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PRESS RELEASE

**Significant progress for children’s services in Slough**

Significant progress has been made by Slough Children’s Services Trust and Slough Borough Council in tackling the deep-rooted problems that have resulted in children’s services being rated inadequate for the last eight years, according to a report published by Ofsted.

Following a recent three-week long inspection, these services received the improved rating of ‘requires improvement to be good’, and the leadership teams at both the Trust and council have robust plans in place to ensure progress continues.

The inspection, which took place between January 14 and February 1, found that the support received by children in Slough who need help, care and protection is much better than it was when the Trust was first set up in 2015. There was both praise for many changes implemented, which are improving outcomes for children, alongside a number of recommendations to help children’s services become ‘good’ in the future.

Robert Tapsfield, Chair of Slough Children’s Services Trust:

“We are really encouraged by this report which confirms that progress has been made. That’s thanks to the talent and dedication of our staff, a solid partnership with the council and stronger leadership. Our new chief executive, Lisa Humphreys, is now leading the way and driving change at a faster pace than ever. We know there are still improvements to be made and will be working hard, with the council, to continue making progress for our children and young people. ”

The Trust was praised for identifying children’s needs and responding to them proactively through its integrated ‘front door’ and for good partnership working with police and health services.

The inspectors found that, through regular visits, social workers were building meaningful relationships with children and their assessments were of good quality, although work is still needed to ensure consistency in the quality of children’s plans.

The Trust’s Virtual School, which works to ensure Slough’s children in care reach their potential, was highlighted as a success, with inspectors stating it had been transformed since the last inspection and praising staff for their high aspirations for the children’s success in education.

Services for care leavers were reported to have improved significantly, with care leavers being better supported to successfully live independent lives. The number of care leavers in education, employment or training has also risen.

The improved partnership between the Trust and the council was another focus of the report, which highlighted that senior leaders have been taking determined action to improve the quality of services following the last inspection. The council was praised for its continued commitment to supporting the Trust in delivering its vision to ensure that local children are safe, secure and successful. The report also highlighted that the council’s commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children, has translated into its five-year plan.

Cllr Shabnum Sadiq, Cabinet Member for Children and Education, Slough Borough Council:

“After three inadequate inspections we are delighted the council and the Trust are delivering progress and better outcomes for children. The council and the Trust are under relatively new leadership and we have further developed our partnership to ensure we work even more closely. This report shows children services in Slough are moving in the right direction and we look forward to continuing the partnership and supporting the improvements needed to get these services to a consistently good standard.”

The Trust and council will continue to work together, alongside other partners, to build on the progress already made in children’s services. Many of the recommended improvements were recognised in their recent self-assessment of children’s services, with Ofsted reporting that this showed a realistic understanding of the work needed to further strengthen quality and standards.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi:

**“**Protecting vulnerable children and keeping them safe from harm is paramount and we will not hesitate to intervene where this is at risk. For many years, children and families in Slough did not receive the support they deserve, so I am pleased to see that Ofsted has confirmed much progress is being made. Today’s report is down to strong leadership and the hard work of staff at the Trust and Council. We want Slough to be able to deliver for every child and so we want this progress to be the first step towards sustained and continuing improvement.”

The full report can be seen on Ofsted’s website at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/slough>

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**Notes to Editors:**

Slough Children’s Services Trust (the Trust) is an independent not-for-profit company providing social care and support services to children, young people and families.

The Trust became operational on 1 October 2015 and was established as a result of a direction from the Secretary of State due to continued failings of Slough Borough Council to safeguard children and young people in Slough identified through Ofsted Inspection.

The Trust’s services can be described as support and social services for children and includes the following sectors:

* Emergency referrals/First Contact
* Referrals and assessments
* Early targeted support work
* Child Protection
* Care proceedings
* Care placements
* Corporate parenting arrangement
* Fostering and adoption
* Residential Services
* Other permanency arrangements
* Supporting youth offenders via the Youth Offending Team (YOT)
* Supporting care leavers

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