



## Corporate Parenting Committee

2 February 2026

### Report from the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Community Development

**Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Employment - Cllr Gwen Grahl**

### Outcome of Ofsted Focused Visit under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	ALL
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	1. Ofsted Focused Visit Letter dated 18/12/2025- <a href="https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80489">https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80489</a>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Kelli Eboji Head of Service for Looked After Children and Permanency <a href="mailto:Kelli.Eboji@brent.gov.uk">Kelli.Eboji@brent.gov.uk</a>  Palvinder Kudhail Director, Early Help and Social Care <a href="mailto:Palvinder.Kudhail@brent.gov.uk">Palvinder.Kudhail@brent.gov.uk</a>

#### 1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report informs Members of the outcome of the Ofsted Focused Visit about children in care that took place on the 18 and 19 November 2025 and was published on 18 December 2025. Please see Appendix 1 for the Focused Visit letter.

#### 2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Corporate Parenting Committee:

2.1 Note the findings of the Focused Visit.

2.2 Note and comment on the action plan to address the two areas for improvement arising from the Focused Visit.

### 3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

The inspection activity being reported on is related to the work being carried out by the local authority's Corporate Parenting service. The work of the LACP service contributes to the following borough priorities:

- **The Best Start in Life**
- **Prosperity and Stability**
- **A Healthier Brent**
- **Thriving Communities**

### 4.0 Background

4.1 The Ofsted framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services focuses on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements in the following areas:

- to help and protect children
- the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home
- the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption
- the experiences and progress of care leavers.

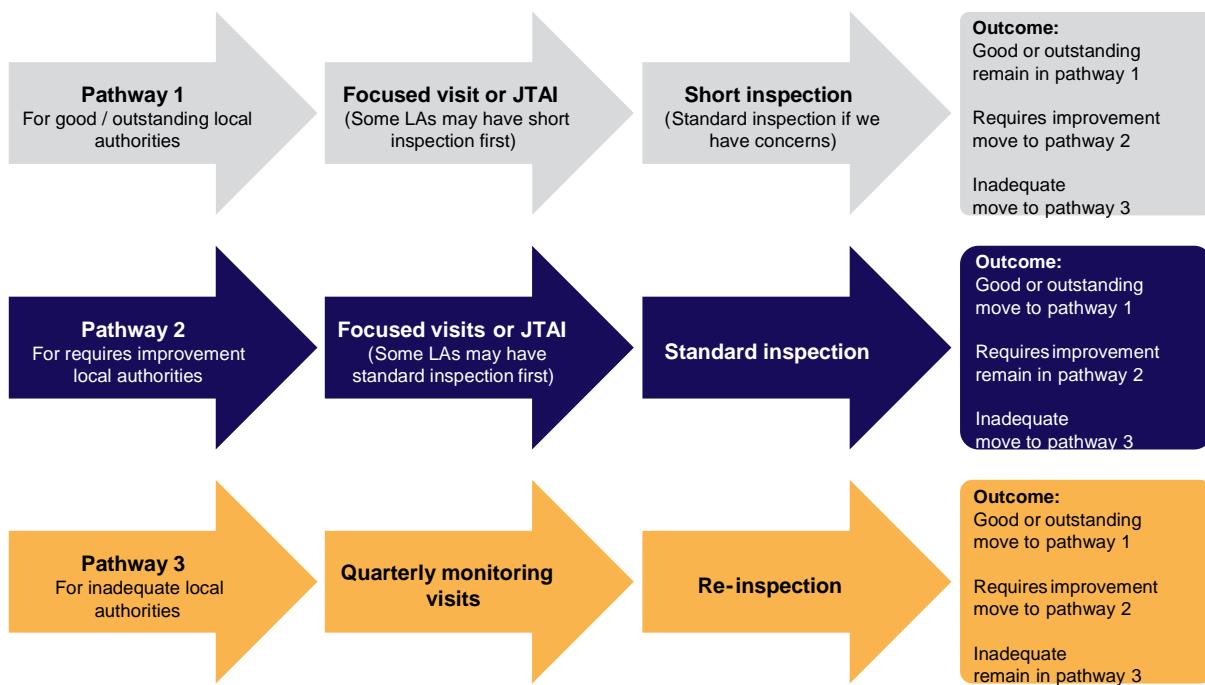
While the framework is primarily focused on social work and the quality of professional practice, the effectiveness of leaders and managers, the impact they have on the lives of children and young people as well as how well equipped and supported the workforce is to deliver effective practice are also evaluated.

4.2 ILACS is an inspection 'system', introduced in January 2018 aimed at making inspection risk-based and proportionate through more frequent contact tailored to each local authority. It comprises:

- an annual engagement meeting (Brent's most recent was October 2024) between the local authority and an Ofsted regional representative to reflect on what is happening in the local authority and to inform future engagement
- standard inspections (usually for local authorities judged requires improvement to be good)
- short inspections (for local authorities judged good or outstanding)
- **focused visits** that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children, taking place over 2 days, usually in between standard / short inspections
- monitoring visits for authorities rated 'inadequate'
- Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI).

Local authorities are also encouraged to participate in activity outside inspection, such as sharing a self-evaluation for discussion at the annual engagement meeting.

4.3 The following diagram summarises the three inspection pathways in the ILACS framework. Brent is on Pathway 1, having been previously graded as 'Good' at the last ILACS inspection in February 2023.



4.4 Brent was notified on 11 November 2025 that a Focused Visit would be undertaken and off-site activity commenced immediately. The focus of the inspection was the local authority's arrangements for and experience of children in care, specifically at assessment, planning and decision-making. Two inspectors were on site at the Civic Centre on the 18 and 19 November 2025 and spent time with front line staff reviewing the quality of casework. Inspectors also met with a group of children in care to hear their views and experiences.

4.5 As part of the visit the inspectors also evaluated the impact of leaders, the arrangements for continuous learning and effectiveness of quality assurance activity, as well as performance management and decision making.

Focused Visits do not result in a graded judgement; however, inspectors consider whether the quality and impact of practice has been maintained, improved or deteriorated since the last ILACs inspection.

4.6 The inspection team tested the validity of Brent's most recent self-evaluation (September 2025) with the main focus on social workers' direct practice with children and young people in care and the impact on outcomes for those same children and young people. The inspection involved reading case files and supporting documentation, including evaluating individual children's records that had been audited by the Local Authority.

### Key Findings

4.7 Inspectors noted that since the last ILACS inspection in 2023, children in care continue to benefit from effective services led by an experienced, stable senior team, with strong political and corporate support. They also noted the progress that leaders had made in overcoming previous recruitment challenges and strengthening workforce stability and retention, which had been particularly important for children in care.

4.8 The inspection identified many strengths within the Local Authority and how it delivers services for and supports children in care:

- Children enjoy stable and supportive relationships with their social workers, who know them and see them regularly

- Children said that they are happy with the care and support they receive
- Children are supported to live within an extended kinship network when safe to do so, and when this is not possible, children are supported to maintain relationships with family and friends
- Most children in care live in homes that are suited to their needs, with carers who are able to promote their religious and cultural needs
- Disabled children in care receive good support from social workers who are able to skilfully develop relationships with them and their families and have a good understanding of their needs. They live in stable homes with caring families and receive strong multi-agency support
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive thoughtful care with social workers who are attuned to their needs. Senior leaders have good oversight of the progress of this group of children
- Decision-making for children in care is informed by thorough assessment of need, with clear rationale for care plans. Social workers provide comprehensive, child-centred, up to date assessments
- Direct work with children in care is “evident in lively and engaging methods” which enable children to share their feelings and worries with their social workers
- Children’s education and health needs are supported proactively and effectively, with the Brent Virtual School having a positive impact for children in care
- Children have benefitted from improvements made to the IRO service since the last inspection, most children participate in their reviews and know their IROs well
- Children say that they know senior leaders in the local authority and that they are given opportunities to be included and influence service, with participation being a priority for the Council and senior leaders always looking for ways to include children in care in decision-making

4.9 The Focused Visit highlighted two areas for improvement:

- The consistency and rigour of responses to children who go missing from care (Outcome 3, national framework)
- Life-story work for children in long-term care (Outcome 4, national framework)

4.10 An action plan to address the above areas has been developed and will be monitored through the directorate’s existing quality assurance processes.

4.11 Activity to improve our responses to children who go missing from care will include a review of our local Missing Protocol and related processes, updated training for practitioners, and ongoing improvements to our recording systems.

There will also be increased multi-agency activity in this space because of the Families First programme. An example of this is a multi-agency workshop held at the Civic Centre on ‘Children Missing from Care Homes and Implementing the Philomena Protocol’ on the 22 January 2026 co-ordinated by the police and attended by Brent, Harrow and Barnet police, practitioners, Care Home managers, and others.

4.12 Activity to develop life-story work for children in long-term care will include identifying leads or 'champions' across social work teams, updated training for practitioners, continued focus on the quality of 3-monthly case summaries which provide a written "narrative" for children and young people of their journey through care, the introduction of a life-story work platform, and the potential of participating in national research.

## **5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

5.1 During the Focused Visit inspectors met with social workers and children in care. Separate discussions also took place with the Lead Member for Children's Services, Education and Employment, the Head of the Brent Virtual School and the Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Community Development.

5.2 Inspectors were particularly interested to hear from children and young people in care. They looked for evidence of children's views in their inspection of files and in discussions with professionals.

## **6.0 Financial Considerations**

6.1 There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report.

## **7.0 Legal Considerations**

7.1 There are currently no legal considerations arising from this report.

## **8.0 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

8.1 There are currently no Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) considerations arising from this report.

## **9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

9.1 There are no climate change or environmental considerations.

## **10.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)**

10.1 There are no additional human resources or property considerations.

## **11.0 Communication Considerations**

11.1 The outcome of the Focused Visit has been published and shared across CYPDC, the wider Council and with Members. The link to the online report is here: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80489>.

There are no additional communication considerations.

### ***Report sign off:***

***Nigel Chapman***

Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Community Development