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Add recipient details (local authority to complete)

To the children and young people in Stoke-on-Trent

Inspection of children's services

In October 2022, 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	Requires improvement
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement

What did the inspectors find

- When inspectors came to Stoke in 2019, services for children and families were not good at all. Over the last three years, senior managers have worked very hard to improve services and many things have changed for the better. Managers have more plans to make improvements, such as employing more social workers.
- Children and families get help early on when they have problems which helps to stop them from getting worse. Sometimes children do need to come into care and, when this happens, children are well looked after by their carers and are helped to feel safe and secure. Children can still spend time with their family, friends and people who are important to them.
- There are still things that need to improve, which is why inspectors made a judgement of 'requires improvement' for the services that children and families receive. Some children have a lot of changes of social worker. That's not easy when you have to get used to lots of different people. There are not enough social workers in some teams which means that sometimes children and families do not always get the help that they need quickly enough. Even so, children are visited regularly and social workers listen carefully to their wishes and feelings.
- Children's records are not always up to date and clear so that staff and managers can easily keep on top of decisions and make sure children's plans are being followed. Up to date records are important, because at some stage you may want to read your files and understand why decisions were made about your life. Life history work is important too, and we would like to see more of this for children who are in care.
- The children in care council has some great members but there are not very many. If more children and young people had opportunities to join and become involved, the group could have a greater say in the services that children and families get.
- Care leavers have trusted relationships with their personal advisors, often people whom they have known for a long time. Care leavers get the support they need to help them live in suitable homes and to succeed in college, work or training.
- Finally, I would like to say 'thank-you' to all those children and young people who gave up their time to speak to inspectors. Your views are very important and it was a pleasure to speak to you all.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Quested
His Majesty's Inspector