

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: CYP Scrutiny

DATE: 16 September 2025

SUBJECT: Ofsted Standard Inspection of Children's Services in Bury

REPORT FROM: Jeanette Richards, Executive Director Children and Young People

CONTACT OFFICER: Robert Arrowsmith, Head of Strategy, Assurance & Reform

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Bury's Children's Services was inspected in the 3 weeks at the start of June 2025. The final report was published on July 29th and the outcome was positive: a move from the previous overall judgement of inadequate in November 2021, to a new judgement that services require improvement to be good.
- 1.2 The report praised the progress made and graded the leadership provided by the council and within Children's Services as 'good', while also highlighting areas for further improvement. Bury must submit an action plan to Ofsted to address those areas by November 5th.
- 1.3 Under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework, the improvement in the overall grade changes the type and frequency of inspection and engagement with Ofsted – moving from monitoring inspections 2 or 3 times a year, as has been the case for the past 3 years, to up to 2 focused visits, or a focused visit and a Joint Targeted Area Inspection, in between standard inspections, with a standard inspection expected in 3 years' time.
- 1.4 What this means in practice is that we have moved to an annual cycle of inspection and discussion/self-evaluation with Ofsted, leading up to a further 'big' inspection in the first half of 2028, with the next visit from the inspectorate likely to be in the first half of 2026.

2.0 ISSUES

- 2.1 Inspection Bury's children's services took place in the 3 weeks from June 2nd to June 20th 2025. One week of information provision and analysis off-site by inspectors was followed by two weeks of on-site inspection.
- 2.2 Following moderation of the inspectors' findings and factual accuracy checks on the draft report, the final report was published on July 29th. The report assessed that Bury's children's services had improved substantially since the previous inspection and overall, they were now judged to 'require improvement to be good', with leadership being judged to be 'good'. In particular, the report noted that "far more children are receiving services that are making a positive difference to their lives and helping to ensure that they are safe and well cared for than was found at the time of the last inspection".

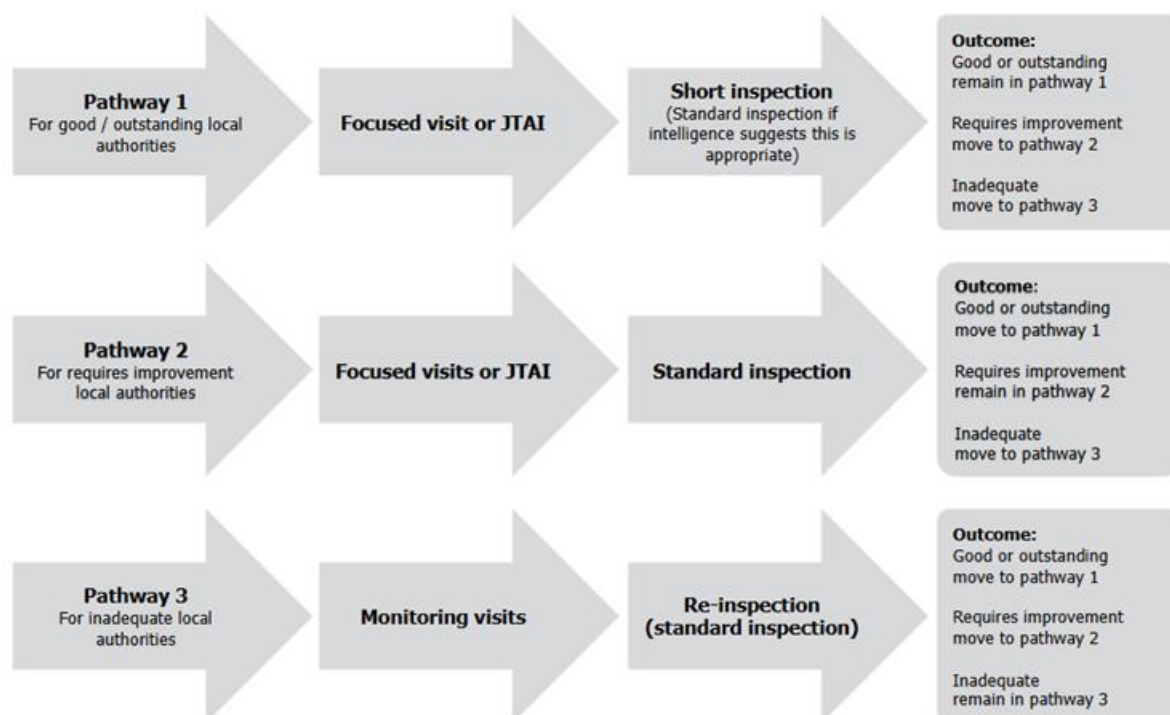
- 2.3 The report also points to key areas for continued improvement to ensure that Bury's children and families receive good services, particularly in the quality of core aspects of social work practice around planning and supervision and management oversight.
- 2.4 The inspection was the culmination of a three- and half-year improvement journey, with six monitoring visits undertaken by Ofsted during that period and five formal DfE reviews of progress, in addition to peer reviews completed by peer local authorities and a focused review by a national expert on support for care leavers (and a follow-up visit).
- 2.5 As part of the inspection a wide raft of documents were shared with inspectors (271 in the initial upload), and during work on site the 7 Ofsted inspectors spoke to over 100 professionals, 12 young people, leaders from 6 schools, 3 adopters and 3 foster carers. They also reviewed the case records for over 240 children (around 15% of all the children and young people currently open to the service).
- 2.6 Following publication of the report, Bury was congratulated on the positive outcome of the inspection by Ofsted's National Director for Regulation and Social Care, Yvette Stanley, our DfE Adviser (Caroline O'Neill) and by our long-term Improvement Board Chair, Linda Clegg.

Next Steps

- 2.7 We need to submit a post-inspection action plan detailing next steps in addressing the areas that require improvement for Bury's services to be deemed good by Ofsted (listed in the inspection report which is referenced in this report as a background paper) . The plan needs to be submitted to Ofsted by November 5th 2025. This plan will inform next steps, but will also contribute to wider planning to strengthen services and outcomes for children and families, delivery of the national reforms for children's social care and budget savings.

Future engagement with Ofsted

- 2.8 Local authorities are inspected based on the intelligence Ofsted have about them and their most recent inspection judgement – see graphic below:



- 2.9 The standard or short inspections will usually happen once every 3 years, plus or minus 6 months – so the next inspection window for Bury will be between December 2027 and December 2028, most likely in the spring/early summer of 2028.

- 2.10 Bury has moved from Pathway 3 to Pathway 2 in the above graphic (local authorities judged requires improvement to be good at their most recent inspection). Under pathway 2, local authorities will also receive up to 2 focused visits, or a focused visit and a Joint Targeted Area Inspection, in between standard inspections.
- 2.11 In addition, annually, in common with all other local authorities, Bury will be expected to share an evaluation of the quality and impact of social work practice (normally in the winter each year) and have an annual engagement meeting with the Ofsted Regional Lead to discuss the self-evaluation and reflect more widely on what is happening in the local authority.
- 2.12 What this means in practice is that we have moved to an annual cycle of inspection and discussion/self-evaluation with Ofsted, leading up to a further 'big' inspection in the first half of 2028, with the next visit from the inspectorate likely to be in the first half of 2026.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Members should note the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services and the time-horizon for future engagement

List of Background Papers:-

- Ofsted Bury Standard Inspection Report 2025: [50283347](#)

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Executive Director sign off Date: _____

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