

# Briefing Note for Council



## Inspection of Tower Hamlets local authority children's services - Ofsted

### 1, Summary:

- 1.1. Tower Hamlets Children's Services has been awarded an '**Outstanding**' rating by Ofsted, the highest possible recognition, following publication of their report and findings on **13th January 2024**. This marks a significant achievement, highlighting the exceptional support provided to children and young people in Tower Hamlets. The service's progress and high-quality delivery place us in top 20% of local authorities nationwide and one of the best performing local authorities in London.
- 1.2. To mark the publication of the report an event was held at our Town Hall on the 13th of January, this was a celebration of our amazing staff including music and dance performances, and included contributions and representation from our Family Group Experts, Foster Carers, Children in Care Council and our partner agencies.

### 1, Background:

- 1.3. On 4th November 2023, Tower Hamlets was notified that an Ofsted inspection would take place. Ofsted began their fieldwork this week and were on-site between 11th and 15th November 2023, during which they visited the local area, sat with teams, conducted interviews, and reviewed children's records. This on-site inspection allowed Ofsted to gain understanding of the services provided and the outcomes for children and families in Tower Hamlets.

### 2. Highlights from the Ofsted Report

- 2.1. **Timely and Effective Support** The report identified that children in Tower Hamlets receive timely, effective help. Staff are described as ambitious for children, encouraging them to reach their full potential, with children receiving excellent support tailored to their individual needs.
- 2.2. **Journey of Continuous Improvement.** Ofsted acknowledged the service's "drive" for improvement, noting that it has evolved significantly. From being rated 'Inadequate' in 2017, the service improved to 'Good' in 2018, and has now achieved 'Outstanding', reflecting the dedication and hard work of everyone involved.
- 2.3. **Outstanding Support for Care Leavers.** The inspection praised the services for children leaving care. The support offered to care-experienced children and young people is described as "**high quality**", with a comprehensive range of services that meet their individual needs. Ofsted also noted the proactive approach in protecting care-experienced individuals from stigma and discrimination, including making '**care-experienced**' a protected

characteristic in council decisions. This, as stated in the report, “positively influences decisions for young people.”

**2.4. Leadership and Workforce Development.** The leadership team of the Council and Children’s Services was highly praised for their “**knowledgeable and committed**” approach. They have a clear understanding of both the strengths and areas for further development within the service. The report highlighted that the leadership investment and support has enabled a culture where social workers are encouraged to learn, innovate, and flourish, contributing to the continued success and improvement of services.

**2.5. Innovative and Collaborative Working Environment.** Inspectors noted that workers in Tower Hamlets develop their practice in an environment of innovation, where all staff have a voice and actively contribute to service development. This inclusive, collaborative, community approach has been key to the positive outcomes seen for children and families.

### **3. Implications**

3.1. Our ‘Outstanding’ rating is a reflection of the hard work and dedication of the entire Children’s Services team, internal departments, our foster carers, our multi-agency partners and community and the council overall. It is a clear indication that we are on the right path, providing exceptional services to children and young people in Tower Hamlets.

3.2. The recognition from Ofsted brings both pride and responsibility. As a result of this success, Tower Hamlets is now positioned among the best-performing local authorities in the country. This places us in a unique position to share our best practices as sector leaders and continue to grow, innovate and develop services, ensuring that we maintain this standard of excellence in the future.

### **4. Next Steps**

4.1. While the ‘Outstanding’ rating is an incredible achievement, we must remain focused on sustaining and building upon the progress made. Continued innovation, staff development, and commitment to high-quality service delivery will be key to maintaining this success.

4.2. As one of the highest-rated local authorities, Tower Hamlets has a responsibility to share our learning and experiences with other authorities. We will actively contribute to discussions and forums to support the improvement of Children’s Services in the sector.

4.3. We will continue to develop services, ensuring that children and young people continue to receive the best support possible, with a particular focus on care leavers and those with additional needs.

### **5. Conclusion**

5.1. The ‘Outstanding’ rating from Ofsted is a significant achievement for Tower Hamlets, reflecting the commitment of all staff, leadership, and our partners in providing excellent support to children and families. This success will guide our future efforts, as we continue to improve, innovate, and ensure that Tower Hamlets remains a leader in children’s services.

5.2. We would like to express our gratitude and heartfelt thanks to everyone involved and who has contributed to this fantastic achievement, particularly the children and families who have

dedicated their time and feedback to helping us shape and improve our services and practice.

## 6. **Appendix**

- Appendix 1 - OFSTED Inspection Report