



Title of report: Children's Services Statutory Direction

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 30 July 2026

Cabinet member children and young people

Report by: Corporate Director, Childrens and Young People

Report Author: Corporate Director, Childrens and Young People

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present Cabinet with the outcome of the Inspection of Local Authority Children Services (ILACS) which took place 10-21 November 2025 and published 12 January 2026 and provide the DfE update on the statutory direction to Herefordshire LA (appendix A).

Recommendation(s)

That

- a) **Cabinet note the improvement made in Children's Services and the positive report completed by the DfE appointed commissioner; and**
- b) **Cabinet note the formal lifting of the statutory direction placed on Children's Services.**

Alternative options

1. None

Key considerations

2. Children's Services was inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.
3. The inspection report found Herefordshire Children's Services to be Inadequate in all areas. The report was published on 21 September 2022 and is available [here](#).

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate

4. In response the Secretary of State issued a [Statutory Direction](#) to Herefordshire Council on 21 September 2022 and appointed a Commissioner for Children's Services.
5. This was revised March 23 following the Commissioner report to the Secretary of State which outlined additional concern for potential for improvement.
6. Good progress with renewed pace was noted in the Ofsted monitoring visits in November 2024, February 2025 and June 2025 leading up to the full ILACS in November 2025.
7. The inspection report found Herefordshire Children's Services to be **Good overall effectiveness**. The report was published on 12 January 2026 Appendix B

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

8. The latest report completed by the current commissioner, Ms McMillan, was presented to an internal senior executive group in June 26. (Appendix C).
9. The report: **Recommendation** Based on the evidence presented, it is my view that Herefordshire Children's Services has demonstrated sustained, embedded, and measurable improvement. The conditions that led to statutory intervention have been addressed, and the service now operates with strong leadership, effective governance, and a clear focus on children's outcomes. Herefordshire Local Authority are committed to the national reform programme and are well advanced in implementing the FFP model.

Based on the points addressed above, I am happy to recommend that the Statutory Direction is revoked and the formal intervention in Herefordshire Children's Social Care be brought to an end.

10. The Commissioner's report was submitted to the Secretary of State in June 2026 for a decision.
11. The Secretary of State decision letter has been received (Appendix E)

Community impact

12. The Ofsted inspection judgement of 'Good overall effectiveness' has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of children and families in Herefordshire.
13. Ensuring co-ordination and golden thread between the Council Delivery Plan, The Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Plan and the Safeguarding Partnership Business Plan will ensure Children's Services contributions to the Council ambition '*to do everything we do, well*' and drive forward our committed ambition to be *Child Friendly Herefordshire*

Environmental impact

14. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.

Equality duty

15. Children and young people who are assessed to be 'in need' of support, protection and care are additionally vulnerable, often as a result of abuse, neglect, exploitation and a range of personal and family circumstances.
16. As individual improvement projects and service delivery progresses, and changes are designed, equality impact assessments will be undertaken, as necessary and appropriate.

Resource implications

18. There are no resource implications arising from this report.

Legal implications

19. There are no legal implications arising from this

Risk management

20. The following risks have been considered.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Partnership prioritisation and engagement – recognising a joint responsibility to deliver high quality services that make a difference to their lives	Extensive partnership engagement activity and key partnership work has and continues to take place in a wide range of operational and strategic forums to promote relationship based joint working, learning and development.
Decline in the quality of services leading to negative inspection outcomes in the future.	Children Services Business plan for 2026/27/28 has been set out to support and maintain the delivery of good quality services.

Consultees

Not applicable.

Appendices

Appendix A	Revised Statutory Direction March 23
Appendix B	Ofsted outcome letter Minister Macallister February 26 Link: 50293401
Appendix C	Commissioners Report June 26
Appendix D	Children's Services Business Plan 2026/27
Appendix E	DfE letter Ending Intervention and Revoking Statutory Direction