

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ann Graham
Director Children's Services
Haringey Council
River Park House
225 High Road
Wood Green
London N22 8HQ

Dear Ms Graham

Focused visit to Haringey children's services

This letter summarises the findings of the focused visit to Haringey children's services on 11 and 12 February 2025. His Majesty's Inspectors for this visit were Monique Lindsay and Christine Kennet.

Inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for identifying and responding to children's needs for permanence. The effectiveness of permanence planning for children in care was an area for improvement in the last judgement inspection in February 2023.

This visit was carried out in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. Inspectors considered a broad range of evidence, including from children's individual records and discussions with social workers. Inspectors reviewed relevant local authority performance and quality assurance information, and spoke to senior leaders, including the head of the virtual school.

Headline findings

At the last inspection in February 2023, the experiences and progress of children in care were judged to require improvement. Senior leaders have maintained a focus on service improvement in this area of practice. Tracking and quality assurance systems have enhanced their line of sight to practice and performance. Leaders know their services well, and most importantly, the impact of these services on children and families.

Social workers build meaningful relationships with children. Supportive frontline managers help social workers to do their jobs well. Robust oversight supports effective decision-making and care planning for children. A recognition that there is always more to do reflects the council's ambitions for children.

What needs to improve in this area of social work practice?

- The consistency of supervision and its impact on progressing plans for children.

Main findings

Most children in care are making good progress, with a strong focus on their education and social needs, and on maintaining their relationships with birth families where appropriate. Their health needs are a priority, and children living outside the borough have additional support.

Children are supported to develop trusting relationships with their social workers. Workers invest time with children and use their skills to engage them and understand their wishes and feelings, and what matters most to them. Workers know children well, and they advocate effectively on their behalf.

Children's care plan reviews are timely and involve them whenever possible. For most children, consideration of permanence starts at the child's first review, and the full range of options is explored. Children's care plans reflect their voices and generally identify their needs well.

Workers understand the importance of stable, loving care to give children a sense of security and belonging. There is a clear focus on permanence. Frequent permanence planning meetings (PPMs) help workers explore options for permanence and to move plans forward, especially for younger children. Adoptions and formal matching for children through fostering panels are timely, with PPMs and independent reviewing officer (IRO) oversight supporting progress.

Reviews for children who are looked after under Section 20 voluntary arrangements consider their long-term interests, and legal proceedings are initiated if they are needed. Legal processes and care plans reflect dual planning for children in care, aiming to return them to their birth families or family networks, where possible, while identifying alternative routes to permanence in case they are needed.

Thorough assessments and effective senior leadership oversight support effective decision-making for children who are being placed with parents under care orders. Planning for special guardianship arrangements is timely, with good consideration of the support children and carers will need.

Children's progress is supported by effective IROs, who develop meaningful relationships with children. Mostly, IRO summaries following reviews are written to the child in age-appropriate language. Careful scrutiny and challenge from IROs have led to impactful changes in children's care plans. Creative social work intervention promotes the well-being of children who haven't achieved permanence or who face instability.

Social workers help children navigate their way through the complexities they face with warmth and empathy. Social workers know the children they are supporting well. They speak positively about children with pride and care. They can describe their individual needs and interests, and they understand their journeys into and through care. Most children experience stability in permanent homes, with social workers who are invested in securing positive outcomes for them.

Sensitive life-story work promotes children's identities and helps them to make sense of their experiences. Workers show a lot of creativity in encouraging older children to participate in this work. Leaders know there is more to do to ensure that this work is done consistently with all children.

Social work support for the most vulnerable children in care is mostly strong. Workers understand risks for children, and they thoroughly explore factors that affect their safety and well-being. Multi-disciplinary support for these children is helping to prevent and disrupt risk of exploitation. There is effective work to reduce harm when children go missing, with a team working intensively to engage young people. Children in care have access to good support with mental health concerns.

Staff in the virtual school play a key part in supporting children's education and getting children back into school.

There is strong political and corporate support for the service. Political and corporate leaders have a thorough overview of service strengths and areas for further development. There is a shared commitment to improve the quality of service provided to children and their families. The introduction of Corporate Parenting Champions exemplifies the whole-council approach to applying the principles of corporate parenting.

A culture of empathy and warmth within the council is an important strength. Staff feel very well supported by their managers, and they enjoy working in this local authority. A stable leadership team and workforce mean that young people benefit from enduring relationships with people who care for them and about them.

Managers provide effective guidance and support for frontline staff. They are visible and available when workers need them. Most staff describe their workloads as manageable, with supportive colleagues who work well together.

There is some variability in the quality and impact of supervision. Most social workers experience supervision as a supportive process that helps them reflect on their practice and understand children's experience. However, some supervision is repetitive, and the actions that result from the discussion do not consistently progress children's plans.

A well-developed assurance framework provides leaders and managers with accurate overview of the quality of practice. Audit briefings are reporting with transparency on findings and themes. The audit process is highlighting key areas for learning and improvements, where needed. Audits are sensitively written and rightly focused on the experiences of the child.

Ofsted will take the findings from this focused visit into account when planning the next inspection or visit.

Yours sincerely

**Monique Lindsay
His Majesty's Inspector**