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# **Children's Social Care, Early Help and Prevention Improvement Plan**

**Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny  
Commission**

Date of meeting: 18 June

Lead director/officer: Damian Elcock

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: v1

### 1. Summary

Under Ofsted's Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework, a short inspection was carried out in Leicester during September 2024. This inspection resulted in the overall rating of 'requires improvement to be good' across all key areas.

Though there were areas of strength recognised, with acknowledgement provided of where previous recommendations had been addressed and significant improvements made, five areas requiring action were identified.

In response to these areas for improvement, an action plan has been developed to drive forward change and strengthen practice. This action plan is being overseen through the Improvement Planning and Children's Transformation (IMPACT) governance, to ensure there is a cohesive approach to change that aligns to a number of drivers of transformation.

### 2. Recommended actions/decision

It is recommended that members of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission note the action plan and the progress that has already been made to deliver the necessary change.

### 3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

The full Ofsted Action Plan has been shared with Ofsted. It is anticipated that there will be discussion of this plan and further progress as part of the Annual Engagement Meeting, scheduled to take place in September 2025.

### 4. Background and options with supporting evidence

#### Inspection process

In September 2024, a team of Ofsted inspectors spent a week on site in Leicester to evaluate:

- the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, and enable families to stay together and get the help they need
- the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home
- the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, in stable, loving homes, including adoption
- the experiences and progress of care leavers

The inspectors also evaluated:

- the effectiveness of leaders and managers

- the impact they have on the lives of children and young people
- the quality of professional practice delivered by a workforce that is equipped and effective

The inspectors' judgements were made on the basis of case reviews, discussions with frontline staff and evidence submitted in advance (including policies, procedures and performance data).

### **Inspection findings**

Inspectors acknowledged that social workers are well-supported, maintain manageable caseloads and demonstrate a strong understanding of the children they work with. However, they found that children do not always receive the support they need, and some care plans lack ambition and clarity.

The inspection also identified delays in responding to referrals and concerns about neglect, with some children experiencing avoidable delays in receiving appropriate support. It was suggested that the council's response to domestic abuse cases sometimes placed undue responsibility on parents without fully considering their own experiences of trauma.

Inspectors commented that support for care leavers was inconsistent, particularly for those in custody or facing homelessness.

The report noted that while there is a clear commitment from leaders to meet the challenges faced by vulnerable children, the overall effectiveness of services had declined since the last inspection in 2021. Inspectors pointed out the need for improved oversight and a more consistent approach to evaluating performance.

### **Inspection recommendations**

The following recommendations were made in the inspection report:

1. The range and accuracy of information used by leaders to evaluate service performance and the quality and impact of management oversight and supervision.
2. The timeliness and robustness of responses to contacts and referrals.
3. The quality and consistency of care plans and pathway plans.
4. Arrangements to identify, safeguard and support the most vulnerable children in care and care leavers, including children in unregistered children's homes.
5. Support for care leavers who may be more reluctant to accept help, including those in custody and those facing homelessness.

### **Responding to the inspection**

Acknowledging the areas for improvement identified through the inspection, a detailed action plan was put together to outline the specific activity required to drive the necessary change. This identifies the action owner and outlines timelines for the delivery of activity. The plan also provides a BRAG rating for both the progress on the activity itself and the impact the activity has had. The plan was shared with Ofsted on 12 May 2025. A summarised version of this plan has also been created to provide a high-level outline of the key work being carried out in response to the inspection.

### **Governance for overseeing improvement**

The delivery of this action plan is being overseen through the Improvement Planning and Children's Transformation (IMPACT) governance, alongside other key areas of transformation. This ensures that the activity aligns with work being carried out in

response to a number of other drivers of change, such as the Families First Partnership Programme and Placement Sufficiency Programme. Focus will be placed on the action plan at the IMPACT Board meeting on 30 June, enabling key partners to provide challenge and identify further opportunities for multi-agency working to strengthen practice.

## **5. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications**

### 5.1 Financial implications

The 25/26 budget for Education and Children's services is £120.6m. The actions contained in this report will be funded within the existing budget.

Signed: Paresh Radia

Dated: 05/06/2025

### 5.2 Legal implications

I have considered this report alongside the summary improvement plan and post inspection plan. These identify key actions to ensure that, as an authority, we are meeting our statutory duties towards children and young people in need. There are no direct legal implications arising from these documents.

Signed: S Holmes

Dated: 6th June 2025

### 5.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

ILACS is Ofsted's comprehensive framework for scrutinising and evaluating how effectively local authorities in England are providing children's social care services, with a strong emphasis on the child's experience and the impact of leadership and practice. The report provides an overview of the action plan that has been developed to drive forward change and strengthen practice in response to the areas that require improvement as per the Ofsted inspection in September 2024. Initiatives and actions that aim to strengthen practice should lead to positive outcomes for people from across many protected characteristics.

There may be actions arising from the plans which would benefit from further consideration of the equalities implications and possibly a full equality impact assessment in certain circumstances. It would be conducive to utilise disaggregated data to understand who is being impacted by any identified weaknesses and tailor interventions accordingly. Victims of domestic abuse can come from any background, but certain groups may face additional

barriers to reporting or receiving support due to cultural factors, language barriers, immigration status, or fear of discrimination.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

Dated: 5 June 2025

#### 5.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications arising from this report.

Signed: Phil Ball

Dated: 05/06/2025

#### 5.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

### **6. Background information and other papers:**

### **7. Summary of appendices:**

- a. Summary improvement plan
- b. Ofsted Action Plan – ILACS Autumn 2024

### **8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?**

### **9. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?**