

West Northamptonshire

Ofsted Monitoring Visit July 2021

**Focus on children who are the subject of
child protection and child in need plans**

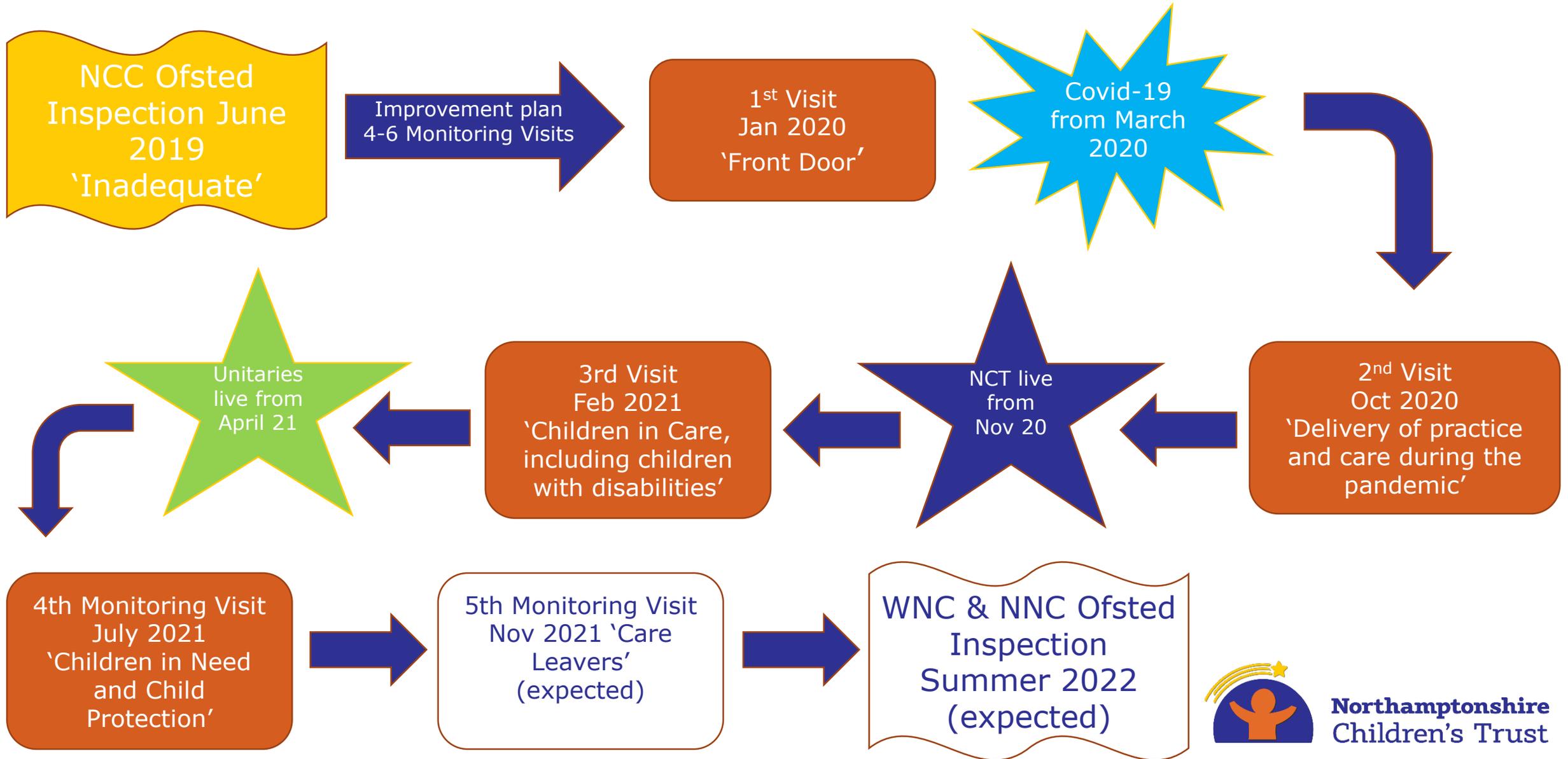


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Where are we on the journey?



Focus of the visit

For children who are the subject of child in need and child protection plans:

- Quality of assessments, planning and reviews
- Quality of visits and work with children to inform assessments and plans
- Responding to children at risk of sustained neglect
- Quality of management oversight and supervision to progress plans
- Stability and sustainability of the safeguarding service workforce, including impact of current caseloads on practice
- The impact of leaders on practice with children and families

There were 2 inspection teams on site together (North & West Northants) – Ofsted will take learning from this approach for their next visit



What did the inspectors do?

- Spoke to political leaders, senior leaders, partners
- Reviewed North, West and County data relating to children's social care
- Reviewed NCT documents and evidence, including our self evaluation
- Met with social workers and spoke to Child Protection Chairs, Parents and Young People
- Met with managers to review selected cases where court proceedings for children to come into care were likely to be initiated
- Reviewed 12 cases NCT managers had previously audited
- Sampled cases including:
 - Children with disabilities with child in need (CIN) and child protection (CP) Plans
 - Children who were on a CIN plan for a short time
 - Children who were on a CP Plan for a short time
 - Children who have had a CP Plan for 18months+



“Throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, senior leaders have continued to focus relentlessly on improving practice. This has resulted in tangible progress, which continues to gain traction in improving the experiences, progress and outcomes for children”.

The areas inspectors identified for improvement are those that we are aware of and have plans in place to address



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Impact of Leaders

- The senior leadership team has an impressive energy and relentless commitment to improving the lives of children in West Northants.
- Sound understanding of current strengths and weaknesses and the key priority areas.
- A determined focus on addressing challenges around workforce capacity, recruitment and retention is having some traction, with more still to do
- Comprehensive and thorough oversight of the quality of practice.
- Staff value two-way communication with managers and senior leaders, appreciate visibility of senior leaders and feel well supported.



Findings and evaluation of progress

- Overall caseloads have reduced, however some remain too high. Managers monitor caseloads every day
- Plans are in place to improve practice in relation to understanding and supporting children's identity, cultural and heritage needs.
- Decisions are now more timely in child protection cases helping to prevent drift
- Social workers receive regular supervision, however, this varies in quality. Some recent records, using a new template, are of a higher standard.



Findings and evaluation of progress

- The quality of social work practice is improving, although it still varies
- The practice model is already enabling positive experiences and progress for some children, however, is not yet used consistently
- Social workers meet with children regularly. Frequency and quality of direct work with children is variable
- Some children have had too many changes of social workers



Findings and evaluation of progress

- Assessments are timely, quality is improving although remains variable
- Quality of plans is improving, although remains variable
- Reviews are held regularly with good multi agency attendance
- Child protection chairs review children's plans and escalate concerns, however, on occasion this does not have impact
- Pre-proceedings are implemented appropriately



Next Steps

- The NCT Improvement Plan priorities already cover the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted and it is positive that inspectors recognised progress made in these areas
- The actions and success measures are being refreshed to ensure the next phase of our improvement is as effective as possible. Specifically:
 - Additional measures to further improve recruitment and retention of social workers
 - Effective consideration and support for children's identity, culture and heritage
 - Achieving consistently good quality practice for all children– supported by full implementation of our practice model
 - Enabling and supporting managers and practitioners to have consistently good quality supervision
 - Continual learning and improvement through our quality assurance framework