

Cabinet

12 April 2022

Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services - Inspection Outcome and Action Plan

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet

1. Considers and comments upon the strengths and areas for improvement identified by the Ofsted inspection report, and
2. Endorses the Action Plan as attached at Appendix 1.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 1 February 2022 Ofsted published an inspection report into children services at Warwickshire (the Report). The Report graded Warwickshire as 'good' in all areas.
- 1.2 The Report highlighted key strengths in the service provided by the Council and in particular graded the following areas as good:
 - the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
 - the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
 - the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers
 - overall effectiveness
- 1.3 In addition, the inspectors formally noted four areas for improvement within the report, these being:
 - the application of thresholds to escalate statutory involvement to a strategy discussion at the 'front door' when the criteria are met
 - ensuring that plans routinely include timescales for action
 - oversight and decisions for children in placements with connected carers that have not been approved
 - achieving a consistently high quality of practice for disabled children
- 1.4 As a result of the Report and the recommendations within it, the Council has prepared an action plan setting out the steps that will be taken to address the formal recommendations. The action plan is attached as Appendix 1 to this report and will be shared with Ofsted on 13 May 2022.

- 1.5 The Council is committed to addressing the areas for improvement identified as part of the inspection within the next six months. Actions and improvements will be monitored within Children and Families Service as part of the Quality Assurance and Performance Learning strategy.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 As noted above, the Report graded Warwickshire County Council good in the following areas:

- the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
- the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers
- overall effectiveness

- 2.2 Within the Report the inspectors highlighted the service improvement journey since 2017 and the role leaders have played in working with partners and children and young people to support development. The Report noted that Social Workers listen to the views of children and ensure they are involved in decisions that impact them and highlighted how the service builds trusting relationships with children, young people and families to ensure families stay together where possible (including when children come into care placing them with their wider family if appropriate). The Report found that children in care are supported to live stable lives and make good progress and that care experienced young people are supported when they leave care with opportunities to strengthen their independence.

- 2.3 The inspectors noted that the service's self-evaluation was accurate and reflected the areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The service has a comprehensive Quality Assurance and Performance Learning strategy, which supports continuous improvement. As part of this strategy the service is already working on the majority of these improvement areas and will use the inspector's findings to further strengthen this work.

- 2.4 All improvement activity will be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team via their Quality Assurance and Performance Learning Board

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The action plan is focussed on process and system improvements and the effective allocation of resources. The activities in the Action Plan are expected to be completed by June 2022 and any costs will be accommodated within the approved 2022/23 budget for the Service.

4. Environmental Implications

4.1 None

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1 The action plan will be shared with Ofsted on 13 May 2022.

5.2 As the Council is committed to continuous improvement, activity to address the areas for improvement has already started and it is intended that the activities within the Action Plan will be completed by June 2022.

5.3 As a result of receiving a grading of “good” and in line with the Ofsted “Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services (ILAC)” framework, Warwickshire’s next graded inspection will be a ‘short’ inspection and will take place in three years, plus or minus 6 months (effectively between May 2025 and May 2026).

5.4 In addition to the short inspection Warwickshire may also be subject to a Focused Visit or a Joint Area Targeted Inspection (JTAI) sometime within the next three years.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Background Papers

1. Background paper 1 – [Children’s services inspection report November 2021](#) (published in February 2022)

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): n/a – county wide report

Other members: Councillors Dahmash, Roodhouse and Brown