

DECISION-MAKER:	CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY PANEL
SUBJECT:	OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT
DATE OF DECISION:	26 JANUARY 2023
REPORT OF:	HEAD OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
Executive Director	Title	Executive Director Children & Learning	
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Not applicable

BRIEF SUMMARY

This report outlines the outcomes of the Ofsted focused visit to Southampton Children and Learning Service in November 2022 and the service response.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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| | (i) | That the Panel note the detail in the Ofsted focused visit letter and the service response. |
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REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 1. | The Ofsted focused visit provides important feedback regarding the service's direction of travel that the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel need to be aware of. |
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ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED
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| 2. | Not applicable |
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DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)
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| 3. | Ofsted notified the service of its intention to conduct a focus visit in respect of children in need and children subject to child protection planning on 15 th November 2022. A two-day, onsite inspection was conducted on 22 nd and 23 rd November. Onsite activity focused on social work practice, with most of the time spent with teams and sampling cases. The inspection was not graded and will inform the next full standard inspection under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. |
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| 4. | The focused visit covered the following areas of practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thresholds • step-up/step-down between children in need and child protection • children on the edge of care |
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children subject to a letter before proceedings and the quality and impact of pre-proceedings interventions • children in need at risk of family breakdown • the quality of decisions about entering care • protection of disabled children.
5.	<p>Inspection preparation went well with the following positives noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate support • Data accuracy • Information in advance • Partnership engagement • Staff morale and buy in • Honest approach.
6.	<p>Overall, Ofsted found that:</p> <p><i>‘Southampton City Council has made progress in how it improves the experiences and outcomes for children in need of help and protection since the last Ofsted visit in May 2021. Most children in need and those subject to child protection plans are visited regularly. They receive help that makes a positive difference to them from social workers, who are now more likely to be permanent members of staff and to have a manageable caseload. On this visit, inspectors did not identify any children at immediate risk of harm.’</i></p>
7.	<p>Ofsted’s feedback is attached as Appendix 1. Areas of strength are summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our ‘Grow our own’ recruitment and retention strategy is having an impact. The team also noted our focus on manageable caseloads. • Thresholds were appropriate for the majority of children. • Pre-proceedings work was assessed to be strong and management oversight of our legal planning arrangements judged to be robust. • Edge of care work was found to be timely and effective. • Strong work was found in our Children with Disabilities team including good analysis of chronologies, robust child protection plans and good direct work. • The quality of supervision has improved and was judged to be reflective in around two thirds of cases. Staff spoke to were positive about our Workforce Academy and induction programme. • The inspection team concluded that our practice framework was beginning to embed.
8.	<p>The following areas for improvement were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of assessments and plans, and of how effectively plans are used to monitor and drive progress for children. <i>** Use of neglect toolkit is not consistent.</i> • The quality of audits and of how effectively they, and the wider quality assurance framework, are used to understand and improve the quality and impact of practice with children and their families.
9.	<p>The inspection team noted that the service’s leaders were clear on the areas of improvement and activity started immediately after the focused visit. This has included / includes:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit process / schedule discussed at management Learning and Improvement Forum - December 2022. • Care Director user group - December 2022; feed into Children's CD Board. • Improvement Board review of improvement plan and forward plan - January 2023. • Practice Manager Workshops x2; February 2023.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
10.	The Workforce Academy budget is focused on improving practice and is a component of the service's overall budget.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
11.	N/A
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
12.	Children Act 1989
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
13.	N/A
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
14.	Oversight of the service improvement activity is provided by our Improvement Board and independent chair.
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
15.	<p>The 2022-2030 Corporate Plan includes, as one of its four goals, strong foundations for life where people are able to access and maximise opportunities to truly thrive, Southampton will focus on ensuring residents of all ages and backgrounds have strong foundations for life.</p> <p>By delivering consistently good outcomes for the city's children and young people, Southampton's Children's Services and Learning Department will contribute to achieving this objective.</p>

KEY DECISION?	No
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	Ofsted Focused Visit Letter
Documents In Members' Rooms	
1.	None
Equality Impact Assessment	

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out?		No
Data Protection Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out?		No
Other Background Documents		
Other Background documents available for inspection at:		
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)	
1.	None	