

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Executive – 1 June 2022

Subject: Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services.

Report of: Deputy Strategic Director Children's Services

Summary

The report reflects on the recent OFSTED Inspection of Local Authorities Childrens Services (ILACS) of Manchester's children's services The report advises of the overall judgement of OFSTED and provides an action plan in response to the findings from OFSTED on what needs to improve.

Recommendations

Executive is asked to discuss both the report and action plan which is attached as an Appendix to the main report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Effective Services are critical to ensuring the most vulnerable citizens can connect and support the drive towards a thriving and sustainable City
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Ensuring the most vulnerable in our society are given the opportunity to access and achieve in the City is supported by the delivery of a strong and cohesive early help system
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Improving education and social care services that are connected to the wider partnership; build the resilience of children and families needed to achieve their potential and be integrated into their communities.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Improving outcomes for children and families across the city helps build and develop communities

A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Services support families to be successful who are then able to deliver continuing growth in the city
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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

Ofsted Inspection of Manchester local authority children's services Children Services Inspection Report March 2022

1.0 Introduction

1.1 As part of OFSTED's inspection regime Manchester's children's services were inspected by Ofsted from the 14th of March 2022 to the 1st of April 2022. The inspection was conducted using their Inspecting Local Authorities children's services (ILACS) framework. The inspection consisted of one week off site and two weeks onsite. The offsite inspection enabled inspectors to analyse performance data, the authority's self-assessment and other intelligence relating to our performance. The onsite inspection focused on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to deliver these services. The inspection is very focused on the quality of social work practice, the impact of this on children's lives and how both are evidenced through the quality of recording both the intervention and impact.

1.2 Ofsted judged Manchester's children's services overall effectiveness as "Good", with the detail of their judgements noted below;

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

1.3 The ILACS inspection of children's services followed a 4 day on-site local area inspection of services to children with special education needs and /or disabilities (SEND) which commenced on the 22nd of November 2021. The local area SEND inspection framework does not have judgements however the letter reflected a strong approach to planning and delivering services to children with SEND.

1.4 The judgment of good places Manchester children's services amongst the top performing children's services in the Northwest of the country, this is in sharp contrast to recent previous inspection results in 2014 and 2017 where services were judged to be inadequate and requires improvement to be good respectively.

1.5 Inspectors found that services had "significantly improved since the last inspection in 2017". Ofsted identified several reasons for this judgement including; ongoing financial commitment to the recruitment and retention of social workers, effective quality assurance and performance management arrangements and strong political and professional leadership.

1.6 Despite the judgement the service is not complacent, the approach to service improvement since the last full inspection in 2017 has been to initiate reform of services that required improvement, develop and implement evidence-based interventions, revise our approach to commissioning, build a comprehensive workforce development and career progression strategy and use our quality

assurance framework and other methods to scrutinize the evidence of impact of these change activities on children and families. These approaches, in addition to the OFSTED action plan, will support our ongoing approach to continuous improvement.

2 Background

- 2.1 OFSTED judged the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families as good some of the components of this are identified in the summary above but however OFSTED also recognised improvements in the care leavers service, privately fostered children, 16 – 17 years who become homeless, life story work, letters before proceedings and importantly, for attracting sustaining and developing our workforce, inspectors commented that leaders have successfully embedded a learning culture across the workforce. To support the monitoring of these developments OFSTED positively commented on the range of and regularity of good quality performance management reports.
- 2.2 The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection was judged as requires improvement to be good, the more positive comments from inspectors noted that when risk decrease children's cases are appropriately stepped out of pre – proceedings, children and families are then supported well and early help is a stable and effective service for children who require early intervention. However, there are other areas detailed in appendix 1 -an action plan to address improvements- that require ongoing attention such as the variability of assessment and some plans being assessed by Ofsted too adult focused with some containing generic actions. Inspectors also commented that impacts of risks arising from domestic abuse are not always fully considered or understood by social workers.
- 2.3 The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers was judged as good, both had been identified by the service as features of our provision that required improvement and we have undertaken large scale reform in these two areas since the 2017 inspection. The service has carefully crafted a meaningful approach to finding the most appropriate outcome for children in the child's timeframe. This long-term approach designed to avoid drift and delay in decision making for children was acknowledged by inspectors who commented “Manchester has successfully embedded a culture of permanence planning for children.” Our leaving care service, which was taken back in-house shortly after the 2017 inspection, has benefited from the creation of a clear ambitious vision and standards supporting significant transformation of the service, inspectors acknowledged this when they commented that “care leavers in Manchester receive a consistently good service”.
- 2.4 The impact of leaders on social work practice was judged as good. Ofsted noted improvements in a range of themes of social work practice but also noted that influence other agencies have in the improvement of services to children. Ofsted noted the “strength of the political and senior leadership relationships and a city-wide focus on the “our child” approach is improving outcomes for children” as well as “the commitment to partnership working

strength of partnership working in Manchester children's young people and their families have received an improving level of service that has offered safety and support throughout the two years of the COVID 19 pandemic". Importantly Ofsted further noted that leaders knew which areas required improvement, these are reflected in the action plan noted on appendix 1 and are discussed below.

3 Ofsted action plan

- 3.1 The action plan is a requirement of the Ofsted inspection framework and is required to address the areas that Ofsted has stated require improving. The action plan provides a focus for improvement and will be tracked through the biannual self-assessment which in turn reports to the children's leadership team. However, the action plan is not the only activity to support the continuous improvement required within children's services. The embedded approach to continuous improvement as identified in paragraph 1.6 will continue to support further changes and developments of the service.
- 3.2 The attached action plan is a bespoke high-level plan of action to the specific actions OFSTED have identified as what needs to improve. Individual leads will develop a detailed implementation plan and as previously referred to the progress of the plan will be overseen by the children's leadership team. The Deputy Director will have overall responsibility for the plan and its intended outcomes.