

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

16 May 2023



Subject: OFSTED INSPECTION OF BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES - 20
FEBRUARY TO 3 MARCH 2023

Report of: Sue Harrison, Director Children and Families

Relevant Cabinet Member: Cllr Karen McCarthy, Children, Young People & Families

Relevant O &S Chair(s): Cllr Kerry Jenkins, Education and Children's Social Care

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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference:		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 To share the findings of the February/March 2023 Ofsted inspection of children's services.
- 1.2 Ofsted has determined that in all areas inspected, services in Birmingham are Good. This overall judgement comprises four graded judgements, each of which was graded '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.
- the experiences and progress of care leavers.

1.3 Ofsted found that:

“Since the last inspection in 2018, much progress has been made by Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Children’s Trust in improving the experiences and outcomes of their children. Children are now safeguarded through effective ‘front door’ arrangements, thorough child protection assessments and a strong response to safeguarding children at risk of exploitation. Children are supported at an early stage to remain in their families where possible. When intervention is required to protect children, it is proportionate to risk and need. When children need to come into care, their needs are met well in appropriate placements. Some children spend too long in stable placements awaiting the appropriate change in legal status to secure their permanence. Care-experienced young people benefit from a strong corporate commitment and ambition to enable them to fulfil their potential in life. Personal advisers develop supportive and encouraging relationships with young people, though for some, the earlier involvement of a personal adviser would help in their preparation for adulthood. Children in care and care-experienced young people are genuinely listened to and actively engaged in recruitment, staff training and service development. Despite significant trust investment and partnership engagement, response to domestic abuse is not proportionate to demand in the city.

Effective performance reporting and quality assurance arrangements help to ensure that leaders have a clear understanding of emerging themes and trends in practice, to which they quickly respond. Good recognition of the diversity of the population is evident throughout the overall strategic ambitions for the city and is reflected in services and support for children and families.”

1.4 Ofsted found that the following areas need to improve:

- the effectiveness of the response to domestic abuse.
- earlier pre-birth assessments to support early permanence planning, and the timely realisation of permanence plans and legal status for children in stable placements.
- earlier engagement of personal advisers for children leaving care.
- consistency of written plans.

1.4 An action plan will be drawn up to respond to the areas identified for improvement.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the content of Ofsted’s report which was published on 18 April 2023 and is attached to this report.

3 Background

- 3.1 Birmingham's children's services were judged by Ofsted as 'Inadequate' from 2008-2018. A full inspection in December 2018 judged services as 'Requires improvement to be good'.
- 3.2 A full inspection took place from 20 February 2023 to 3 March 2023, the outcome of which was that services are now judged to be 'Good' in all areas.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7 Compliance Issues:

7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

- 7.1.1 Ofsted's findings that children's services are 'Good' supports the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Birmingham City Council Plan 2022:
- Birmingham is an aspirational city to grow up in - we will improve protection of vulnerable children and young people (including those with Special Educational Needs and Disability).
 - Birmingham is an aspirational city to grow up in - we will inspire our children and young people to be ambitious and achieve their full potential.

7.2 Legal Implications

- 7.2.1 Birmingham children's services were inspected in line with the framework for inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS).
- 7.2.2 Birmingham Children's Trust was established in 2017 as a wholly owned company of Birmingham City Council following formal intervention by the Department for Education. The Trust delivers statutory Children's Social Care services on behalf of the Council through a commissioning arrangement and formally commenced operations in April 2018.

7.3 Financial Implications

- 7.3.1 Not applicable.

7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

7.4.1 Not applicable.

7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

7.5.1 Not applicable.

7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

7.6.1 Not applicable.

7.7 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

7.7.1 Not applicable.

8 Appendices

8.1 Ofsted report: Inspection of Birmingham City Council local authority children's services 20 February to 3 March 2023.

9 Background Documents

9.1 Ofsted letter of Notification for the ILACS Standard Inspection of Birmingham 13 February 2023.