

## **Children and Families Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	23 May 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Update report on the 2021/2022 Action Plan to address the ILACS recommendations
<b>Report of:</b>	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>Report Reference No:</b>	CF/05/22-23
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All wards

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. This report will provide the Children and Families Committee with an update on progress on the recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in November 2019. This report will focus on progress made since the action plan was updated in March 2022, and includes the recommendations from the ILACS focussed visit in November 2021. The action plan will be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis and updates presented to children and family committee accordingly.
- 1.2. Ofsted ILACS inspections review the quality of our services and how well we protect and safeguard children and young people, and how well we support our cared for and care experienced children and young people. Therefore, our work to continue to develop services in response to the recommendations from these inspections contributes to achieving our aims in the Corporate Plan to:
  - Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
  - Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care.

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. This action plan is a key document to ensure that leaders in Children's Social Care are continually working towards, and accountable for the

required actions to support improvement towards the identified recommendations from the ILACS inspections in November 2019 and November 2021.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1.** The Children and Families Committee is recommended to receive the update on the progress to date against the recommendations, and the impact for children and young people, recognising the achievements and progress made, and to seek assurance around ongoing areas for further development.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1.** The council, working with statutory partners, has legal duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people in Cheshire East. It is important that the Children and Families Committee has the opportunity to consider the achievements, progress to date, and the improvements planned ahead to ensure that the welfare of children and young people is prioritised.

### **5. Other Options Considered**

- 5.1.** Not applicable.

### **6. Background**

- 6.1.** All Children's Services are subject to regular inspection by the regulator body Ofsted. Cheshire East Council's last full inspection under the ILACS Framework was in November 2019. Cheshire East Children's Services were judged as 'requires improvement to be good' in this inspection. The inspection recognised that significant progress had been made in a number of areas since the previous inspection in 2015.
- 6.2.** Cheshire East Council received a Focused Visit in November 2021 from Ofsted, this focused on our Children in Need and Child Protection (CIN/CP) service and also evaluated the impact of leaders on frontline practice and outcomes for children.
- 6.3.** Inspections under the ILACS framework evaluate the effectiveness of local authority services and how we work together as a wider partnership to support children and young people, including:
- the help and protection of children.
  - the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those who return home.
  - the arrangements for permanence for children who are cared for by the local authority, including adoption.
  - the experiences and progress of care leavers.
  - the effectiveness of leaders and managers
  - the impact we have on the lives of children and young people.

- the quality of professional practice.

**6.4.** The ILACS framework is a complex system of inspection; the aim is to create a proportionate inspection process based on their most recent inspection judgement and intelligence gathered throughout the year. There are three different types of inspections under the framework:

- **Standard Inspection** - this inspection covers all the services above across levels of need and takes place over three weeks, with one week's notice and inspectors onsite for two weeks. At the end of the inspection, a report is completed which gives a judgement on the quality of our services, either outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good or inadequate. Authorities that are already judged to be good or outstanding have a shorter standard inspection which takes place over two weeks.
- **Focused Visit** - these inspections focus on one area in particular. Prior to the recent focused visit in November 2021 on our Children in Need and Child Protection Service (CIN/CP) we had a focused visit on cared for children and care leavers. These inspections take place over two weeks and inspectors are onsite for two days. At the end of the inspection, a letter is written which outlines strengths and areas for improvement, no overall judgement is given.
- **Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI)** – these inspections are multi-agency, and are carried out by inspectors from multi-agency inspectorates (including Ofsted, CQC, HMICFRS and HMI Probation). These inspections look at a particular topic, which changes on a regular basis. These inspections take place over three weeks and inspectors are onsite for one week. At the end of the inspection, a letter is written which outlines strengths and areas for improvement, no overall judgement is given.

**6.5. Progress against the Recommendations from the Ofsted ILACS Inspection 2019 and further areas for improvement from the Focused Visit**

**6.6.** Following the inspection in 2019, Children's Services have implemented strategies to address the shortfalls identified and have continued to drive forward our ambition for children and young people in Cheshire East. The action plan to address the recommendations from the 2019 inspection, and the progress to date against the actions, is included within the appendix. The action plan was updated in March 2022 and includes additional recommendations identified during the focussed visit.

**6.7.** The additional recommendations will support progress to address the following areas of improvement:

- To fully consider childrens identities when reaching decisions and ensure assessments will be updated promptly when children's circumstances change.

- Improve the identification of contingency arrangements in child in need plans.
- Improve the consistency and effectiveness of management oversight for disabled children.
- Improve the completion of audit recommendations to further improve experiences for children.

## **7. Consultation and Engagement**

**7.1.** Children's Social Care consult and engage with key stakeholders as part of service delivery. For the purposes of the period referenced, consultation has taken place specifically with foster carers, and cared for children and young people accessing emergency accommodation.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1. Legal**

**8.1.1.** Ofsted inspections are conducted under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

**8.1.2.** Cheshire East has a statutory responsibility to safeguard children and young people within the borough and the service operates within the relevant legal framework.

### **8.2. Finance**

**8.2.1.** Financial plans are due to be reviewed to ensure that the service can continue to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people in Cheshire East and will be reflected in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

### **8.3. Policy**

**8.3.1.** Cheshire East is ambitious and committed to ensuring that together, we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young. Our priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people are driven through the council's Corporate Plan, the Children and Young People's Plan, and the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

### **8.4. Equality**

**8.4.1.** Good quality practice with families ensures that all children and young people's needs are taken into account and supported.

### **8.5. Human Resources**

**8.5.1.** Recruiting and retaining high quality social workers and managers is crucial in supporting us to achieve consistently good practice for children and young people.

## **8.6. Risk Management**

**8.6.1.** There are reputational and financial risks of not providing good Children's Services, as well as risks to individual children and young people. The council must continue to ensure that these risks are minimised by ensuring effective plans are in place to improve where areas for development are identified.

## **8.7. Rural Communities**

**8.7.1.** Vulnerable children and young people are present in all communities in Cheshire East.

## **8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

**8.8.1.** Our plans intend to improve the experiences and outcomes for children and young people across the borough, in particular those that are most vulnerable. Cheshire East Council has a Corporate Parenting responsibility for children in their care. Full council made pledges to cared for children and young people in December 2018 in line with the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

## **8.9. Public Health**

**8.9.1.** There are no direct implications for public health.

## **8.10. Climate Change**

**8.10.1.** Children's services continue to support the council with climate change objectives.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Kerry Birtles Director Children's Social Care <a href="mailto:Kerry.Birtles@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Kerry.Birtles@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	Action Plan to address the Ofsted ILACS Recommendations
Background Papers:	<a href="#">Children's Inspection Report 2019</a> <a href="#">Children's Services Focused Visit Report 2021</a>