

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** 18 September 2018

**By:** Director of Children's Services

**Title:** The Ofsted inspection of East Sussex County Council's Children's Services

**Purpose:** The report sets out the outcome of the Council's Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services in July 2018.

---

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. welcome the findings of the inspection into the work of ESCC for children and young people which was published 4 September;
2. congratulate all staff involved; and
3. note that the areas for improvement will be incorporated into the business planning process.

---

## **1 Background**

1.1 East Sussex County Council was inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) in accordance with the framework and evaluation schedule for Inspections of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) from 16 - 20 July. This is a new inspection framework which was introduced in January 2018. As the Council's overall judgement under the previous Single Inspection Framework, in February 2014 was good, this was a short, one week inspection rather than a standard two week inspection.

## **2 Supporting information**

2.1 The outcome of the inspection was published 4 September and is attached at Appendix 1. East Sussex County Council's (ESCC) Children's Services has been judged to be outstanding overall. This is an excellent outcome for the service and for the Council which has made keeping vulnerable people safe, a priority outcome. The judgement for each area of the inspection is set out below.

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding

2.2 The inspectors spent the majority of their time with frontline staff and the inspection outcome is a reflection of the difference staff make to the lives of children and young people in East Sussex.

2.3 ESCC was one of the first 16 local authorities to receive a standard or a short inspection under the new framework. ESCC is now one of six, out of 150 local authorities, to have an outstanding judgement.

2.4 The report highlighted key strengths including:

- East Sussex leaders set exceptionally high standards for services that support children who need help, protection or care across this large rural local authority while clearly communicating that this is simply what all vulnerable children are entitled to.
- Leaders and managers have successfully established a culture in which talented social workers stay, and where effective social work flourishes.
- The social care workforce is impressively stable and resilient at all levels and in all teams.
- The East Sussex model of 'connected practice' which is fully embedded, resulting in helpful, enduring and trusting relationships between practitioners, children and their families, sometimes over many years.
- Examples of creative and purposeful direct work with children are widespread, and this leads to substantial improvements in children's lives.
- The local authority is a strong, dynamic learning organisation that encourages self-reflection at all levels.
- Political leaders firmly hold senior managers to account for the quality of practice and performance.
- The well-established and regularly refreshed quality assurance framework is an important instrument in monitoring and continually improving social work practice.

2.5 The report identifies two areas which need to improve:

- The consideration and recording of managers' rationale for the timescales they agree for completing family assessments, in line with each child's presenting needs.
- The clarity and accessibility of letters that are sent to parents when legal proceedings are being considered.

2.6 The areas for improvement will be incorporated into the department's business planning process.

### **3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

3.1 Despite the very challenging financial context, East Sussex has maintained a focus on the key priority outcome of keeping vulnerable people safe and Cabinet is asked to note the contents of the inspection report.

**STUART GALLIMORE**  
**Director of Children's Services**

Contact Officer: Amanda Watson  
Tel. No. 01273 481339

Email: [Amanda.watson:eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Amanda.watson:eastsussex.gov.uk)

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- Appendix 1 Ofsted Report