

Ofsted, Clive House,
70 Petty France,
Westminster,
London SW1H 9EX

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

Direct T 03000130654
Direct F
Steve.lowe@ofsted.gov.uk

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To the children and young people of Devon

Inspection of children's services

In January 2020, Ofsted inspectors visited your area. They looked at children and young people's experiences of the help, protection and care given to them by workers at the local authority. They also looked at what leaders at the local authority do to make these services better.

We have asked the workers at the local authority to share this letter with you. It tells you the main things that inspectors found. There is a more detailed report on our website that you can read if you want to.

What grades did inspectors give the local authority?

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate

What did the inspectors find?

- Children who have left care do not always get the help that they need to keep them safe. Inspectors were worried about this the last time Ofsted did an inspection in 2015 and it hasn't really got any better. Young people who are struggling to find somewhere to live and something useful to do, are left to do this on their own too much of the time.
- Workers in Devon have time to spend with children and their families to get to know them well and listen to their views. For children who need help and protection they do this well. For older children, they build good relationships but don't always do what they should quickly enough.
- Managers have made some positive changes so that adults act quickly when children need help and protection. For lots of families this means that they get help at school or from people that they already trust. A lot of plans for children in need or who need protection, are not clear enough about what needs to change to make things better. This can make it harder for everyone to know what they need to do, and by when.
- Sometimes it isn't safe for children to be left at home because their families are struggling to look after them. When this happens workers usually take them to foster carers where they are safe, and they are happy. Inspectors are worried that this doesn't always happen quickly enough, and managers know that they have to get better at this.
- When children cannot live with their own families, most children stay with their brothers and sisters and they can see people who are important to them. If children have to move outside of Devon to keep them safe, they still get to see the people who are important to them.
- Disabled children and their families get a different service depending on where in Devon they live. In some places it is really good but in others it is too slow. Workers use lots of good ways to communicate with parents and children to help improve children's lives.
- Inspectors would like children to know where their permanent home is going to be sooner than they do now. Workers also need to do more to help children understand what happened to them when they were younger.
- The Children in Care Council is getting better but it hasn't been very good recently. The participation team has lots of good ideas about how to make this better. Advocates do a good job of making sure that children are listened to.
- Care leavers do not always get a 'health history', to help them to make decisions about their health in the future.

Yours sincerely

Steve Lowe
Her Majesty's Inspector