



Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care Services (Pilot)

19 September 2017

Background

Between 23rd January and 3rd February Ofsted carried out an inspection of our Children's Services, piloting their new inspection framework. During their time with us, Inspectors reviewed:

- The impact of leaders on practice with children and families
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection
- The experiences and progress of children looked after and care leavers and achieving permanence.

And gave us an overall judgement of 'Good'.

Feedback from inspectors highlighted the great progress that our service has made since its last inspection in 2014. Inspectors were clear that our workers complete meaningful work with children and their families, which leads to improved outcomes in all areas of their life. Throughout the inspection process inspectors credited the passion, enthusiasm and positivity of our staff.

Some key areas of positive feedback from Ofsted included:

- The catalyst for our improvements was our move to become 'one directorate'.
- Regional peer review and challenge is well used to inform services and shape future provision.
- We continue to work hard to recruit a permanent workforce. They particularly liked our plans for Grow your Own and our ASYE programme. We have deployed resources strategically, where it will make the biggest difference to children and young people.
- We have responded well to growth in demand, as a result we are becoming an employer of choice and our reliance on agency workers is reducing.
- We have successfully created an environment where good and outstanding practice can flourish.
- The diverse needs of children are well understood.
- Listening to the voice of the child across our work is a real strength.
- Our Integrated Locality Hubs offer accessible, responsive and effective multi-agency services.
- Children's assessments are consistently good which lead to meaningful indicative plans.

- The support offer for disabled children is good, sensitive work leads to children and their families receiving tailored support.
- The MST/MST-CAN offer and the Edge of Care Hub are two examples of creative use of resources. The support they provide improves the lives of children and families and are reducing the number of children coming into care.
- Social Workers know their children well and have the capacity to undertake direct work, whilst ensuring that they are listening to the voice of the child.
- Children live with carers who are proud and ambitious for them, and their achievements are celebrated.
- Children's emotional needs are regularly considered and children are supported by wrap-around services like CAMHS and Targeted Support.
- Educational outcomes for children in our care are improving due to the efforts of our excellent carers and the Virtual School.

One of the areas which Inspectors highlighted needed further development as Leaving Care as detailed below.

Leaving Care

The Inspection highlighted some concerns regarding the Leaving Care Service's approach to a small number of care leaver's now young adults who had withdrawn from ongoing contact with the service. The Inspection identified that the Leaving Care Service needed to be more tenacious in ensuring the service maintains contact and support to this particular group of hard to reach and engage Care Leavers. An independent review has been undertaken including an audit of cases highlighted by Inspectors and similar cases to explore the activity of the Leaving Care Service and reflect upon its efficacy in addressing its key responsibilities.

Work has been undertaken to implement processes and policies to ensure the most vulnerable young people who lose touch with the service or decide to withdraw are identified early and checks are made with Housing, Department of Work and Pensions, Custodial establishments. New processes are now in place to locate young people and robust attempts are made to re-engage young people, the service remains mindful that these young adults have a choice as to whether they engage with the service and that their choice to decline if they wish to do so is respected. A "Keep in Touch" protocol has been put in place to ensure that even if young people want to cease involvement with the service they are aware of their right to re-engage if they wish to do so at a future date. They are also to be reminded of their right to a service on a regular basis with ongoing but less frequent attempts to engage them in case they need help.

Inspectors noted a number of areas of good performance that more Care Leavers aged 17 - 21 in Nottingham are in education employment training than in similar authorities, the number of Care Leavers living in suitable accommodation is also higher than similar authorities.

Currently Care Leavers are allocated a Personal Advisor until the age of 21 or age 25 if they remain in full time education. The Department for Education has recently announced a new strategy entitled 'Keep on Caring' to address national concerns re support for care leavers this will compel Local Authorities to offer more support to

young people from care to independence. The Department for Education have stated that guidance should be issued in January 2018 and Local Authorities will be expected to implement by April 2018. A review of the capacity of our leaving Care service is ongoing and we await the new guidance that we hope will be accompanied by new additional funding. A “Local Offer” for all Care Leavers will need to be in place by April 2018 detailing what our Care Leavers can expect in terms of housing, education, employment, and advice and guidance.

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