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To the children and young people in Reading local authority

## **Inspection of children's services**

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In April 2024, 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 staff 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 would like to.

### **What grades did inspectors give the local authority?**

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Grade</b>
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	<b>Requires improvement to be good</b>
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	<b>Requires improvement to be good</b>
The experiences and progress of children in care	<b>Good</b>
The experiences and progress of care leavers	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness	<b>Requires improvement to be good</b>

## **What did the inspectors find?**

- Children and families are supported very well by impressive early help workers. Their work is skilled and often helps things to improve at home. They help children and their families to have better relationships with each other.
- The help provided when the problems at home are more serious is mixed. Children at risk of harm are protected quickly. Some children's lives are improved through the good work done with them. The help that some other children get is not as good because social workers have too much work to do, and assessments and plans do not focus enough on the things that need sorting out the most.
- When children come into care, most are looked after well in stable, loving homes, whether they live with foster carers or with family members. They attend school regularly and do well. The virtual school supports children's progress. Children's carers know them well and want the best for them. An increasing number of children have independent advocates, who also make sure that their views and wishes are heard.
- Social workers take time to get to know children and try to see them often. Children who need help with their physical and mental health get support quickly. This work means that they are helped to do well and have fun while they are growing up.
- When children leave care, personal advisers (PAs) help them to become more independent. PAs are good at helping care leavers with important skills such as managing money, finding the best place to live and making sure that young people see their family and friends and do not feel lonely.
- Senior leaders need to carry on with their efforts to get more young people into education, training and jobs. The updated local offer, which explains the services and support that are available to care leavers, has not yet been published, so some care leavers are not fully aware of what they are entitled to.
- In the past few years, there have been quite a few different senior managers in Reading. This made it harder to improve services for children and their families. Social workers and other managers also didn't stay for very long. This has got much better over the last 18 months.
- Services for many children and their families in Reading have improved since the last inspection, and senior leaders know what more needs to be done to make further improvements.

Yours faithfully

Christine Kennet  
Lead inspector  
His Majesty's Inspector