

## OFSTED HEADLINES AND SERVICE RESPONSE

### INTRODUCTION

OFSTED visited the Children & Families Service (“the Service”) on 24 April 2023 for a duration of 5 days.

It is important to note that a number of the findings and gaps in the Service had already been identified and shared in the self-assessment presented to OFSTED. These were being responded to prior to this visit; none of the findings were a surprise to the Service and therefore accepted.

OFSTED reviewed a significant number of open cases during their visit and there were no immediate issues of concern identified or raised around safety or protection of our most vulnerable children and young people.

OFSTED stated that whilst there was work to do, there were a significant number of positive developments across the services and staff were motivated and knew their children.

### HEADLINE ISSUES

Overall, there were 11 headline issues resulting in 61 findings which have been developed into an Action Plan by the service;

- 26 of these actions have been achieved and completed;
- 27 are ongoing with plans and timeframes in place to resolve; and
- 8 require financial input or resolution by other Government Departments or agencies.

#### LACK OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

##### Manx Care Response:

There was already a review of this service underway prior to the OFSTED visit. The review identified a number of gaps in service for example, there are no designated residential placements for children who can no longer reside with their families, there is no advocacy service, the numbers of children now presenting with needs that would require support from these services is increasing and we don't have the resources to meet the need. The review findings were reinforced by the OFSTED findings. We are currently reviewing and scoping the whole service provision to determine how we can meet the current and future need of this cohort of children and young people. Discussions and plans are underway for the development of this service which will be dependent on financial investment.

There is also a role for DHSC in conjunction with Manx Care regarding the identification of the wider needs of this cohort across all services.

### RESOURCES FOR CARE LEAVERS

**Manx Care Response:**

There is currently no Leaving Care Legislation on the island, however this will be reviewed and updated in line with the review of the Children and Young Person's Legislation in 2026. We have reviewed current provision and are in the process of scoping what can be implemented to ensure that the needs of these young people are identified and met.

### FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, LACK OF FOSTER CARERS

**Manx Care Response:**

There has been a shortage of foster carers across the island for some time, without a strategy to develop and move this forward. We now have a recruitment strategy that is well underway with positive response and engagement from the community. We expect to see an increase in the number of people on island showing an interest in fostering and progressing through to assessment.

### MORE ROBUST RESPONSE REQUIRED IN REGARD TO THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**Manx Care Response:**

We had developed a multi-agency response to the exploitation of young people across agencies. This was in its infancy during the OFSTED visit and continues to develop. Some initial changes were made to the process and oversight as suggested by OFSTED and we will be visiting other jurisdictions in October/November of 2023 to see how they have developed their responses and services in this arena. Any learning and opportunities identified from these visits will be considered and where appropriate implemented

## QUALITY ASSURANCE AND REPORTING MANAGEMENT

### Manx Care Response:

Prior to the OFSTED visit we had developed a quality assurance and performance framework. This was a new way of working and was in the initial stages when OFSTED visited. We have now started to embed this across the service area and it continues to progress. This will give us greater oversight in terms of our performance and improvements

## 16+ HOMELESSNESS

### Manx Care Response:

There is a lack of appropriate accommodation for our 16+ young people, who are estranged from their family. This is an island wide issue which is being addressed strategically across services – The lack of accommodation options means that on these occasions we have to accommodate these young people in B&B or hotel accommodation, which doesn't meet their needs. We continue to assess and support these young people as best we can within the limited housing resources available. We have also reviewed the assessment process for these young people to ensure that the assessment is holistic rather than just focused on the issue of homelessness/estrangement

## LACK OF APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION FOR ESTRANGED YOUNG PEOPLE AND CARE LEAVERS ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Manx Care Response:

This is an island wide issue that requires Government input. This has been raised and there is ongoing discussions in relation to how we can address this, which includes an island wide housing strategy

## INFORMATION SHARING AND CONSENT

**Manx Care Response:**

This was in relation to the reluctance of agencies to share information when there was a concern about a child. This is being addressed via the Safeguarding Board working group to address the concerns of agencies.

This headline also related to the withdrawal of parental consent to continue with interventions. There is now improved oversight and monitoring from a senior manager in place to ensure robust, and appropriate decision making.

**PLANNING FOR PERMANENCE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

**Manx Care Response:**

This headline identified that, on occasion, the oversight and timeliness of permanence decisions was not robust enough and lacked monitoring. We have now put improved tracking mechanisms in place to ensure that there is no delay or drift when trying to achieve permanence For Looked After Children.

**EDUCATION FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

**Manx Care Response:**

This headline was in relation to the lack of education provision for Looked After children, when they are not attending mainstream school on a full time basis. This was shared with education colleagues at the time of inspection, to determine how this can move forward. This will be an action for education colleagues.

**LACK OF ISLAND WIDE STRATEGY FOR SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN**

**Manx Care Response:**

This requires a strategic response from DHSC with input from all agencies and stakeholders.

**SUMMARY**

There were a number of positive developments identified throughout the OFSTED visit, who could see that there had been a lot of hard work undertaken in a short period of time. They did identify that the Social Workers did their best for the children and young people and were sometimes hindered by a lack of island wide resources.

There were also some gaps identified that we were able to resolve quite quickly by amending current processes to improve monitoring and oversight. A number of the areas for development that were identified have been addressed through a programme of training and workshops for staff that were already in place

None of the identified gaps or the issues highlighted in the report were unexpected or a surprise and plans were already in place to start to develop and improve these areas.

This document covers the headlines that were identified, the action plan addresses the actions and tasks that were identified from the headlines, with timeframes and responsibilities for completion.

The overall action plan is progressing well and covers short, medium and long-term plans to support the improvement and development journey.

There is now a Children's Services improvement board in place ( with an independent chair) that I am confident will enable the progression of the medium and long-term developments within the service and beyond. The senior management team and all of the staff are motivated to move things forward and continue with the development of the service that will improve outcomes for our children and families

**Julie Gibney**

**Assistant Director Children and Families Social Work**

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