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Corporate report

Ofsted social care annual report 2016 summary for children

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You might have heard of Ofsted because we inspect schools. But we also

inspect local authorities, children's homes and fostering services. We inspect these to find out if they are giving children the best care and support possible.

Each year, we write a report that says what we have found during our inspections. The report is called the [Ofsted social care annual report](#). We have written this summary of the Ofsted social care annual report for children. We have included the things we think will be most important to you.

1.

What did we find this year?

The main thing we found this year was that going into care can be the best thing for a child when living at home is not right for them, as long as:

- the decision to take them into care is made at the right time
- they go to live in the place that is right for them
- they get the support they need

We found that 2 local authorities do outstanding work for children who live in their area. They are:

- Kensington and Chelsea
- Westminster

There are 8 other local authorities that were not good before but have worked really hard to improve. They are:

- Gateshead
- North Yorkshire
- Staffordshire
- Essex
- Leeds

- Nottinghamshire
- Salford
- Kingston-upon-Thames

But we are worried that there are other local authorities that are still not doing enough for children. That is not good enough.

Even in places that are not good enough, there are social workers and other people who are still doing a really good job. It is just harder for them than it should be to get their work done.

We found that most children's homes are good or even better. There are more good children's homes now than ever before.

Sometimes, it's difficult for homes to make a real difference to children's lives. This is because they often don't have a long enough time with a child before they move on to somewhere else.

2.

Who can help make it better?

The local politicians (known as 'councillors') and the managers in the council are the ones that can make the most difference. They need to:

- make children a priority
- know what they should be doing for children (some of the things in this report)
- help social workers to be able to do their job well by giving them the time they need and the right help and support

What children told us

3.

Children have told us the things that are important to them are:

- feeling safe and protected
- having a sense of belonging and being put first
- having fun things to do and good food to eat
- having some independence and responsibility

We want to tell you what we have found in our inspections about these areas.

4.

What inspectors found out about feeling safe and protected

Children want to feel safe where they live and who they live with. The people who are caring for them should be able to protect them from harm.

Managers of children's homes need to make sure that the children who go to live in their home fit in with the other children who already live there.

Everyone should be able to get on with each other and feel happy with who they share their home with.

People who care for children need to act quickly when a child goes missing. They should do everything they can to find them and return them to safety. They need to get on well with children because this can help them to understand why a child has gone missing and then try to stop it from happening again.

Social workers know a lot more about how children can be forced into sexual acts with other children and adults. They also know more about how they can stop this from happening. But there is more they can do. They need to

work together with other people like teachers, youth workers, doctors and the police.

Services for older children need to improve. Older children are still children, even if they sometimes look and sound like adults. Adults need to listen and act on their views and opinions, but they also sometimes need to make decisions to protect them. Sometimes, young people are finding life really difficult and this affects how they behave. Instead of focusing on what older children do and seeing it as wrong, adults should try to understand what has caused it and what they can do to help.

5.

What inspectors found out about a sense of belonging and being put first

Children want to feel comfortable where they live. But they need time to settle into a new home and to build good relationships with the people who are caring for them or working with them. This is difficult to do if they have to keep moving or if those people keep changing.

In some places, social workers change too often. In some children's homes, there are lots of changes of staff and managers.

When a child comes into care, what happens for them next must be well planned and it must be what is best for them. Social workers need to make good decisions, at the right time. Children should be involved in the decisions. If decisions aren't made quickly enough, children find it hard to settle and get on with their lives.

Social work managers need to know what children coming into care need. They need to make sure they have the right children's homes and foster carers for them. They have to do this so that social workers can find the right home for every child. When children don't go to live in the right place, it

can mean they have to keep moving. This can mean they also have to keep changing schools, which makes it harder to do well in school.

Many social workers do a really good job. But they need better help and support from their managers so that they can do their best for children. Some social workers are working with too many children. Unfortunately, this means they can't visit children soon enough or often enough.

People who care for children, like foster carers and people who work in children's homes, also need support. Their managers or their fostering service need to do this. They need more information about the children they care for. They need to be able to do training courses so that they have the right skills. Then they can provide better care for children.

6.

What inspectors found out about fun things to do and good food to eat

Children who are looked after told us that they want to be able to do the same things as other children. They want to spend time doing things they enjoy. They want to have good food to eat.

People caring for a child who is looked after need to be able to make the same sort of decisions that a parent would make. Things like whether they can go on school trips or stay over at a friend's house.

Local authorities need to work more with carers to agree what sort of decisions they can make about their foster children.

What inspectors found out about independence and responsibility

7.

Young people want to know that when the time comes for them to leave care, they will have help and support to be ready for this.

There needs to be better preparation and planning by social workers to help young people leaving care. Plans need to be clear and explain what the young person needs to successfully move on.

Young people who are leaving care need to have the right place to live. Social workers need to make sure they find it for them.

Some young people in foster care who are 18 can stay with their foster carers until they are ready to leave. This is called 'staying put'. But not enough young people get to do this.

We know it is really important for young people to be able to stay in touch with people who have been important to them. We know lots of foster carers and children's home workers do this. But it doesn't always get recognised.

People working for local authorities who provide good support to care leavers help them to find education, training or a job. They check how they are getting on. Not all places are doing this well enough.

8.

What happens next?

We want to improve children's lives. We do inspections to find out what works well and what needs to be better. Then we can help people caring for children to do their best.

We think that it's really important that all the different types of people who have contact with children work together. This makes things better for children. We have started some new inspections to find out how well local authorities, the police and health workers do this.

We will carry on doing inspections to check that children's social care is the best it can be. And where it isn't good enough, we'll make sure that things change for the better.

We're also asking people about [how we should inspect children's social care in the future](#). Over the summer, we will be trying to find out what children think about our plans. If you would like to tell us what you think, please email us at socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk and we will get in touch with you.

We will report back on what everyone has told us about this in the autumn.

Name	What it means
Local authorities	Who social workers and independent reviewing officers work for. They are sometimes called 'the council' or 'social services' or 'social care'.
Fostering services	They decide who can be a foster carer. They help foster carers to look after children.
Children looked after	Sometimes called 'children in care'. They might be living with foster carers, in children's homes or other residential settings.
Child sexual exploitation	A type of child sexual abuse. It happens when someone makes a child take part in sexual activities when they don't want to.

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