

15 March 2022

Eoin Rush
Director of Children's Services
East Riding of Yorkshire
Room HS136
County Hall, Cross Street
Beverley
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Dear Eoin

Monitoring visit to East Riding of Yorkshire children's services

This letter summarises the findings of the monitoring visit to East Riding of Yorkshire children's services on 7 and 8 February 2022. This was the third monitoring visit since the local authority was judged inadequate in December 2019 and the subsequent publishing of the report in March 2020. Her Majesty's inspectors for this visit were Matt Reed and Vicky Metherringham.

Areas covered by the visit

Inspectors reviewed the progress made in the following areas of concern identified at the last inspection:

- Assessment and planning for disabled children.
- Children in care who are living in children's homes.
- The effectiveness of the local authority designated officers.
- Assessment and planning for children subject to private fostering arrangements.
- The availability and access to training for all social work staff and foster carers.

This visit was carried out in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. Inspectors were primarily on site.

Headline findings

East Riding of Yorkshire children's services have continued to improve since the local authority was judged to be inadequate in December 2019. Sustainable progress has been made in all areas reviewed at this visit which had been identified as areas for improvement in the judgement inspection. Senior leaders know their services well; they are clear on where improvements have been made. Workforce recruitment and retention remains a challenge which senior leaders are aware of and are addressing.

There continues to be corporate support and additional investment to continue the improvement work.

Findings and evaluation of progress

Since the 2019 inspection, senior leaders have continued to work effectively to implement the improvement plan. Senior leaders have a methodical approach with the development of improved and effective performance management and quality assurance systems. This, alongside the embedding of a practice model, is central to their improvement journey. The model of practice is becoming more consistently evident in the work with families and is positively influencing assessment and planning seen at this visit.

The self-evaluation document provides a well-informed account of where progress has been made but where continued challenges remain. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed some progress. Recruitment and retention challenges are affecting workforce stability and consequently the impact and outcomes of interventions for a small number of children. Senior leaders are aware of these issues and are seeking to address them. Senior leaders are reported to be very visible by social workers. They are described as approachable and social workers describe a culture of being listened to. They feel valued and supported to develop their practice with children.

Disabled children receive effective multi-agency services based on clear assessments of risk and need. Social workers visit children regularly. Families are encouraged to contribute to the updating of assessments and plans to enable appropriate support to be provided and continued. When direct payments or short breaks are offered, children transfer to family intervention workers who monitor these arrangements. Children are receiving appropriate support that improves their experiences.

Disabled children are making good progress in the residential placements. Children are seen frequently by social workers who use a range of ways to communicate with them to gain their wishes and feelings. Care plans are informed by detailed assessments, which ensures that children's needs are being met.

Most children in care who reside in children's homes are making progress. Children are seen regularly and seen alone. Children's views inform assessments, care planning and review discussions. There is regular oversight and multi-agency review to ensure that the care arrangements are the most appropriate to meet their needs.

Management supervision records for these children are detailed and offer social workers opportunities for reflection on the impact of interventions on children's circumstances. Previous supervision actions are checked, along with review recommendations, to minimise the potential for drift and delay in planning.

There is one child who is in an unregistered placement. There is detailed management and senior management oversight of this arrangement and additional

safeguards, such as increased visiting by the social worker, are in place. A plan is in place for this placement to end.

Children at risk of exploitation are frequently reviewed in multi-agency risk management meetings. The 'making a change' team coordinates the response to exploitation concerns and enables plans to be formulated to mitigate risk. There are determined efforts to work with children who do not wish to engage, and for some children exploitation risks have successfully reduced.

The local authority has invested in an additional local authority designated officer (LADO) and there is a clear understanding of the role. The LADOs ensure that there is a robust response to concerns raised about professionals. The LADOs have engaged in awareness-raising of their role with a number of organisations. As a result, there has been a significant increase in referrals to the service. LADOs have effective mechanisms to record and monitor activity and outcomes. Appropriate agencies are involved in enquiries and outcomes are proportionate to the level of concern, which ensures that children are safeguarded.

Local authority oversight of children subject to private fostering arrangements is strong and has significantly improved following the judgement inspection. Children are seen regularly and consistent visits by the same worker have allowed meaningful relationships to be formed. Assessments are routinely updated to ensure that children's needs are met and any risks identified. Private foster carers are supported by having their own social worker and access to training. Independent reviewing officers review arrangements every six months, providing an additional level of oversight. As a result, children have been supported to live with carers who meet their needs.

Foster carers have access to an impressively wide range of training opportunities which are coordinated and overseen by the fostering service and training officers. Foster carers' attendance at training is monitored effectively and informs their annual reviews and the identification of their future training needs. Online training has significantly improved the amount of training that foster carers can access. The additional offer of live webinars, access to the training hub and support from the National Association of Therapeutic Parents is further supporting foster carers. Foster carers who spoke with inspectors are overwhelmingly positive about the support offered during the pandemic and access to training and development. The foster carers believe that the training offer has improved and that the training helps them to provide effective care to children.

Social workers report that they have access to a wide variety of training and development opportunities which are influencing their work with children and families. The local authority has a detailed workforce development offer which is being further developed by the effective practice, learning and development team. A

combination of direct learning, in conjunction with a coaching approach, is enabling a more personalised offer to workers and teams to meet their developmental needs.

I am copying this letter to the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Matt Reed
Her Majesty's Inspector