

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY  
19 DECEMBER 2022**

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**OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES (ILACS)**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update scrutiny committee on the Ofsted Inspection Of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in Darlington.

**Background**

2. Between 10 October and 21 October 2022, a full inspection of Children's Services in Darlington was completed by Ofsted. This full Inspection, known as an ILACS, leads to an overall judgement rating and is the first Inspection of this kind since 2018. At the conclusion of the last Inspection in 2018 services were found to Require Improvement overall, following the previous Inspection finding in 2015 that the Service was Inadequate.
3. The Inspection looked at all aspects of Children's Social Care Services, through a methodology of reviewing performance data, case management information, policies and procedures and through Inspectors interviewing and speaking to practitioners and service users directly.
4. The Inspection leads to an overall grading for the service, as well as specific gradings for Help and Protection, Services to Children in Care and Care Leavers and for Leadership and Management. Each grading is either Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate.
5. The ratings were as follows:
  - (a) The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families = **Good**
  - (b) The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection = **Good**
  - (c) The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers = **Outstanding**
  - (d) Overall effectiveness = **Good**
6. A highlight from the report includes that "workers are rightly proud of their work and the effective relationships with children and families they have harnessed. They genuinely want to make a difference for children. Workers in Darlington are extremely committed to the local authority and feel valued by senior leaders. Social workers we spoke to describe an environment where they feel confident and supported by their managers to make decisions. They feel cared about and supported by them."

7. It was also pleasing to read that “Care leavers told inspectors that ‘they feel that they belong to a family’. For some young people, their personal adviser is their first point of call for support.”
8. An area to improve was identified in relation to support for 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless and these changes and improvements were made during the time of the Inspection. Further improvements can be made in terms of the process for assessments and section 47 Investigations, which were already recognised in the service Self-Assessment. This will be a key focus on the next stage of our journey as we strive for continual improvement and development.

### **Recommendations**

9. It is recommended that Scrutiny note the contents of the ILACS report and the observations of the OFSTED Inspectors.

**Chris Bell**

**Assistant Director, Childrens Services**

## Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	The service supports the Council's crime and disorder responsibilities, young people engaged in learning are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour
Health and Wellbeing	The service actively promotes health and wellbeing
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The service promotes sustainability
Diversity	The service actively supports the diversity agenda
Wards Affected	All wards will be affected
Groups Affected	All families of learners with special education needs
Budget and Policy Framework	Services for SEND are supported through the Dedicated Schools Grant
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This work will support the aim to provide excellent services for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) - implement a new SEND strategy, increase the number of SEND places in schools and work to raise SEND funding levels from central government
Efficiency	The work will support efficient use of resources to support SEND
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This work will have a positive impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Darlington Action Plan

10. The immediate action taken in response to the inspection outcome was that the SEND Assurance Executive and SEND Implementation Group coordinated a response by education, health and social care to the Ofsted/CQC inspection.
11. The WSoA has been created by the local area partnership and has involved a number of co-production approaches. We have surveyed across the partnership receiving 74 responses from Parent/Carers, Children and Young People, Health, Education and Social Care professionals. We also hosted a co-production event with good participation from Parent/Carers. Health, Education and Social Care professionals.
12. All actions have clear dates and a named lead in the WSoA to ensure that delivery can be clearly monitored through the described governance arrangements with monthly, quarterly and annual check points. The governance will monitor not only actions but the detailed outcome measurements so that as a local area we are clearly aware of the impact of the actions taken.
13. The SEND Assurance Executive will have strategic overview of the WSoA and the implementation of the agreed actions to improve the outcomes for children with SEND in Darlington. The overarching aim is to ensure a joint responsibility for addressing the significant weaknesses highlighted by Ofsted/CQC. The executive will also ensure there is pace to the implementation of improvements and sustainable impact for children and young people with SEND.

### Monitoring

14. The WSoA was approved as being fit for purpose by Ofsted on 9 September 2022. The delivery of the WSoA will be subject to quarterly monitoring by DfE/NHS England and a full re-inspection will be undertaken by Ofsted/CQC around 18 months after the WSoA has been approved.