

**Children, Education and Communities Policy
and Scrutiny Committee**

20 February 2023

Report of the Director of Safeguarding, Children's Services

Ofsted Action Plan, Children in Care and Workforce

Summary

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee on the Ofsted Action Plan, provide an update on children in care and the workforce.

Recommendations

2. The Committee is asked to note the report.

Reason: To keep the Committee updated on the progress of areas reported on.

Background

3. Children's Social Care was inspected by Ofsted under the Inspection of Local Authority Children Services (ILACS) framework, which was conducted between 7 and 18 March 2022. The overall inspection judgement was that York 'Required improvement to be good'. The Council was required to submit an action plan to Ofsted within 70 days of the publication of their report outlining how the council intends to address each of the areas for improvement and the monitoring arrangements.
4. A draft of the Ofsted Action Plan was shared and considered by the Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee in June 2022. The final Ofsted Action plan was endorsed by Council Executive on the 28 July 2022. An update to the Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee was last provided on the 12 October 2022.

Progress of Ofsted Action Plan

5. The initial Ofsted Action Plan following inspection addressed the immediate actions required at that point in time. We have reached a stage where the initial actions have now been completed but we know we need to embed these and go further. To achieve this, we have developed our 'Ambition Plan' (see Appendix 1). The Ambition Plan is a holistic plan which sets out 9 priority areas:
 1. Workforce
 2. Voice of Children, young people and their families
 3. Early Help and Targeted Family Support
 4. Front Door
 5. Children and Young People in Care
 6. Care Leavers
 7. Practice
 8. Performance and Quality Assurance
 9. Leadership and Partnerships
6. Each priority has a number of key improvement actions and sets out how we will achieve these and how we will know we are succeeding.
7. The Ambition Plan is overseen by the Council's Children's Services Assurance and Ambition Board. The Board meets on a quarterly basis and the first update on the progress of the plan is due in March 2023.

Children in Care

8. We currently care for 262 children and young people along with 14 unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.
9. We have been working hard to ensure robust oversight of children and young people in our care. We ensure that decisions for a child or young person to come into care are scrutinised at the highest level. We review all plans at 4 months and 10 months to track planning.
10. We have developed groups to oversee plans for children. A weekly group, 'Making York Home' reviews all external provision to ensure

plans are right and we work to enable children and young people return to the City wherever possible.

11. We are striving to keep more children in the City, to enable this we are working on our own residential provision. We have 2 children's homes in the city. At the present time, children's homes continue to sit under the commissioning arm of Adult Services. However, there are plans for both homes to transfer back to Children's Services.
12. We will be developing the children's homes into a model which sees residential care as a short-term solution. We know the impact on longer term outcomes for young people in residential care and we believe young people should live with families wherever possible.
13. Young people will be supported by a multi-disciplinary team, therefore it will be a partnership, working together to keep children in the City and promote the best possible outcomes. Both health and Police partners are engaged in conversations about funding of roles within the service. Progression of the model will move at pace once a Registered Manager is in place.
14. We have taken part in the National Safeguarding Review of young people who have disabilities and complex needs who live in specialist residential settings and are in care. This was a request of all Local Authorities following allegations of widespread abuse and neglect in three settings ran by the Hesley Group in Doncaster.
15. The review allowed us to ensure all young people with additional vulnerabilities and complex needs are safeguarded and protected from harm. During this review we found that all young people were living in settings that meet their individual needs. Young people were involved in care planning and their wishes and feelings were heard. If the young person is non-verbal their feelings were ascertained through observation. There were no thematic recommendations identified through the review.

Workforce

16. There is a national crisis in the recruitment and retention of permanent social workers (and a range of other public service roles) which is well reported across multiple national media sources. The impact of this is felt by young people and families who experience multiple changes. York as with other authorities have found it challenging to recruit. However, in the last quarter we have seen a 50% reduction of agency

staff, we have gone from 45 to 22 agency practitioners in this area which is excellent progress.

17. Our senior management team is now permanent, and we only have 2 agency Service Managers in place, 1 of these will leave at the end of February 2023.
18. We do continue to have a number of social work vacancies and recruitment is underway. We have a number of applications from newly qualified social workers, and we have a recruitment event planned.
19. We are invested in our future workforce and participate in a number of programmes that support us to 'grow our own' by supporting learning and establishing relationships and connections at the earliest opportunity with students on a variety of learning programmes. We are part of the Yorkshire Rural and Urban teaching partnership with the University of York which has enabled us to work closely together to ensure we provide good quality placements.
20. Alongside our partnership with the University of York, we are a member of the Yorkshire and Humber Step-up partnership and host 2 step-up to social work students bi-annually. We have worked with Frontline for the last 4 years hosting units of Frontline students to undertake their 2 year social work qualification with us, which includes their NQSW year when we offer them a permanent post.
21. We partnered with the Open University in 2019 to introduce the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship Scheme.
22. Since 2021 we have successfully recruited 32 Newly Qualified Social Workers who were already known to us through the forementioned programmes, and we have continued to invest in them to encourage staff retention through the allocation of mentors and the offer of continuing learning and development opportunities. All NQSW's join the Social Work Academy and are supported and mentored by a member of the advanced practitioner team and complete their ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) following the Skills to Care programme; a Skills for Care review of our ASYE offer in 2021 identified our ASYE offer as good.
23. Having a stable workforce is a priority area for the service.

Consultation

24. The Ambition Plan has been agreed by the Assurance and Ambition Board. The progress of the Action plan will continue to be overseen and scrutinised by the Assurance and Ambition Board.

Council Plan

25. The delivery of high-quality children's services will support the aims of the Council Plan which are to improve the quality of life for residents by supporting good health and well-being and by providing a better start for Children and Young People in York.

Implications

26. **Financial** Over recent years there has been investment into children's services. However, there continues to be significant pressure of delivering children's services within budget. The delivery of improvement activity is beginning to ease this pressure, but it is a modest reduction given how far we are into the financial year. However, it is expected to save up to £2m on an on-going basis if maintained into 2023/24.
27. **Human Resources (HR)** None at this stage.
28. **Equalities** The delivery of the Ambition Plan will support the council in its overall duty to promote equality and address the needs of vulnerable or marginalised children, young people and families therefore contributing to the reduction of inequalities across the city faced by children and young people.
29. **Legal** None at this stage.
30. **Crime and Disorder** Delivery of plans will ultimately safeguard children and young people, reduced the number of children exposed to risk and the impact of that exposure.
31. **Information Technology (IT)** None.
32. **Property** None.
33. **Other** None.

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Report
Approved



Date 09/02/23

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected:

All



**For further information please contact the author of the report
Background Papers.**

Annexes

Appendix 1 - Ambition Plan

Abbreviations

ILACS	Inspection of Local Authority Children Services
NQSW	Newly Qualified Social Worker
ASYE	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment