

# Ofsted Inspection of West Sussex Children's Services 2019

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# Ofsted Inspection of Children's Social Care

Took place between **25<sup>th</sup> February and 8<sup>th</sup> March 2019**. Inspectors visited all of the main office locations. **7 inspectors** in total.

Week prior to being onsite, inspectors reviewed:

- over **150 documents** to help them understand how the Council manages its social work practice
- **audits** that had been undertaken in the 6 months before the inspection
- **11 child-level data** lists, covering all aspects of the service

During the inspection inspectors:

- interviewed over **100 staff**
- spoke to some children in care, care leavers, adopters and foster carers
- viewed **687 case files**

# What Needs to Improve?

Key findings from the Ofsted Inspection Report:

- Case loads
- The changes of social worker that children experience
- Consistency of practice across the service
- Levels of drift and delay
- Management and supervisory oversight
- Systems and processes to ensure that they are centred around the child
- Permanency for children looked after
- Frequency of visits for children throughout the system
- Care planning and recording
- The involvement of partners
- The corporate parenting function

# Children First – Our Approach to Improvement

- ✓ Developing an **improvement plan**, with a clear vision and measures of success, that puts the voice of the child at the heart of everything we do.
- ✓ Setting up a children's **improvement board** with an independent chair to review and challenge our improvement plan.
- ✓ Invested **£5 million** to increase the number of social workers in November 2018. Allocated a **further £5 million** to the improvement plan.
- ✓ **Recruitment and retention drive** to make the best social workers come to, and stay in, West Sussex.
- ✓ Strengthened the **Corporate Parenting Panel** and it's role in leading and monitoring.
- ✓ Performance monitoring and **quality assurance** of practice.
- ✓ Major **training** and development programme to improve social work practice.

# Areas of Good Practice to Build On

Ofsted did acknowledge progress had been made in some areas.

- The support from the **Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH)** - who deal with children when they first come into contact with the Council - is working well;
- The **Children's Asylum Team** provide effective support to asylum seeking children following good assessments of need
- The **Care Leaver's service** and the dedicated service for complex adolescents are having a positive impact.
- The **Children in Care Council** champions the views of all children in care and care leavers and enables their voice to influence the development of services.
- **Foster carers** receive effective assessment and training. Most looked after children live with carers who meet their needs, support their aspirations and act as a champion for them.

# Improvement Activity (March to May)

## Improving quality of Practice

- Focus on management oversight and challenging poor practice
- Principal Social Worker developing new practice standards
- Focus on compliance – Standards of Care policy revised and reporting developed to monitor progress
- Development of a private fostering team

## Building Partnership Arrangements

- New Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Multi-Agency Risk Conference steering group
- Serious Case Review Partnership event
- LSCB chair visited children to hear their experiences
- IPEH Partnership events

## Neglect

- Neglect toolkit developed and shared with all CSC staff
- Training on assessment of neglect delivered to CSC staff
- Engaging voluntary sector to support identification of neglect
- Partnership action plan developed

## Pre-birth

- Appointment of 2 social workers leading on pre-birth action plan
- Review of policy
- Improved management oversight of cases

## Recruitment and Retention

- 40 new social workers recruited
- New retention offer launched

# Draft Improvement Plan





# Next Steps

DfE

- DfE statutory direction to West Sussex County Council. Commissioner appointed to oversee the Council's response.
- Council to work closely with the commissioner on development and delivery of the Improvement Plan.

Cabinet and  
Improvement  
Board

- Approve the Improvement Plan for submission to the Department for Education and Ofsted in June.

Ofsted

- Relationship with Ofsted: the first action planning meeting in mid-June, then through quarterly monitoring visits, the first in the autumn.

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