

<b>4 February 2020</b>		<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> N/A	
<b>Report of:</b> Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Early Help		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Health and Housing and Interim Director of Children's Services		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

### Executive Summary

Ofsted introduced the new ILACS inspection framework in January 2018 which replaced the previous Single Inspection Framework (SIF) of children's services. Thurrock children's services' previous inspection was held between 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016 under the SIF inspection framework and the service was graded 'Requires Improvement' across all judgement categories. This report is to update the Committee on Thurrock's recent Ofsted ILACS inspection undertaken between 4<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019.

The ILACS inspection is a very detailed and robust review of all areas of practice in children's social care, early help services and education services for children educated at home as well as for children missing education. Ofsted Inspectors came on site from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November for two weeks; there were four key inspectors for the whole two weeks and for two days of the inspection a further two inspectors joined the inspection team, which meant a total of six inspectors within the service. The inspection was very thorough and inspectors examined the experience of children through the lens of social work interventions, by talking directly to social workers and examining their case work files in detail. The inspectors were focused on evidence of outcomes for children and the impact social work intervention is having for children and their families. The two weeks of on-site inspection was very intense, it thoroughly tested the practice of the service and the corporate support and commitment from the Council as a whole for our most vulnerable young people.

Ofsted rated Thurrock Children's services as:

- Impact of Leaders on social work practice with children and families; **GOOD**
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: **GOOD**

- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: **GOOD**
- Overall effectiveness: **GOOD**

The inspection outcome reflects the hard work and commitment of all those striving to ensure children and their families receive good services within the Council and from partners. Ofsted commented 'Effective and stable senior leadership has led to considerable improvement in the quality and impact of social work practice for children in need of help and protection, those in care and care leavers since the 2016 Ofsted inspection.' They also commented that, 'The senior leadership team and elected members demonstrate a collective determination to provide high-quality services that improve outcomes for vulnerable children. A palpable sense about wanting to do the right thing fosters an open learning culture, and allows leaders to engage readily in internal and external reviews and challenge.'

Ofsted recognised the excellent practice undertaken by social workers and reflected that morale is good within the service. Ofsted observed; 'Social workers and managers are fittingly proud of the work they are doing in Thurrock. They know their children and families very well and speak with passion and enthusiasm about the often exemplary work they undertake with them. They work in an environment where caseloads are manageable and where leaders support them to do their jobs effectively.' Ofsted were clear that the service is continually developing and the three areas for improvement identified by Ofsted, were already identified by the service with action plans in place to further improve practice.

The outcome of the inspection evidences that Thurrock Council is providing a Good, much improved service for vulnerable young people in the borough. In addition, the council is well placed to further embed the good practice in place and to continue to provide excellent services to vulnerable children and their families.

## **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 That the Committee note Thurrock's outcome from the Ofsted ILACS and offer their unanimous thanks to all officers and elected members of the council involved in achieving the Good rating.**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1** In January 2018, a new universal inspection framework came into force for Children's services. The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) focuses on the local authority (LA) functions regarding the help, care and protection of children and young people. The ILACS is a 'whole system' approach to inspection. The aim of the ILACS is to drive up improvement and catching LAs before they fall over as the underpinning principles of the framework, which is described as a system rather than a programme of inspection. ILACS attempts to take a proportionate, whole system approach to inspecting a service and this inevitably involves greater contact between Ofsted and LA's. In addition to on-site inspection activity, the ILACS is supported and informed by an annual self-evaluation, the annual conversation

and Ofsted's LA intelligence system.

2.2 The ILACS inspections focus on the effectiveness of local authority children's services and arrangements in these four areas:

- 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 and care leavers
- Overall effectiveness

2.3 Thurrock's children's social care last Ofsted inspection was in February 2016, when children's social care was judged to be 'Requires Improvement'. The council was notified of the ILACS inspection by phone call on the 4<sup>th</sup> November, which is the off-site week of the inspection. During this week the service uploaded over 200 documents, produced audit reports of case work and the Lead Inspector conducted a number of telephone interviews including with the Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder and the Director of Children's Services and the Assistant Director. The onsite weeks began on the 11<sup>th</sup> November and completed on the 22 November. During that period of time there were up to six Ofsted inspectors in the service. The inspectors located themselves alongside social workers and reviewed their cases directly with them, probing into significant detail for every case. The inspectors reviewed in detail a significant number of cases, selected completely randomly by the inspectors in their 2 weeks of onsite work.

Please see the attached Ofsted report in full, which was published on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

2.4 Recently, a number of neighbouring authorities have also been inspected by the same Ofsted team under the new ILACS framework. Southend Council was rated Requires Improvement, Medway was Inadequate and is now under government intervention. In addition, there were 3 other Ofsted ILACS inspections at exactly the same time as the one in Thurrock; London Borough of Ealing went from Good to Requires Improvement, London Borough of Hackney also went from Good to Requires Improvement and Solihull remained as Requires Improvement. When compared to these outcomes the Thurrock outcome of an improved judgement to Good is even more significant.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

3.1 Thurrock's Ofsted ILAC report is attached at appendix 1.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 Members of the Committee are aware of the outcome of the ILAC inspection, including the areas for development.

**5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

None

**6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

None

**7. Implications**

**7.1 Financial**

Implications Verified by: **Michelle Hall**  
**Management Accountant**

There are no financial Implications to this report.

**7.2 Legal**

Implications Verified by: **Lindsay Marks**  
**Deputy Head of Legal Social Care and Education**

There are no legal implications.

**7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications Verified by: **Rebecca Lee**  
**Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities**

None.

**7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)**

None

**7.5 Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):**

None

**8. Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Ofsted – Thurrock Council – Inspection of Children’s Social Care Services Report, 11 – 22 November 2019

**Report Author:**

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Children’s Services