

Ofsted Inspection Framework

Briefing to Corporate Parenting Board

1. Scope of Inspection

The children and young people within the scope of the Inspection are:

- those children and young people at risk of harm (but who have not yet reached the 'significant harm' threshold) and for whom a preventative service would provide the help that they and their family need to reduce the likelihood of that risk of harm escalating and reduce the need for statutory intervention
- those children and young people referred to the local authority, including those for whom urgent action has to be taken to protect them; those subject to further assessment; and those subject to child protection enquiries
- those who become the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan setting out the help that will be provided for them and their families to keep them safe and to promote their welfare
- those children and young people who have been assessed as no longer needing a child protection plan, but who may have continuing needs for help and support
- those children and young people who are receiving (or whose families are receiving) social work services where there are significant levels of concern about children's safety and welfare, but these have not reached the significant harm threshold or the threshold to become looked after
- those children and young people who are missing from education or being offered alternative provision
- **those children and young people looked after either by being accommodated under section 20 or those 'in care' during or as a result of proceedings under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and those accommodated through the police powers of protection and emergency protection orders**
- those children aged 16 or 17 who are preparing to leave care and qualify as 'eligible'; those aged 16 or 17 who have left care and qualify as 'relevant'; those young people aged 18 and above and qualify as 'former relevant'; and those young people aged 18 to 25 who qualify as 'former relevant children pursuing further education or training' including those children living in homes of multiple occupation
- those children and young people who have left care to return home, or are living with families under a special guardianship order, residence order or adoption order.

2. Inspection Methodology

Methodology differs from previous Inspections and will include:

- evaluating and exploring a sample of at least 25 children's cases (to inform Key Lines of Enquiry) in order to judge the quality of front-line practice and

management and the difference this makes to the lives of children, young people, their families and carers – this will include discussions with social work staff, including their managers and other professionals working with the child or young person.

- Of the 25 children's cases, twelve will be children looked after and include:
 - a. **at least two children placed out of authority**
 - b. **at least one child who has a plan for adoption**
 - c. **at least one child who lives with a foster family provided by the local authority**
 - d. **one child who has recently returned home in the last three to six months**
 - e. **one child for whom the plan is to return home**
 - f. **two children living in children's homes who are known to have run away.**
- testing the decision-making at all stages of a child's journey: early help; referral and assessment; children in need; child protection planning; continuing support; the decision to remove a child from home; permanence planning; placement decisions, including work to support return home; leaving care
- meeting with children, young people, parents and carers
- shadowing staff in their day-to-day work, for example observing practice in the duty team, the work of social workers with children and families and the work of independent reviewing officers
- observing practice in multi-agency meetings such as child protection strategy meetings, child protection conferences, **looked after children reviews** and resource panels.
- Inspectors will usually talk, by telephone where necessary, with a range of stake holders including... the corporate parenting group or senior officers in partner agencies responsible for corporate parenting

3. Inspection Judgments

The overall effectiveness of services and arrangements for children looked after, care leavers and children who need help and protection is a cumulative judgement derived from:

- the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- **the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence including graded judgements on:**
 - **adoption performance**
 - **the experiences and progress of care leavers**
- leadership, management and governance.

Inspectors will make their judgements on a four-point scale:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- inadequate

4. Timeline of Inspection

Week One:

- Mon: Telephone Notification from Ofsted
- Tuesday: Request for Annex A
- Wednesday-Thursday: Inspectors evaluate the effectiveness of the Front Door arrangements
- Annex A data to be provided (Wednesday)
- Performance data to be provided (Friday)

Week Two:

- Monday – Friday: Case file auditing of 20 cases (Inspectors not on site)

Week Three:

- Tuesday – Thursday: Inspectors track and sample at least 25 cases and meet with staff and service users

Week Four:

- Tuesday: Inspectors track and sample 50 cases and meet with staff and service users
- Wednesday - Feedback to the Director of Children's Services

5. Ten Probable Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOES)

- (1) What makes York's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Local Safeguarding Children Board anything other than requiring improvement?
- (2) What has happened in York since the last SLAC Inspection?
- (3) Are services in York self-aware – are there inconsistencies of understanding between professionals and/or between partner agencies about the Services being delivered and outcomes being achieved?
- (4) Are caseloads simply too high to provide a safe and effective service?
- (5) Is Quality Assurance systemic – is it part of the day-to-day business involving everyone at every level?
- (6) Do York know what 'good' looks like?
- (7) What is happening at the 'threshold points'? ie. such as a decision to escalate from CAF to Contact, Contact to Referral, Referral to Strategy Discussion, Decision to convene Conference, Decision to List, Decision to accommodate, Decision to enter into care proceedings.
- (8) What is the culture in York? Is there effective organisational support? Is there a clear and coherent narrative about the support being provided?

- (9) Does the LSCB hold partners to account? Are there clear and understood governance arrangements (do partners know who reports to who and who should know what?)
- (10) Are lessons learnt in York (from national and local SCRs)?

6. What 'Good' looks like according to Ofsted. Some Questions?

Key judgement: The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence

- Are decisions to look after children and young people timely and made only when it is in their best interests?
- Is the Public Law Outline used effectively, including Letters Before Proceedings, family group conferences and parallel planning?
- Where the plan for a child or young person is to return home, is there evidence of purposeful work to help the family to change so it is safe for the child to return?
- Are applications and assessments for care or other orders accepted by the courts?
- Are Viability Assessments of members of the family carried out promptly to a good standard?
- Are children and young people seen by their social worker alone and do they understand what is happening to them? Are they helped to understand their rights and to complain and access an advocate and/or independent visitor?
- Are risks associated with children and young people offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, going missing or being sexually exploited known and are plans in place to reduce the risks?
- Are children and young people helped to maintain or improve their health?
- Are children and young people receiving the same support from their carers around their education as they would from a good parent?
- Do children and young people who do not attend school have access to 25 hours per week of good-quality registered alternative provision?
- Is urgent action taken when children and young people are missing from school or their attendance noticeably reduces?
- Do carers have delegated authority to make decisions about children's access to recreation and leisure activities?
- Do children and young people live in safe, stable and appropriate homes or families with their brothers and sisters when this is in their best interests?
- Do children and young people move only in accordance with care plans, when they are at risk of harm or are being harmed? They do not live in homes that fail to meet their needs and they do not move frequently.
- Do Care Plans comprehensively address the needs and experiences of children and young people?
- Are they regularly and independently reviewed, involving as appropriate the child or young person's parents, kinship carers (connected persons), foster carers, residential staff and other adults who know them?

- Do children and young people have appropriate, carefully assessed and supported contact with family and friends and other people who are important to them?
- Do children and young people who live away from their 'home' authority have immediate access to education and health services that meet their needs as soon as they begin to live outside of their 'home' area?
- Are family-finding strategies informed by the assessed needs of children and young people and is there decisive action to find families and avoid drift and delay?
- Does the recruitment, assessment, training, support, supervision, review and retention of foster carers including kinship carers (connected persons) and, as appropriate, special guardians, ensure that families approved are safe and sufficient in number to care for children and young people with a wide range of needs.
- Are children and young people effectively prepared for, and carefully matched with, a permanent placement?
- Are children helped to understand their lives and their identities through life history work that is effective and provided when they need it?
- Are Plans effectively and regularly reviewed by independent reviewing officers (IROs). Do IROs bring rigour and challenge to the care planning and monitor the performance of the local authority as a corporate parent, escalating issues as appropriate?
- Do case records reflect the work that is undertaken with children and clearly relate to the plans for their futures?
- Are children and young people represented by a Children in Care Council or similar body which is regularly consulted on how to improve the support they receive?
- Do children and young people receive care that is sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation?

Adoption performance

- Is adoption considered for all children who are unable to return home or to their birth families and who need a permanent alternative home?
- Does the local authority demonstrate a sense of urgency and care in all adoption work including the appropriate use of concurrent and parallel planning?
- Does the recruitment, preparation, prompt assessment, training and support of adopters enable them to meet the needs of children and young people and to keep them safe?
- Are sufficient families available to accommodate sibling groups, older children and children with complex needs?
- Does the Panel and Agency Decision-Maker ensure that children are effectively matched with the most appropriate families and does the Panel promote good practice through its work and regular reports to the local authority?
- Are children who are adopted, their adoptive families, their birth relatives and adopted adults informed of their entitlement to receive an assessment of their adoption support needs? When support is needed, is it provided quickly and effectively?

The experiences and progress of care leavers

- Are Care Leavers safe and do they feel safe?
- Are any risks associated with offending, drug or alcohol misuse, going missing or with sexual exploitation known by adults who have a responsibility for them and effective plans are in place to reduce the risk of or actual harm to them?
- Is Pathway planning effective and do plans (including transition planning for looked after children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) address all young people's needs and are they updated as circumstances change?
- Are the health needs of Care Leavers are clearly assessed, prioritised and met?
- Do Care Leavers have access to and understand their full health history and are provided with all key documents they need to begin their lives as young adults, for example national insurance numbers, birth certificates and passports?
- Do Care Leavers develop the skills and confidence they need to maximise their chances of successful maturity to adulthood, including parenthood? This includes learning to budget, to live independently and to manage safe relationships and behaviour.
- Do Care Leavers succeed in their transition to greater independence and adulthood at a time that is right for them? Are young people aged 16 and 17 are encouraged to remain looked after until their 18th birthday where (and this will usually be the case) this is in their best interest and can they remain in placements beyond their 18th birthday or, where more appropriate, live in permanent and affordable accommodation that meets their needs?
- Do Care Leavers have access to appropriate education and employment opportunities, including work experience and apprenticeships?
- Are Care Leavers positive about themselves?
- Is accommodation for Care Leavers appropriate for each young person to safely develop their independence skills?
- Are Care leavers are provided with information about their legal entitlements such as access to their records, assistance to find employment, training, financial support and how to complain where necessary supported by an advocate?

Key judgement: Leadership, management and governance

- Do leaders, including elected members and managers, have a comprehensive and current knowledge of what is happening at the 'front line' and how well children and young people are helped, cared for and protected?
- Does the local authority have detailed and relevant knowledge of its local communities, including looked after children and care leavers?
- Do commissioned and in-house services respond to and meet the needs of local children, young people and families in need of help, care and protection?
- Does the local authority work effectively with other strategic bodies such as the LSCB, the Health and Well-being Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups to promote and secure a sufficient range of good-quality provision to meet local need?
- Is the local authority an active, strong and committed corporate parent that knows the children and young people it looks after well? Is it an

effective and successful champion of their progress (particularly in education and learning) ensuring that each child has every opportunity to succeed?

- Does the DCS work closely with the LSCB chair? Does the Chief Executive, drawing on other LSCB partners and, where appropriate, the Lead Member, hold the chair to account for the effective working of the LSCB.
- Does the local authority, through performance management and monitoring, have an accurate and systematically updated understanding of its effectiveness? Does it have a track record of dealing rigorously and effectively with areas for development?
- Is management oversight of practice, including practice scrutiny by senior managers, established, systematic and used to improve the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children and young people?
- Does the local authority know itself well? Is it a learning organisation?
- Does the local authority have an effective relationship with CAFCASS, the health community, the family courts and the local Family Justice Board?
- Is the social care workforce sufficient, stable, suitably qualified and competent to deliver high-quality services to children and their families?
- Are managers and practitioners experienced, effectively trained and supervised and does the quality of their practice improve the lives of vulnerable children, young people and families?
- Is there effective organisational support for the professional development of social workers and do leaders provide the right environment for good social work to take place?