerous strengths including **“children benefit from an experienced team of specialist exploitation workers in the CATE team who provide an exceptional service for children when they are exploited or at risk of exploitation.”**
- 3.13 Ofsted noted that children and families continue to experience exceptional social work practice, noting **“Children’s care plans are aspirational. They are thorough**

and address children’s specific needs. They are independently reviewed, with the relevant people in children’s lives contributing to the meeting.” It was recognised that innovative social work practice means that more children benefit from early help with family hubs. Participation of children and families was acknowledged as a real strength of the service, helping to develop services. The report also made reference to the fact that senior leaders at Telford and Wrekin Council continue to implement ambitious plans for children and young people. The report also references the political and financial support that has been provided, which has been critical to the successes achieved. Ofsted noted the **“strong commitment of the corporate leadership is evident in the political and financial support for children’s services in Telford and Wrekin.”** Also recognising that **“Senior leaders work tirelessly with partners to improve children’s experiences.”** The full report from Ofsted can be found at Appendix 1.

- 3.14 It is reflected in the report that children services within Telford and Wrekin Council have been a priority, and this is evident in the leadership, financial investment and political support of members. Children’s services continue to be a priority area and appropriate financial investment, planning and support has continued to be made available to help support and deliver outcomes for the children and young people of Telford and Wrekin. Ofsted specifically note **“The strong commitment of the corporate leadership is evident in the political and financial support of children’s services in Telford and Wrekin. The impact of the stability of the strategic quartet in the leader of the council, the lead member for children, the chief executive and the director of children’s services is impressive as they work together to make sure that children are the priority across the whole council.”**

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 Following the ILACS inspection the Council must submit an action plan to Ofsted outlining how it will address the areas it has identified that the council can improve on. The overall findings of the report judged the Council’s children services to be outstanding.
- 4.2 The final report, attached at Appendix 1 highlights that children services can improve on the management of contacts within Family Connect. The report also documented that children services should be more consistent in making children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless aware of their rights and entitlements.
- 4.3 The action plan attached at Appendix 2 provides further detail of actions to be taken to address the areas of improvement highlighted above by Ofsted.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 There are no alternative options, local authorities are mandated by the ILACS inspection to provide an action plan in response to the formal recommendations made by Ofsted.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 The Ofsted report judges Telford and Wrekin children's services to be outstanding, which provides assurances that the Council follows best practice within its children services teams. The development and implementation of an action plan will further strengthen the delivery of children services. Were an action plan not to be developed this would hinder the ability of the council to continue to improve and refine the services it delivers to children and young people and also would not be compliant with requirements of Ofsted.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The Ofsted report and subsequent action plan aligns with the council's priorities. Particularly when considering 'Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community', All neighbourhoods are a great place to live.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications identified from the recommendations in this report at this time. Actions arising from the Ofsted inspection will be met within existing resources/budgets. There has been ongoing and significant financial investment from the council, demonstrating the priority and value of the service in helping to deliver positive outcomes for the children and young people. The latest investment into children's Safeguarding was a net ongoing investment of £7.6m in 2024/25 as part of the 2024/25- 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The Council has a number of Statutory duties to ensure it protects and supports the children and young people residing within the Borough. The ILACS framework of inspection is a method of benchmarking the quality of care provided to children and young people in England; the overall assessment of Outstanding provides assurance that the Council follows best practice within its children services teams. There is a requirement, following an ILACS inspection, to evidence that steps are being taken to address any recommendations and the proposed action plan will enable the authority to do this.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The action plan will have a borough-wide impact for all children and young people living within Telford and Wrekin.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 There are no negative health, social or economic implications arising from the action plan. The Ofsted report judges the council's children's services to be outstanding. Children's services will continue to support children's health, educational and holistic needs through its statutory services, which include supporting the delivery of health assessments for children who are cared for by the local authority. Personal education plans for those children who are cared for by the local authority will continue to be delivered on a termly basis.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 Children's services will continue to work in partnership with children, young people and their parents, carers and wider family in a respectful, sensitive and transparent way. Recognising that individuals each have their own needs and by working with people in a collaborative way is more likely to lead to improved outcomes for children and families. There are no negative implications for equality and diversity because of the action plan.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no climate change or environmental implications because of the action plan.

14.0 Background Papers

None

15.0 Appendices

- 1 Ofsted – Inspection of Telford and Wrekin local authority children's services
- 2 Ofsted Action Plan

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	19/09/2024	24/09/2024	DTW
Director	19/09/2024	25/10/2024	DK
Finance	25/10/2024	25/10/2024	TD