

Report to: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date of meeting: 16 October 2025

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Ofsted Focused Visit – July 2025

Purpose: To provide the Corporate Parenting Panel with a summary of the findings from Ofsted's focused visit to East Sussex Children's Services, conducted on 30 and 31 July 2025.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the update.

1. Background

1.1. Ofsted undertook a focused visit under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework, specifically reviewing arrangements for children in need and child protection planning. Inspectors Rodica Cobarzan, Steve Bailey, and Zafer Yilkan led the visit.

2. Supporting Documentation

Headline Findings

2.1 Ofsted found that children in need and those subject to child protection plans in East Sussex are receiving services that make a positive difference to their lives. Key strengths highlighted include:

- Strong senior leadership and corporate support.
- Integrated, multidisciplinary support for children and families.
- A stable and committed workforce, with staff feeling valued and supported.
- A well-embedded model of practice, with social workers delivering thoughtful, creative, and kind support.

Areas for Improvement

2.2 Ofsted identified one area for improvement:

- Timeliness of child protection strategy meetings: While urgent cases are prioritised, a small number of children experience delays in convening strategy meetings. This can impact the early development of multi-agency plans to reduce risk.

2.3 It is important to note that this issue is not systemic. The feedback acknowledges that delays affect only a small number of children and that urgent cases are consistently prioritised.

Main Findings

2.4 The main findings are detailed below:

- Multi-agency working is a strength, particularly in cases involving domestic abuse, mental health, and substance misuse, the inspectors described this work as 'life changing'.
- Child protection plans are proportionate, well-recorded, and created collaboratively with families.
- Meetings (e.g., child in need, core groups, conferences) are regular and well-attended.
- Direct work with children is strong, with tailored visits and effective use of tools to understand lived experiences.
- Pre-proceedings and edge-of-care support are timely and transformational, enabling many children to remain safely at home.
- Private fostering arrangements are now better supported, with timely assessments and visits.
- Neglect toolkit is used effectively to inform decision-making and interventions.
- Supervision is timely but recording quality is inconsistent, and actions are not always reviewed.
- Quality assurance is robust, though improvements are needed in incorporating feedback and data system development.

Leadership and continuous Improvement

2.5 Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. The self-evaluation is reflective and shows a strong commitment to learning and improving practice. Performance management systems are used well, though reliance on manual data extraction may limit efficiency.

Next Steps

2.6 Ofsted will consider these findings in planning future inspections. The leadership team will continue to address the identified area for improvement and build on the strengths recognised in the report.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel is recommended to note the findings of the Ofsted focused visit and acknowledge the strengths and progress made in children's services.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Children's Services Focused Visit