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Jim Leivers
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Dear Jim Leivers

Final report: ILACS Focused Visit St Helens

Following our recent visit, I am pleased to share with you the final report. We will usually publish this eight working days from the date of this letter on the Ofsted reports website. Please also note, that if, after receiving the draft report, you alerted us to any factual inaccuracies or had any other comments about the visit process and findings you wanted us to consider before the report was finalised, you will find our responses to these in a form attached to this letter. This form is for your information and will not be published by Ofsted.

Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with your report or the visit process, you may submit a formal complaint using the form on the [Ofsted website](#). You must submit any complaint by the end of the fifth working day from the date of this letter.

Pre-publication arrangements

We will share this pre-publication version of the report with:

- the DfE
- the Care Quality Commission
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

■ Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Services Inspectorate

If you wish, you may share this report with others under embargo until 02 July 2021 at which time it can be publicly accessed on the Ofsted website.

Feedback survey

If you have not done so already, we would like to invite you to complete our online post-inspection survey via this link:

<https://ofsted.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ilacs2021/10148075>

We value all survey responses - they help us review and improve the inspection process. We also use this feedback to help keep us informed about the quality and impact of inspections.

We would be grateful for your feedback by 20 August 2021.

If you have any queries please contact ProtectionOfChildren@ofsted.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Jo Marshall
Inspection Support Administrator

Response to your factual accuracy comment on the draft report

Page or paragraph reference	Comments about factual accuracy	Ofsted response
Page 2, Paragraph 3	Could we please add 'Throughout the pandemic, Merseyside, and St Helens within it'	Agreed – the letter will be amended accordingly.
Page 2, Paragraph 5	Could we please add on the 5 th line ' a multi-agency assessment'	Not agreed –The finding is about the decision not to hold multi-agency strategy meetings. The evidence seen demonstrated assessments of children's needs being required rather than strategy meetings as previously agreed by the front door team. These assessments had not concluded therefore Ofsted cannot determine whether these were multi-agency assessments.
Page 3, Paragraph 4	Line 4 - could we please replace ' <i>Too many</i> children within the pre-proceedings' with ' Some children' (which would better reflect the number of cases reviewed as it was a smaller proportion).	Agreed – letter amended accordingly
Page 4, Paragraph 2	<p>Line 2 – could we remove 'in some areas'</p> <p>Line 3 – could we please add 'receive in most areas' (We feel this better reflects the feedback offered and the letter as a whole).</p> <p>Line 4 – For the 2nd sentence in this paragraph could we please add 'The local authority's self-assessment and Audit Executive Summary highlighted the areas that need to change to improve social work practice and children's experiences'</p> <p>Line 4 - Could we remove 'Senior leaders broadly know the areas that need to change to improve social work practice and children's experiences.'</p> <p>Line 6 – Could we please add, after 'However' 'whilst the local authority acknowledged more work was required to embed pre-</p>	<p><u>Line 2 and 3</u> – not agreed - this was a focus visit with the primary aim to consider decision-making and the impact on children's experiences. The feedback provided during the focus visit acknowledged some areas where improvement was seen and others where further work was identified to improve social work practice and children's experiences. At the conclusion of the feedback on Thursday 20 May 2021 Jim Leivers, DCS, was noted to say, 'we clearly have more to think about and discuss.'</p> <p>The letter currently reflects the finding that evidence was seen to demonstrate that, in some areas, improvements had been made.</p>

	<p>proceedings practice in their self-assessment' they were not fully aware of the drift and delay....(this was reflected in the self-assessment)</p>	<p><u>Line 4</u> – partially agreed – the sentence regarding senior leaders broadly knowing the areas that need to change is an accurate reflection of the findings of this visit. On reflection we realise that we have not mentioned your self-assessment and will amend the letter to include the following sentence. This is demonstrated through the local authority's self-assessment and discussions with senior leaders during this visit.</p> <p><u>Line 6</u> – partially agreed - The letter will be amended to 'However, they were not fully aware of the drift and delay.....' again the finding is based on evidence gathered from a range of sources.</p>
<p>Page 4, Paragraph 3</p>	<p>Line 2 – Could we please add to 'the quality of practice' with 'in all areas' Line 5 – At the end of the paragraph, could we please add 'The local authority senior leaders had recognised this, as evidenced in their self-assessment, and have started developing a plan to address this'</p>	<p><u>Line 2</u> - not agreed – this finding relates to the effectiveness of the local authority's auditing process for providing assurance to senior leaders about the quality of practice. Inspectors reviewed a range of evidence from a variety of sources and found that audits, across a wide range of issues, were not providing assurance.</p> <p><u>Line 5</u> - the findings are based on the evidence and the impact on children's experiences at the time of the visit. Ofsted cannot comment on the local authority's evolving plans for the future.</p>
<p>Page 4, Paragraph 4</p>	<p>Line 3 – Could we please add 'drift and delay for some children in reducing risks' Line 4 – Could we please add 'Senior leaders are aware of this and at the time of inspection they had put plans in place to further reduce social work churn (due to an unprecedented number of maternity leaves in the social work assessment area/10) and case load pressures. (We advised Inspectors of action taken well in advance of the maternity leave starting i.e. recruiting interims to cover three months in</p>	<p><u>Line 3</u> – partially agreed – in order to avoid duplication of words, the letter will be amended to 'In the assessment service, some children are experiencing too many changes of social worker and delay in meeting their needs. This means that there is drift and delay in reducing risks for these children and in the decision-making to secure their early permanence.'</p>

	<p>advance of maternity leave, commissioning an agency to recruit for us. Etc. At the time of the inspection Social Work caseloads were mainly within our own policy with an exception of a small few).</p> <p>Line 5 – Could we please remove <i>‘However, these measures were not in place at the time of the visit’</i></p>	<p><u>Line 4 & 5</u> – not agreed – inspectors were aware of the plans you had already put in place. However, at the time of the visit the evidence demonstrated that some children continued to experience drift and delay. The lead inspector requested a conversation with Linda Evans AD. Linda acknowledged the changing demands of the court system on social worker’s workloads (not caseloads), the churn of social workers and the impact of this for some children in need. She told the lead inspector about further plans to introduce a CIN team need to further alleviate the pressures on social workers in the assessment teams.</p>
<p>Page or paragraph reference (if applicable)</p>	<p>Your comments about the inspection process and findings</p>	<p>Ofsted response</p>
	<p>Overall this is a balanced report which helpfully highlights deficits and where our authority is doing well. The process was very well received by staff working in children’s services who felt they were listened to and respected by inspector colleagues. Thankyou.</p>	<p>Thank you for your positive comments</p>