

AGENDA

Cabinet

Date: **Thursday 13 October 2016**

Time: **2.00 pm**

Place: **Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square,
Hereford, HR1 2HX**

Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the meeting.

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Agenda for the meeting of Cabinet

Membership

Chairman **Councillor AW Johnson**
Vice-Chairman **Councillor PM Morgan**

Councillor H Bramer
Councillor DG Harlow
Councillor JG Lester
Councillor PD Price
Councillor P Rone

AGENDA

		Pages
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
2.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>To receive any declarations of interest by Members in respect of items on the Agenda.</p>	
3.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2016.</p>	7 - 10
4.	<p>ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD AND THE HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD</p> <p>To report on the annual reports of the HSCB and HSAB, which address the work of multi-agency partners in Herefordshire in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults within the county, including achievements and areas for improvement, and priorities identified for 2016/17.</p>	11 - 122
5.	<p>CUSTOMER SERVICES AND LIBRARIES</p> <p>To agree the model for future operation of customer services and libraries across the county.</p>	123 - 174
6.	<p>SMALLHOLDINGS DISPOSAL PLAN</p> <p>To approve a detailed smallholdings disposal programme.</p>	175 - 214
7.	<p>LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN DECISION</p> <p>To inform cabinet of a decision by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) of maladministration and injustice, and confirm actions being taken in response.</p>	215 - 230
8.	<p>EXECUTIVE RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF EARLY YEARS PROVISION AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES</p> <p>To agree the executive response to the recommendations from the task and finish group review of early years and children's centres.</p>	231 - 250

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HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Wednesday 21 September 2016 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor AW Johnson (Chairman)
Councillor PM Morgan (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors H Bramer, DG Harlow, JG Lester, PD Price and P Rone

Cabinet support members in attendance Councillors BA Durkin, NE Shaw and EJ Swinglehurst

Group leaders in attendance Councillors TM James, RI Matthews and AJW Powers

Scrutiny chairmen in attendance Councillors PA Andrews and WLS Bowen

Other councillors in attendance: Councillors D Summers, PE Crockett and J Hardwick

Officers in attendance: Alistair Neill, Geoff Hughes, Jo Davidson, Claire Ward and Josie Rushgrove

31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

33. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 15 September 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.

34. FOUR YEAR FUNDING SETTLEMENT

The head of corporate finance presented a report on the proposed four year funding settlement for Herefordshire. She highlighted that:

- the multi-year deal had been offered to all councils
- it only included the grants set out in the table in paragraph 10 of the report
- if accepted, the deal provided a minimum guaranteed funding envelope
- the deal would require the council to demonstrate that it could set a balanced budget up to 2020 and the approach to this was set out in the draft efficiency statement included as appendix 3 to the report
- the deal excluded a number of other grants such as the Better Care Fund (BCF)
- the LGA supported the multi-year approach and

- the majority of other authorities had accepted or intended to accept the offer.

In the ensuing discussion the following comments were made:

The chairman of the general overview and scrutiny committee stated that while there were concerns over some aspects of the settlement, the deal was the best available at the current time. The general overview and scrutiny committee had recommended acceptance of the settlement but encouraged cabinet to pursue all other avenues for additional funding.

In response to a question from a group leader the head of corporate finance confirmed that the cap on increasing council tax was expected to remain in place until 2020.

Should the rural services grant be received as anticipated then the preference would be to spend it on areas for which it was intended.

The council's LEP partners, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin councils, were intending to accept the deal as were a number of district councils within the west midlands combined authority area.

Central government reserved the right to change the level of funding in exceptional circumstances, even after the deal was accepted.

The council would seek assurances on its position in year 5 of the financial strategy period, as there was a high degree of uncertainty over levels of funding.

Resolved

That:

- a) cabinet recommends to Council acceptance of the four year central government funding settlement for 2016-17 through to 2019-20.**

35. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2016-2019

The cabinet member economy and corporate services introduced a report on the proposed communications strategy for the period 2016-2019. He noted that it built on the previous strategy. The aims of the strategy were to maximise engagement with residents and businesses, provide support for officers and members and to promote the key council messages.

In response to a question the cabinet member economy and corporate services confirmed the rebranding would be carried out in a cost efficient way.

The communications manager confirmed that the council logo would remain largely the same, with adjustments to facilitate increased digital use. She went on to say that the shift to the new branding would happen gradually which would help minimise costs.

With reference to the proposed new advertising and sponsorship protocols, a group leader queried which third parties were currently advertising with the council and how much revenue this brought in. The communications manager stated that nothing specific was in place for digital platforms at present, but that this was an area for future development. The cabinet member economy and corporate services stated that a number of third parties already advertised via the council in other ways, for example on signage on roundabouts and on the rear of parking tickets. He stated that full details could be provided in writing.

A group leader stated that he was pleased to see the improvements that had been made following feedback from the general overview and scrutiny committee.

In response to a query from a group leader the solicitor to the council confirmed that the constitutional review would seek to clarify what is meant by 'the council' in the various contexts in which it is used in communications.

In response to a question from a group leader the communication manager stated that research into the approach of other councils had been carried out ahead of the strategy review and that the document now proposed included similar headings to those used by other councils.

Resolved

That:

- a) the communications strategy 2016 to 2019 at appendix 1 to the report be approved; and**
- b) the accompanying communication protocols at appendix 2 be approved.**

36. INTERIM POSITION STATEMENT UPON HOUSING DELIVERY

The cabinet member, infrastructure introduced a report on the interim position statement upon housing delivery. The council acknowledged that it could not currently demonstrate a five year housing land supply. The reasons for this were known.

The team leader strategic planning made the following comments:

He reminded cabinet members that policy SS3 of the adopted core strategy provided the framework for addressing a shortfall in housing delivery against the target figure. The policy indicated that priority would be given to increasing housing supply by:

- a partial review of the local plan; or
- the preparation of new development plan documents (DPDs); or
- the preparation of an interim position statement utilising evidence from the strategic housing land availability assessment.

A partial review of the local plan was not recommended as it had only recently been adopted. This approach would require the identification of additional strategic allocations which were unlikely to be deliverable in the short term and would consequently not address the current undersupply.

Work was underway to bring forward documents such as the Hereford Area Plan which would help to address the shortfall.

The interim statement provided a positive message on housing delivery in the county, using technical evidence and working with neighbourhood planners.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- the statement would be publically available and would be presented as relevant evidence at future planning appeals
- consultation would take place on the Hereford Area Plan in due course

- officers were aware of recent comments by Welsh Water regarding infrastructure requirements and that the council would be engaging with them at the highest level and seeking to influence the imminent investment round
- in the opinion of officers the council would need to demonstrate a five year land supply for at least three years before the requirement for a 20% buffer could be removed
- demand for housing was linked to economic growth

In response to a question from a group leader the team leader, strategic planning stated that the 20% buffer would not lead to provision of additional housing above the core strategy target but reflected the need to catch up on previous under-delivery. The housing trajectory was weighted towards the latter stages of the plan period to reflect infrastructure constraints in the earlier stages.

He went on to say that the interim position statement would provide relevant evidence for planning decisions and at appeal hearings but that the lack of a 5 year land supply would continue to be an important consideration.

In response to a question from a group leader the team leader, strategic planning stated that updating the monitoring report of housing sites required considerable resource so it was difficult to update it more frequently. The monitoring report would be subject to scrutiny at planning appeals and as such it was important that the document was compiled by professional officers. It was also noted that neighbourhood planners often contacted the planning office to make enquiries about the status of allocated housing sites in their area and so they could not be relied upon to provide information.

The cabinet member, infrastructure stated that there was an issue with non-delivery of sites and that there was no mechanism to force developers to progress sites with extant planning permission. He went on to say the national policy was failing to deliver the housing growth needed and that he would be writing to local MPs to lobby for changes to the national planning policy. It was hoped that neighbourhood and area plans due to be adopted would go some way to address the lack of development.

In response to a question from a cabinet support member the cabinet member infrastructure stated that adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had been placed on hold. It was intended that the experience of other councils that had already introduced CIL would be monitored. It was noted that some councils had set nil rates for CIL.

Resolved

That:

- a) the draft interim position statement upon housing delivery (at appendix 1) be approved; and**
- b) the need for such a statement be reviewed on an annual basis or earlier if it was clear that the council was able to demonstrate the existence of a five year supply of available housing land.**

The meeting ended at 3.11 pm

CHAIRMAN



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	13 October 2016
Title of report:	Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) Annual Report 2015/16 Herefordshire Safeguarding Adult Board (HSAB) Annual Report 2015/16
Report by:	Cabinet member children and young people's wellbeing

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is not a key decision.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To report on the annual reports of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) and Herefordshire Safeguarding Adult Board (HSAB), which address the work of multi-agency partners in Herefordshire in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults within the county, including achievements and areas for improvement, and priorities identified for 2016/17.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- a) the annual reports and effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements for children, young people and vulnerable adults in Herefordshire as assessed by the boards be noted;**
- b) the strategic priorities identified by the board be used to inform future decision making by the council; and**
- c) any further areas that the safeguarding boards should be focusing attention upon to provide challenge regarding the council's functions to safeguard vulnerable groups be identified.**

Alternative options

1. This report is to inform and enable cabinet to consider the HSCB and HSAB annual reports. Cabinet could therefore suggest alternative activities or priorities for consideration by either board.

Reasons for recommendations

2. To ensure cabinet are aware of the work of the boards and future priorities, and have the opportunity to ensure the compatibility of any future council activity with those ongoing priorities.

Key considerations

3. The information provided below in relation to the two safeguarding boards' annual reports should be considered within the context of safeguarding within Herefordshire.
4. From a children and young person's perspective the impression can be one, influenced perhaps by ongoing national coverage, that abuse is perpetrated by 'strangers', or is historic in nature. Although this is correct to an extent, the reality both in Herefordshire and elsewhere is that it is very much a current and ongoing problem, and that the vast majority of child protection issues happen within the family, and in the child's home. It is also important to recognise that the abuse can take many forms, it is not only physical and sexual abuse that the board and agencies seek to protect children from, emotional abuse and serious neglect is a very real problem in the county, as it is across the country. These forms of abuse can provide particular challenges for professionals to recognise, respond to and deal with, but can be as damaging to the child or young person's long term health and wellbeing as better recognised and understood forms of abuse. It is of note that emotional abuse and neglect are the main reasons for children being made subject of a child protection plan. Additionally, children and young people find themselves increasingly exposed to, and at risk from, harmful individuals and material as a result of the accessibility of the internet and social media at a younger and younger age. This undoubtedly is contributing to the increase in the number of children at risk of child sexual exploitation being identified in Herefordshire.
5. From an adult perspective, the introduction of the Care Act 2014 has necessitated a new approach to working with adults at risk, with professionals having to balance the need to protect vulnerable people with the recognition that individuals are entitled to make unwise choices. The Act has also placed domestic abuse firmly as a safeguarding matter. Financial abuse is an ongoing risk to our more vulnerable

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Steve Ecclestone, HSCB ASB Business Manager on Tel (01432) 260720

Herefordshire residents particularly the elderly, and with an increasingly elderly population the challenges for partners involved in keeping residents safe from such abuse is likely to grow. In addition to these types of abuse which we know take place within the county, emerging threats such as modern slavery require a co-ordinated and multi-agency response, and these threats are particularly prevalent in areas with significant numbers of migrant workers, such as Herefordshire.

6. The work of both boards is a critical element of the ongoing challenge to keep the most vulnerable members of our Herefordshire communities safe from harm. It is well known to both the boards and the various partner agencies involved in the safeguarding of these children, young people and vulnerable adults that a number do regrettably come to serious harm. As such the importance of effective boards and the effective coordination of high quality services, as reflected in the annual reports should be recognised.

HSCB annual report 2015/16

7. The HSCB annual report details a number of developments in 2015/16 within the priorities set for that period. Key developments, impact and continuing areas for development are detailed below.
8. Priority 1 – HSCB is a truly effective agent for change and has a real impact for children and young people.
 - a. Assessment – Mainly achieved, with effective delivery of multi-agency training the ongoing area of work.
9. During the year HSCB established a child sexual exploitation (CSE) sub-group in order to drive improvements in our collective response to this threat within Herefordshire. Further details of this work are provided below.
10. The performance information and quality assurance processes established by the board have been used directly to highlight areas for improvement then drive change which delivers better outcomes for children. An example of this was in relation to the high level of children on child protection plans. In response to this the board commissioned work which challenged decision making, the planning and review process and the effectiveness of the planning. This has led directly to a reduction in the number of children on such plans, a greater focus on early help and intervention for the child or young person, and greater opportunity to give the appropriate attention to those at greatest risk in order to keep them safe. There is however recognition that work remains within this area, and this is reflected in the 2016/18 priorities (see below).
11. Priority 2 – To improve the recognition and response to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing children and young people.
 - a. Assessment – Steady progress, but with areas for improvement remaining, particularly in relation to children who go missing, and appropriate support for those who have been subject of CSE.
12. This has led directly to clear pathways, guidance and tools to support recognition, referral and response to CSE. Extensive work has taken place over the year to raise awareness of CSE, including a multi-agency conference in March 2016, close work with the licencing authorities, and delivering key messages to children and young people. This has in turn led to an increase in the identification of cases. Further, as a result of challenge from the board, parents and children are more involved in the development of plans to keep them safe when risk is identified. The Board recognises

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that there remain areas for improvement in relation to our response to CSE in Herefordshire, for example to ensure return home interviews of missing children are of good quality, and children who have experienced CSE receive appropriate post abuse support, and as such it continues to be a priority area for the Board in 2016/18.

13. Priority 3 – To support increased resilience in individuals, families and communities.
 - a. Assessment – Some progress. Future focus must now be on the early help services effectively identifying needs and concerns relating to children and families, and services then address those needs through effective planning and interventions.
14. This priority area of the Board aligns with a key priority within Herefordshire’s Children and Young People’s Plan, and covers the whole spectrum of provision of services to children and families. The aim is always to improve the early identification and response to critical issues affecting children and young people’s development.
15. In support of this the Board has led the development and promotion of the “Levels of Need” document in Herefordshire, which acts as a guide to support professional judgement when considering help that children and families need and when to refer concerns.
16. The Board has also both supported and challenged the development of the Early Help Strategy and offer, which is a priority in Herefordshire’s Children and Young People’s Plan and is led by the Children and Young People’s Partnership.
17. Our plan for the year 2015-16 set out some key areas for improvement, for example a reduction in referral and re-referral rates to children’s social care. Whilst re-referrals have reduced compared to the previous year, indicating positive outcomes for children following first referral, they are still high and focus will remain on this area. Specifically HSCB will be working to ensure that effective decision making is taking place at the early stage of identification of needs.
18. Priority 4 – To safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are abused and/or neglected.
 - a. Assessment – Some progress, with continuing area of focus being the quality and effectiveness of decision making and partnership engagement within the child protection process, and that the needs of children and young people are identified and addressed earlier, to prevent them being drawn into the child protection system.
19. Details of HSCB scrutiny of a particular aspect of the child protection process has been provided above, and one of the priority areas for the HSCB for 2016/17 is assuring itself that the child’s ‘journey’ through the child protection process results in positive outcomes for the child. The Board will continue to scrutinise this area and this will include Board members observing child protection conferences to establish the quality of multi-agency working to safeguard children.
20. HSCB will also be working to ensure that:
 - The process and decision making at the initial stages of the child protection process (strategy meetings/ section 47 investigations) comply with statutory guidance, and the decisions are consistent with the levels of need in Herefordshire.
 - The child protection planning and review process (child protection conferences/ core groups) are truly multi-agency and consistent with guidance and procedures.

- Child protection plans are effective in reducing/ eradicating the risk of significant harm to children.

21. Additionally, Members will note the inclusion of the voice of children and young people within the annual report, and the HSCB are committed to ensuring this is at the centre of understanding the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding in the county.

Priorities for 2016/18

22. Reflecting on the achievements through 2015-16, and considering data and other evidence alongside the need to ensure continuous improvement, the HSCB has set four priorities for 2016-18. These priorities will ensure focus is maintained on the key areas identified in order to ensure children and young people in Herefordshire are and remain safe, and are detailed below:

- The Board will continue to seek to ensure best practice in recognising and responding to CSE, expecting good intelligence reporting to allow disruption of CSE activity, and that practitioners utilise the guidance and tools available to help recognise and respond to CSE concerns.
- The board will concentrate on the child's journey through the child protection process, to seek assurance that effective planning and intervention takes place with children and families to reduce risk. This will be considered alongside early help services and checking that help and support is continuous through "step up" and "step down" services.

23. Linked to this the HSCB will be looking in 2016/17 at the early help offer in Herefordshire, that needs are identified and effectively responded to.

24. A further area of priority focus in 2016/17 will be the issue of childhood neglect, and ensuring there is an effective multi-agency childhood neglect strategy in place.

HSAB annual report 2015/16

25. HSAB identified four priorities for the 2015/16 period. These priorities, together with examples of progress made against them and continuing areas for development are detailed below.

26. Priority 1 - Partnership working

- a. Assessment – Steady progress since the Adult Safeguarding Board was placed on a statutory footing in April 2015, with future focus being on embedding the engagement of all partner agencies within Herefordshire with the Board, and promoting the importance of the adult safeguarding agenda amongst all partners.

27. This period saw adult safeguarding boards placed on a statutory footing for the first time. HSAB took this opportunity to review its meeting structure, streamline membership, and reduce meeting frequency in order to allow greater time to be spent by partners on making meaningful progress against the priorities set.

28. Herefordshire Council, in conjunction with the CCG, Police, Healthwatch and CQC, has introduced a new approach to the quality assurance of care and support services offered in the county. The new quality assurance framework is designed to ensure

that local services provide the appropriate care and support that individual adult's need. Continued work is now required to embed that assurance framework.

29. Priority 2 - Prevention and protection

- a. Assessment – Steady progress, with the need to place further emphasis on preventing abuse across the county.

30. The structure and response of the advice and referral team has been reviewed, and there has been great emphasis on the promotion of 'making safeguarding personal' and the new Deprivation of Liberty standards within our workforce (further details below).

31. The work of the board and partner agencies within Herefordshire can be seen to be improving the proportion of those people who use services and feel safe and secure as a result. A government commissioned national survey showed that in Herefordshire this proportion rose from 83.90% in 2014/15 to 88.00% in 2015/16, which provides positive evidence of the impact of the changes being implemented.

32. Priority 3 - Communications and engagement

- a. Assessment – Some progress, evidenced by the work detailed below, further work remains in relation to ensuring that we are consistently capturing the voice of the service user, and that others fully understand the work of the board.

33. The board has worked with other boards in the region to develop shared safeguarding policies and procedures. These have been adopted by the board and shared with providers and partners in order to promote a shared and consistent approach to safeguarding across Herefordshire.

34. The board has supported work to raise awareness and understanding of the law relating to mental capacity and deprivation of liberty. This has impacted significantly on the number of requests for assessment, with an increase seen, so ensuring those who most need assessment and advocacy now have access to them.

35. In February 2016 a joint communications group was established across, HSAB, HSCB and the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership. It is important that we now develop this group to ensure a co-ordinated and effective approach to our communications across the three partnerships.

36. Priority 4 - Operational effectiveness

- a. Assessment – Steady progress, with a particular area for future work being to embed the 'making safeguarding personal' approach across Herefordshire to the extent it has been achieved by the Local Authority, supported by the development of multi-agency training for adult safeguarding.

37. During 2015/16 HSAB gave particular focus to making safeguarding personal (MSP), this being the process by which we put the adult at the centre of our work. This included the council launching an intensive training programme for staff. A review of the impact of this work conducted in April 2016 identified that as a result there was an increased proportion of service users and their representatives who's views had been sought and considered in relation to the outcomes they wanted from the safeguarding process, and then asked at the end of the process whether they felt those outcomes had been met. This is very positive, but the board recognises that this review also

showed there is further room for improvement, and as such this will remain a priority area.

38. In 2016/17 the HSAB will continue to prioritise the following areas:

- Effectiveness of partnership working (particularly promoting a shared and universal understanding of safeguarding, increased involvement of the voluntary sector, sharing the correct data, and connectedness with other boards).
- Prevention of harm and protection (particularly service user involvement, good mental health and greater focus on prevention).
- Increased communication and engagement of public and professionals (particularly understanding the work of the board, reaching out to smaller and community organisations, and continued focus on MCA and Deprivation of Liberty standards).
- Operational effectiveness (particularly challenging single agency issues, shared learning, links in commissioning and public health, embedding the competency framework and developing multi agency training).

39. The HSAB annual report sets out work plans to deliver on the priority areas.

Community impact

40. The partners represented on the boards have statutory responsibilities for services in Herefordshire that safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults. The boards have a statutory duty to scrutinise, challenge and support this work. The HSCB and HSAB are key mechanisms for challenge, supporting and promoting improvement of these services within the authority. The annual reports and priorities going forward not only identify areas of safeguarding that require sustained focus and improvement, but also complement and support the work of the other partnerships in Herefordshire such as the Children and Young Persons Partnership focus on early help, neglect and safeguarding, and the Community Safety Partnership's focus on domestic abuse.

Equality duty

41. The safeguarding boards pay due regard to The Equality Duty on public bodies and others carrying out public functions, specifically that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work. This is particularly evident for example through the work of HSAB in embedding the 'Making Safeguarding Personal' approach within Herefordshire, so tailoring the service delivered to the individual's particular wants and needs, and ensuring that the voice of the adult informs decisions. A similar example within the HSCB is that there is a particular emphasis on ensuring that the child and parent(s) have the appropriate opportunity to express their views within child protection conferences so their needs can be fully considered within the decision making.

Financial implications

42. The Safeguarding Boards receive contributions from partner agencies to fund the organisation and work of the boards. A budget is set out and reviewed throughout the year and any risks identified.

Legal implications

43. The statutory functions of the Safeguarding Boards are found under the 1989 and 2004 Children Acts. There should be a clear framework to allow the HSCB to monitor the effectiveness of local services.

44. Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 requires each Local Authority area to establish a Safeguarding Board and specifies who should be represented on the Board.
45. The statutory objectives and functions of the HSCB as set out in Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 are:
- To coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
 - To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes
46. Regulation 5 of the LSCB Regs 2006 sets out the functions of the Safeguarding Boards in relation to the above objectives.
47. Each local authority must establish a Safeguarding Adults Board. The board has three core duties:
- To develop and publish a Strategic Plan;
 - To provide an annual report of how effective the local services have been; and
 - Commission safeguarding adults reviews (SARS).
48. Under statutory guidance each of the safeguarding boards has a duty to produce annual reports on the effectiveness of safeguarding children and adults respectively in the area. The reports should provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services. It should also identify weaknesses, causes of these and action to be taken to address them.

Risk management

49. There are a number of identifiable risks associated with a reduction in the effectiveness of either or both boards. The boards both have a statutory responsibility to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements within Herefordshire. Ineffective safeguarding arrangements directly increase risk to the most vulnerable members of our community, this risk being both high in probability and impact on individuals, evident from previous high profile cases in other areas, which in turn carries legal, political, reputational and financial risks to the partner agencies involved.
50. The current identifiable risks to the effectiveness of the boards are the ongoing threat to the appropriate resourcing of the boards' work inherent in the financial challenges facing the contributing partners, organisational changes within partner agencies which can on occasions also be linked to those ongoing budget reductions, partners disengaging from the work of the boards as a result of reduced management resilience within their own agencies, uncertainty of future board structure and role as a result of ongoing reviews and scrutiny (for example the recent Wood report on Safeguarding Children Boards) and increased demand for safeguarding services through greater awareness of safeguarding and increased public confidence to report.
51. The two boards and the Community Safety Partnership run a joint risk register in order to monitor and manage these risks where appropriate, and this is subject to regular review.

Consultees

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – HSCB Annual Report 2015/16

Appendix 2 – HSAB Annual Report 2015/16

Background papers

- None identified.



Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board



Annual Report

1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016



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1. Foreword from the Independent Chair

I am pleased to introduce this annual report for Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board covering the year 2015-16, at the end of my first full year as its independent Chair.

At a national level, the year began with a revised version of the statutory guidance within which all Safeguarding Children Boards operate - 'Working together to safeguard children', and concluded with the publication of the Wood review of LSCBs, which heralds significant changes in the safeguarding landscape for the future. These changes took place against a backdrop of rising demand, reducing resources, and pressures across the system for partners to do more with less. The implications of these are still being worked out, but have already resulted in and will continue to result in structural changes and altered working arrangements, which bring their own risks in terms of disruption to the continuity of services for children.

In Herefordshire, the Board has worked to create stronger links across other multi-agency partnerships in Herefordshire, aligning its activities and priorities to promote the ambitions set out in Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan (2015-18).

This year has therefore seen considerable activity focused on coordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of arrangements to protect children who are at risk of or already experiencing sexual exploitation. At the same time, there has been significant challenge to the agencies involved in the "front door" arrangements - known locally as the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) - as the Board recognised that there was insufficiently strong leadership and evidence of inconsistent responses to and outcomes for children. Part of the challenge included a focus through the Children and Young People's Partnership on strengthening arrangements to provide early help for families.

Ofsted's judgement in May 2014 that the Board 'requires improvement' has provided impetus for the Board to review its own structures and working practices, in recognition of the need to become more effective in its operation and achieve clearer impacts, whilst working hard to progress its priorities and achieve consistently good services and outcomes for children. Hence it has worked to improve and focus its quality assurance and learning activity in order to strengthen its ability to scrutinise and challenge effectively the work of the safeguarding partner organisations across Herefordshire.

The Board has revised and strengthened its membership, reviewed and reconfigured its subgroups - transferring some of these to sit within operational services - developed its engagement with front line practitioners, and improved its oversight of frontline practice. It has taken steps to engage more with children and young people, responding to their voices and stories when carrying out its work.

2015-16 has also been the first full year of operation of the joint Business Unit that was set up to support the Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards and the Community Safety Partnership. The Business Unit has worked hard to streamline its functions and improve

alignment between these Boards and with the other key multi-agency partnerships operating within Herefordshire. This offers significant potential to improve efficiency and effectiveness across all the partnerships, and will be further developed now that the unit has secured permanent staffing.

Overall, the direction of travel within Herefordshire is a positive one. The quality and consistency of child protection work is improving, and there are some good examples of effective multi-agency working. Recruitment and retention of staff within the Children's Wellbeing Directorate is improving gradually as well. However, there are still areas across organisations which are in need of improvement. Wye Valley NHS Trust was inspected by the Care Quality Commission during the year, which concluded that its services were inadequate overall; in its assessment of the effectiveness of West Mercia Police in protecting people who are vulnerable and supporting victims, HMIC judged the police to be 'requiring improvement'.

There is, therefore, much still to do. Within the report, the priorities on which the Safeguarding Children Board will concentrate during the coming year are set out. This will include responding to the national changes which are expected to accompany forthcoming legislation.

Amidst all this activity, however, what does not change is the hard work, commitment and dedication of staff who work every day to support families, keep children safe and promote their well-being. This report contains examples of feedback and appreciation by some of the children and their families who have been helped, to which I add my voice.

Sally Halls
Independent Chair
Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board

2. About this report

Chapter 3, paragraph 12 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)*, requires the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area.

This report covers the priority areas addressed by the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children through 2015-16, as well as the data and reporting provided by partner agencies regarding their performance in working together to safeguard children and young people in Herefordshire. The report also sets out how effectively the Board meets its statutory responsibilities, identifies areas for improvement, including learning from case reviews and audits, and sets out the Board's planned priority areas for 2016-18.

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This report can be downloaded from the HSCB website at:

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3. Executive Summary

This report sets out how Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board has worked during 2015/16 to meet its statutory objectives, which are to co-ordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, and to ensure the effectiveness of that work. The report also gives detail on the priority areas addressed by the Board during this period, as well as the data and reporting provided by partner agencies regarding their performance in working together to safeguard children and young people in Herefordshire. The report also sets out how effectively the Board identifies areas for improvement, including learning from case reviews and audits, and details the Board's planned priority areas for 2016-18.

Progress on Priorities 2015-16

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board's (HSCB) priority areas for 2015/16 were determined following consideration of evidence from multi-agency case audits, Ofsted inspection (2014) and the peer review diagnostic commissioned by the Board.

1) HSCB is a truly effective agent for change that has a real impact for children and young people.	2) To improve the recognition and response to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing children and young people.	3) To support increased resilience in individuals, families and communities.	4) To safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are abused and/or neglected.
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Priority 1: HSCB is a truly effective agent for change that has a real impact for children and young people.

Ofsted's Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers in May 2014 included a review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, which it found to be 'requiring improvement.' HSCB developed an improvement plan in response, which focused on the four broad areas for improvement identified by Ofsted:

- Governance arrangements for the HSCB
- Policies and Procedures
- Child Sexual Exploitation and children who go missing
- Multi-agency safeguarding training

Significant progress has been made in the majority of areas. With the exception of activity in relation to multi-agency training, all areas have now been incorporated into 'business as usual' and reflected in the Board's business plan for 2016/17. The Board continues to monitor the establishment and implementation of the training pool through 2016/17.

Priority 2: To improve the recognition and response to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing children and young people.

The Board has established a CSE and Missing subgroup that oversees and challenges the work of partners to recognise and respond effectively to this issue. A CSE strategy was drawn up and signed off by the HSCB in July 2015, supported by a delivery plan. A dataset has been agreed to enable the Board to monitor the effectiveness of the response to CSE. Targeted auditing of responses to CSE has also taken place during 2015/16. The pathways for referring and responding to cases of CSE, a checklist and a CSE risk assessment tool have all been implemented.

The Board recognises that there remain areas for improvement in relation to our response to CSE in Herefordshire, and as such it continues to be a priority area for the Board in 2016/18. Specifically the Board will be working to ensure that:

- The pathway for addressing concerns about cases of suspected CSE is clear.
- There is clear data relating to CSE risks and children missing from home
- There is good intelligence from practice to better understand the prevalence of CSE and inform responses.
- Children, families, the general public and professionals know about and understand CSE and how to respond as appropriate.
- Return home interviews are of good quality and used at an individual and strategic level to tackle risks.
- Children who have experienced CSE receive appropriate post abuse support

Priority 3: To support increased resilience in individuals, families and communities.

This priority area of the Board aligns with a key priority within Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan, and covers the whole spectrum of provision of services to children and families. The aim is always to improve the early identification and response to critical issues affecting children and young people's development.

In support of this the Board has led the development and promotion of the "Levels of Need" in Herefordshire, which acts as a guide to support professional judgement when considering help that children and families need and when to refer concerns.

The Board has also both supported and challenged the development of the Early Help Strategy and offer, which is a priority in Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan and is led by the Children and Young People's Partnership.

HSCB will continue to receive reports on the prevalence of domestic abuse in cases involving children and reviewing the services designed to reduce the risk of harm to children and address the impact of domestic abuse, as evidence shows that factors affecting adults can have a direct impact on the safety and wellbeing of children.

Our plan for the year 2015-16 set out some key areas where we wanted to see improvements:

- A reduction in referral and re-referral rates to children's social care.
- Improved quality of referrals to children's social care.
- An increasing percentage of professionals who report they are confident in responding to concerns in accordance with thresholds document

Whilst re-referrals have reduced compared to the previous year they are still high and focus will remain on this area this is being reviewed in order to better understand and then address themes or causes.

Learning from HSCB audits carried out in 2015-16 demonstrated that:

- There was good awareness of the Levels of Need Guidance but more work was needed in supporting use of this in day to day practice and decision making.
- There was limited use of any tools when practitioners were carrying out assessments or considering referrals.

HSCB will be working to ensure that:

- Effective decision making is taking place at the early stage of identification of needs.
- Common Assessments are taking place within timescales and are effective in identifying needs of children and families and planning interventions.
- Lead professionals are identified in each case deemed to be level 2 or 3.

Priority 4: To safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are abused and/or neglected.

The performance information and quality assurance established by the Board highlighted a number of areas for improvement within the child protection system. HSCB noted that the figures of children subject of a child protection plan was high. In response, the Board commissioned an analysis of the child protection system "overheating" with a number of issues identified and strategies developed to address these.

Our plan for the year 2015-16 set out key areas where we wanted to make a difference:

- The process and decision making at the initial stages of the child protection process comply with statutory guidance, and the decisions are consistent with the levels of need in Herefordshire.
- The child protection planning and review process are truly multi-agency and consistent with guidance and procedures.
- Child protection plans are effective in reducing/eradicating the risk of significant harm to children.

This too will be a continuing theme for the Board; one of the priority areas for the HSCB for 2016/17 is assuring itself that the child's 'journey' through the child protection process results in positive outcomes for the child.

How the HSCB has carried out its statutory functions

a. Policies, procedures, practice guidance updates

Herefordshire commissions its multi-agency child protection procedures together with the other West Mercia LSCBs - Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and Worcestershire - from Tri-X. There has been a project throughout 2015/16 reviewing any "local" procedures and where appropriate ensuring that they are reflected in the cross West Mercia procedures and guidance. The aim is to have agreed West Midlands procedures in place by April 2017, with an agreed process for management and review of the procedures. Until this is achieved Herefordshire will continue to maintain the joint West Mercia procedures.

b. Training

The HSCB multi-agency training offer for 2015/16 reflects the priority areas of the Board and wider safeguarding issues. Face to face multi-agency training has included working together to safeguard children (and refresher), childhood neglect, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and child protection conferences.

There has also been an on-line training offer that has included safeguarding children basic awareness, CSE basic awareness and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

c. The safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered

A child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative' is deemed to be privately fostered. Private fostering is an arrangement made between a parent and a carer for 28 days or more. The council has a legal duty to make sure that all private fostering arrangements are safe and appropriate for the child. HSCB receives an annual report about private fostering in Herefordshire.

d. Case reviews

During 2015/16 one Serious Case Review (SCR) in respect of a child was initiated. The review will be fully concluded in 2016/17.

The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

There were 14 deaths within the review period April 2015- March 2016, five of which are still awaiting completion of review. Of those reviewed; all were completed within six months from time of death. Of the five from the current year that are awaiting review completion two await post-mortem and possible subsequent inquest. Three have not been completed because of delayed submission of some of the statutory form Bs needed from agencies to

enable the CDOP to complete the review. This has been an area of concern for some time and the matter has been escalated to the HSCB with corresponding challenge issued by letter to the agencies concerned.

Effectiveness of agency safeguarding arrangements in Herefordshire

The Board has continued to monitor a range of performance information and carry out quality assurance activities to ascertain the effectiveness of local services. This work is set out in the Board's Learning and Improvement Framework and is primarily coordinated through the Quality Assurance and Performance (QA) subgroup. Practitioners and first line managers have been actively involved in the multi-agency case audits and this allows for a much richer discussion and exchange of views and understanding that lead to better learning.

Section 11 audit

Partners of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board completed a "Section 11" Audit Self-Assessment tool in 2015-16. Based on their self-assessment, each agency (except CAF/CASS) identified actions for improvement and developed an action plan in response. The HSCB has put into place a peer challenge review of the section 11 audits, consisting of panels of Board members meeting with each representatives of each agency to seek evidence for their assessments and challenge the completion of the audits. The QA subgroup will be reviewing the progress and impact of the action plans through 2016-17.

A further full section 11 audit will take place in 2017-18.

Development of HSCB and its effectiveness 2015-16

HSCB carries out its work primarily through its subgroups, supplemented by task and finish groups as required, and through scrutiny and challenge at Board meetings.

The Board also works with other multi-agency partnerships across Herefordshire to both scrutinise and challenge their activities and to pursue joint objectives. Overall engagement by partners in the work of the HSCB has continued to be positive throughout 2015-16. HSCB has benefitted from the creation of the joint business unit at the beginning of the year, which supports the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Community Safety Partnership as well as HSCB.

Illustrations of HSCB challenge and impact

Throughout this Executive Summary there are details of the work of all partners in safeguarding children, and the Board’s function in seeking assurance that partners are working effectively together. Examples of this activity are summarised below:

Challenge	Impact
Establishment of a HSCB subgroup to focus on Child Sexual Exploitation	Clear pathways and guidance and tools to support recognition, referral and response. Awareness raising campaigns and activities. An increase in cases over the 12 month period. Parents and children more involved in the process
HSCB scrutiny and oversight of the “front door” MASH services	MASH Governance Group established. Clarification of agencies responsibilities in the MASH. Continued identification of areas for improvement (deep dive analysis commissioned)
Board was informed of a lack of communication between agencies regarding “Step down” of early help cases under common assessment framework.	Work undertaken in relation to step down process. The relationship between early help and targeted services has been picked up as an issue by the Board for coming year priorities.
Planning meetings for children in the child protection process not being effective. “Spike” in numbers of children subject to a child protection plan	Report from WVT relating to cancelled meetings. Greater scrutiny of Strategy meeting thresholds; one child protection conference chair focusing solely on initial child protection conferences. Work on threshold criteria relating to significant harm.
Voice of the child needs to be heard	HSCB has included this in all Board meetings, sources of voice of the child are illustrated in this report.
Audit of CSE cases	Development of the work of the Operational Group to identify themes and factors relating to CSE to support disruption activity.
Challenge regarding the pace of the development of the early help offer in Herefordshire	Detailed report on the implementation of the early help offer measures of effectiveness to be reported to the board in April 2016. Early Help is a priority area for the Board in 2016-17.

Conclusion and priorities for 2016/18

The focus that the Board placed on Child Sexual Exploitation in 2015/16 has led to greater awareness of CSE, more robust processes in intelligence gathering and improved understanding of what this means. In the coming year the Board will want to see positive impact from recognition and responses to CSE and good reporting relationships between the CSE team, operational group and strategic group.

Early Help Services and processes continue to be developed to recognise the needs of children and difficulties in families early. The Board will be expecting a report on progress in early 2016/17 and the plans for implementation.

The Board will also continue to focus on the “front door” with the commissioning of a deep dive analysis of the MASH and subsequent monitoring of an improvement plan.

Through scrutiny and challenge the Board has been able to see positive actions in improving the child protection process by focusing on key stages in the ‘child’s journey’. There will be further work to monitor these areas.

There has been some awareness raising in relation to Private Fostering, though this needs a stronger focus, and the newly developed joint communications subgroup of the partnership boards will prioritise this.

There are positive indications of stability and improving outcomes for children in the looked after system. HSCB will want to continue to see a strong commitment from all agencies in seeking and taking account of the views and understanding of children and young people.

Reflecting on the achievements through 2015-16, considering data and other evidence alongside the need to ensure continuous improvement, the HSCB has set four priorities for 2016-18.

<p>Priority 1.</p> <p><i>Identification, prevention and response to Child Sexual Exploitation/ children who go missing.</i></p>	<p>Priority 2.</p> <p><i>The child’s journey through the child protection process ensures effective planning and intervention to improve the care, safety and wellbeing of children and reduce/eradicate actual or the risk of significant harm</i></p>	<p>Priority 3.</p> <p><i>Identification and response to childhood neglect</i></p>	<p>Priority 4.</p> <p><i>The early help services effectively identify needs and concerns relating to children and families, and services address these needs through effective planning and interventions to enable families to function effectively and children’s needs are met and they are supported to achieve their full potential.</i></p>
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4. The Local Context

The latest (mid-2014) estimate of **Herefordshire's resident population is 187,200**; 0.6 per cent higher than the year before.

Almost uniquely in England, Herefordshire's population is scattered right across its 842 square miles. Just under a third (60,000 people) lives in Hereford city and just over a fifth (40,500) in one of the five market towns, but over two-fifths (79,400) lives in areas classified as 'rural village and dispersed'

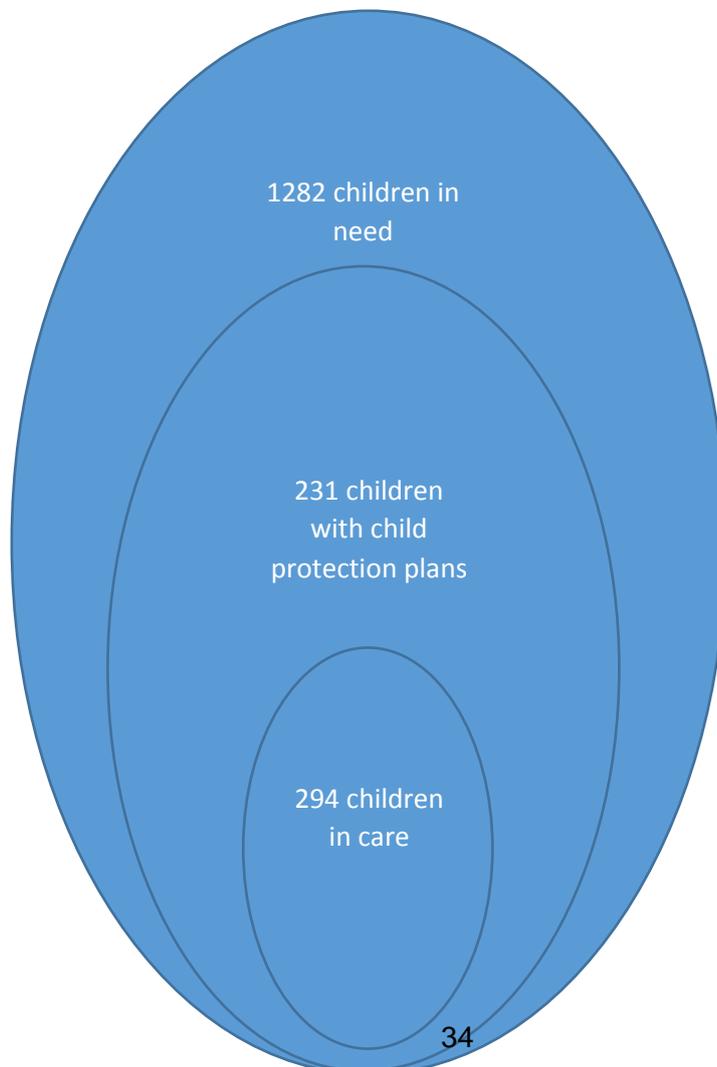
There are 40,000 (21%) children and young people (aged 0 to 19) living in Herefordshire, of whom:

- 9,900 (5%) are aged under five
- 21,800 (12%) are aged 5-15 years
- 8,400 (5%) are aged 16-19 years and

There are also

- 11,600 (6%) aged 20-25 years old.

Below is an illustration of the numbers of children assessed as in need, numbers of children with a child protection plan and numbers of children in the care of the Local Authority as at 31st March 2016.



5. Progress on Priorities 2015-16

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board's (HSCB) priority areas for 2015/16 were determined following consideration of evidence from multi-agency case audits, Ofsted inspection (2014) and the peer review diagnostic commissioned by the Board.

<p>1) HSCB is a truly effective agent for change that has a real impact for children and young people.</p>	<p>2) To improve the recognition and response to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing children and young people.</p>	<p>3) To support increased resilience in individuals, families and communities.</p>	<p>4) To safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are abused and/or neglected.</p>
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Priority 1: HSCB is a truly effective agent for change that has a real impact for children and young people.

Ofsted's Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers in May 2014 included a review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, which it found to be 'requiring improvement.' HSCB developed an improvement plan in response, which focused on the four broad areas for improvement identified by Ofsted:

- Governance arrangements for the HSCB
- Policies and Procedures
- Child Sexual Exploitation and children who go missing
- Multi-agency safeguarding training

Significant progress has been made in most areas, and is detailed elsewhere in this report. With the exception of activity in relation to multi-agency training, all areas have now been incorporated into 'business as usual' and reflected in the Board's business plan for 2016/17. As the HSCB training pool (see below for details) becomes more fully established and supported in 2016-17 this area will be signed off by the Board along with other areas as now being core business rather than part of an improvement plan.

Priority 2: To improve the recognition and response to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing children and young people.

What we have done

The HSCB has established a CSE and Missing subgroup that oversees and challenges the work of partners to recognise and respond effectively to this issue. A CSE strategy was drawn up and signed off by the HSCB in July 2015, supported by a delivery plan that sets out the expectations of what needs to be done in Herefordshire to address CSE. Work was

commissioned from West Mercia Police and Public Health to develop a local problem profile. This continues to develop.

A dataset has been agreed to help the HSCB monitor the effectiveness of services to respond to CSE. It was a difficult process to draw together the data from different agencies. However, by early 2016 the HSCB had a comprehensive score card to assist in identifying risk and providing assurance. This has been supplemented by targeted auditing to assess awareness of and responses to CSE risks and harm.

The pathways for referring and responding to cases of CSE, a checklist to help partners identify CSE concerns and better refer, and a CSE risk assessment tool to assist the MASH (multi-agency safeguarding hub) team, have all been implemented in 2015/16.

The Family Support Team Manager, Early Help, Intensive Support team, manages all the “Return Home Interviews” of children who go missing, and liaises closely with the CSE Coordinator who was appointed in 2015/16 by the local authority.

There has been a significant amount of awareness-raising undertaken with both children and adults. This included a coordinated approach by key agencies in raising the issue on 18th March 2016 - National CSE Awareness Day. HSCB has also made positive links with the Licensing services to raise awareness and responses from taxi services and other areas of the night time economy. This is an initiative that the HSCB will be taking forward in 2016-17.

What have we learned and what difference we have made

Our plan for the year 2015-16 set out some key areas where we wanted to make a difference:

- An increased number of schools delivering safe and healthy relationship information to pupils.
- Percentage increase in the number of welfare return interviews completed
- Increase in the disruption and/or prosecution of perpetrators

In the 4th quarter (Jan-March 2016) of 2015/16 **32** risk assessment tools were completed by staff in the MASH on referrals concerning possible CSE and of these 27 were deemed low or medium risk and 3 were assessed as high risk. Most cases (24) were of children living at home. The table below gives details by age and gender:

Age	Male	Female
12		1
13	1	3
14		6
15	1	5
16	1	8
17		6

The increase in CSE referrals that have then been risk assessed is an encouraging indication of increased awareness of CSE and the need to refer. Data for the same period in 2014/15

shows **14** risk assessment tools were completed, with the age and gender breakdown as follows:

Age	Male	Female
13		4
14		0
15		3
16	1	3
17		3

10 cases were deemed low/ medium risk and 4 high risk.

On 21st March 2016, in collaboration with Hereford Academy, HSCB arranged for the staging of the production of “*Chelsea’s Choice*” (a CSE Awareness raising theatrical production) at The Hereford Academy which was seen by children and young people from 4 schools across Herefordshire, along with a presentation from West Mercia Police about Sexting (which has been rolling out to schools across the County).

***Chelsea’s Choice* production held at The Hereford Academy 21st March 2016**



The production was extremely well received, with a sample of responses given below:

Academy Vice Principal:

"We are very grateful for you allowing us to host the play here. It went very well indeed and though I have now seen it 3 times, it is incredibly powerful. The Interim Principal has tweeted about it and we have put an article on our web page. The students have been really thoughtful about it and have been discussing with some staff. We have followed up with some RS/ PSHE lessons. I had a great lesson with Year 9 this morning about negative relationships as a follow on and we referred to the play constantly. They were really shocked by it and some have said they are going to be more careful on line. I really wish all teenagers could see it"

What Young people said about Chelsea's Choice:

"I am now more aware of who people might be, and not to message anyone I don't know"

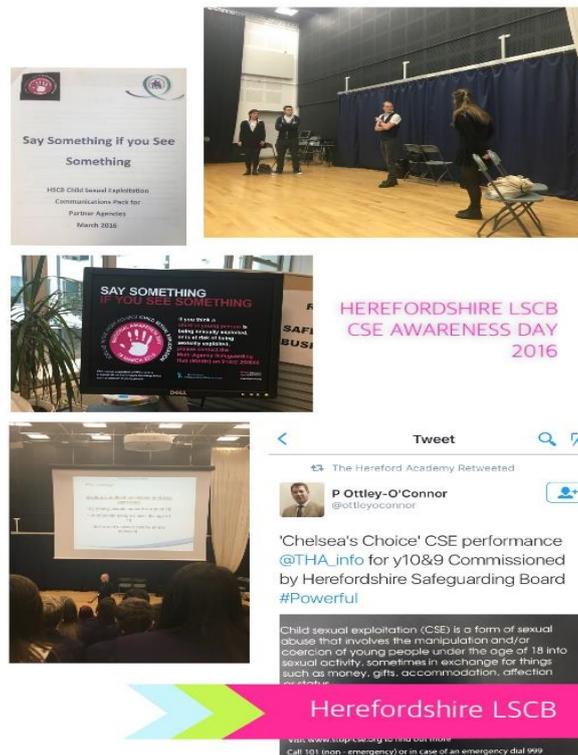
"This covered a lot of detail about different aspects of exploitation and grooming. As its true, it kind of makes you think this can actually happen"

"It shows what can happen if you trust or communicate with a stranger"

"This made me aware of how manipulative people can be"

As well as commissioning the *Chelsea's Choice* production, HSCB took part in the NWG [#Thunderclap](#) initiative during CSE Awareness Day in March 2016, and arranged a screensaver takeover in Herefordshire Council and our NHS Trust partners. A Communications Pack for all partner agencies was developed and distributed, encouraging their support. A multi-agency "Tackling CSE" Conference was scheduled for 27th April 2016, with key speakers including Dr Peter Unwin and Lorin La Fave from The [Breck Foundation](#).

The NWG Annual Conference Awards displayed the images below to highlight the work done in Herefordshire.



A CSE case audit carried out by the HSCB identified that not enough information was being shared and analysed to assist in the disruption of CSE. The “CSE Operational Group”, whose role this is, has taken account of the findings and as a result will be reporting to the CSE subgroup on findings and action taken. A good example of improved intelligence is the “soft information” gained from return home interviews of missing children that is now fed in to the Operational Group. Information such as postcode areas and schools attended is also now reported on which, in turn, will enable improved and more targeted responses.

HSCB also became aware, via its audit activity, that referrals relating to CSE were often considered via a strategy meeting (see below for information about strategy meetings), and challenged this practice: this has changed as a result and these cases are more often considered through a risk management meeting process, which involves parents more fully.

What we will do next

HSCB will be working to ensure that:

- The pathway for addressing concerns about cases of suspected CSE is clear.
- There is clear data relating to CSE risks and children missing from home.
- There is good intelligence from practice to better understand the prevalence of CSE and inform responses.
- Children, families, the general public and professionals know about and understand CSE and how to respond as appropriate.
- Return home interviews are of good quality and used at an individual and strategic level to tackle risks.
- Children who have experienced CSE receive appropriate post abuse support.

HSCB will want to see a reduction in the numbers of children going missing and the numbers of missing episodes; that return home interviews take place in all cases, consistent with the guidance and procedure; and evidence of increased disruption and/or prosecution of perpetrators.

Priority 3: To support increased resilience in individuals, families and communities.

This priority area of the Board aligns with a key priority within Herefordshire’s Children and Young People’s Plan, and covers the whole spectrum of provision of services to children and families. The aim is always to improve the early identification and response to critical issues affecting children and young people’s development.

What we have done

a) Thresholds for intervention

HSCB has led the development and promotion of the “Levels of Need” in Herefordshire, which acts as a guide to support professional judgement when considering help that children and families need and when to refer concerns.



b) Early help

HSCB has both supported and challenged the development of the Early Help Strategy and offer, which is a priority in Herefordshire’s Children and Young People’s Plan and is led by the Children and Young People’s Partnership.

The approach to early help in Herefordshire has continued to be developed throughout 2015/16, including the following:

- Revision of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessment form (consistent with Families First eligibility criteria; Herefordshire Outcome Framework; ensuring assessment of all family members; Single Assessment process).
- Multi Agency Group (MAG) meetings continue to be held on a 6 weekly basis in 9 localities in Herefordshire. Emphasis is being placed on “step down” cases from child protection plans and those cases deemed to be at risk of “step up” to Social Care.

The Early Help team has continued to provide an Early Help Directory of Services. A new site - “Wellbeing and Signposting for Herefordshire” (WISH) - has also been launched which provides access to information and advice as well as information about services and activities.



At Level 2 and 3 of the Levels of Need, professionals adopt a ‘pre-assessment checklist’ and where appropriate complete an assessment with the family and other agencies using the Common Assessment Framework to determine the needs of children and families and the best way to intervene and offer support to address identified needs. Below is information about case activity through common assessments:

Average number of active Common Assessments (CAs) 2015:	497
Total number of new CAs in 2015:	313
Of which number of step down CAs:	152 = 49%
Total number of closed CAs:	360

There is a need to improve the completion of closure information for Early Help services; currently this is done in a third of cases. An increasing source of pressure for the Early Help services is the rise in the numbers of cases which are “stepped down” from more intensive interventions. The figure for January-March 2016 was 93, compared with 152 for the whole of 2015.

Whilst there is a process for quality assuring Common Assessments, the service, due to limited resources, does not carry out case audits. As part of its plans for 2016 onwards the HSCB will be including Early Help in its quality assurance audit programme.

c) Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)

Contacts and referrals for services are received in the MASH, where decisions are made about the level of response that is required, and further enquiries initiated as required. Governance and oversight of the MASH sat originally with HSCB, and was transferred into operational services at the beginning of the year.

d) Domestic abuse

Evidence shows that factors affecting adults can have a direct impact on the safety and wellbeing of children. Such factors include parental mental ill health and substance misuse, and exposure to domestic abuse.

Appendix 3 shows data, sourced by West Mercia Women's Aid and West Mercia Police, that indicates the numbers of children in Herefordshire exposed to domestic abuse. Whilst a drop is indicated in the number of children exposed to domestic abuse, analysis suggests that this may be due to a change in the electronic recording system and further work will be needed on this indicator and viewed over time.

Notifications from the police regarding incidents of domestic abuse where children may be affected are a significant proportion of the total number of contacts received by MASH. The MASH team is in the process of reviewing the triage of these cases and the HSCB will review the effectiveness of this.

Herefordshire's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a victim focused information sharing and risk management meeting attended by all key agencies, where high risk cases are discussed. The MARAC facilitates, monitors and evaluates effective information sharing to enable actions to be taken to increase public safety. MARAC combines up to date risk information with a timely assessment of a victim's needs and links those directly to the provision of services for all those involved in a domestic abuse case: victim, children and perpetrator.

West Mercia Women's Aid provides a service working with children and young people through the Children's Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (CIDVA) service. **Appendix 4** shows the numbers of children involved with this service in 2015-16, and their age categories.

Below is some feedback from children, families and professionals about the CIDVA service:

“I would like to have more talks. I would like my mum to be happy. I would like my dad to be happy. I would like to do more stuff with [the CIDVA worker].”

“The Children really enjoyed their time with [CIDVA worker] and really looked forward to the sessions. I feel these have been helpful for them. Thank you. A valued service.”

“The boys really enjoyed using the puppets and asking how we are feeling and why. It was really good and I enjoyed bonding with the boys, we all feel we can express our feelings.”

“Sessions are calming and positive for pupils” from school.

“Supports students and helps with a positive outlook for the future, the students enjoy being listened to by someone who understands” from school

HSCB will continue to receive reports on the prevalence of domestic abuse in cases involving children and reviewing the services designed to reduce the risk of harm to children and address the impact of domestic abuse.

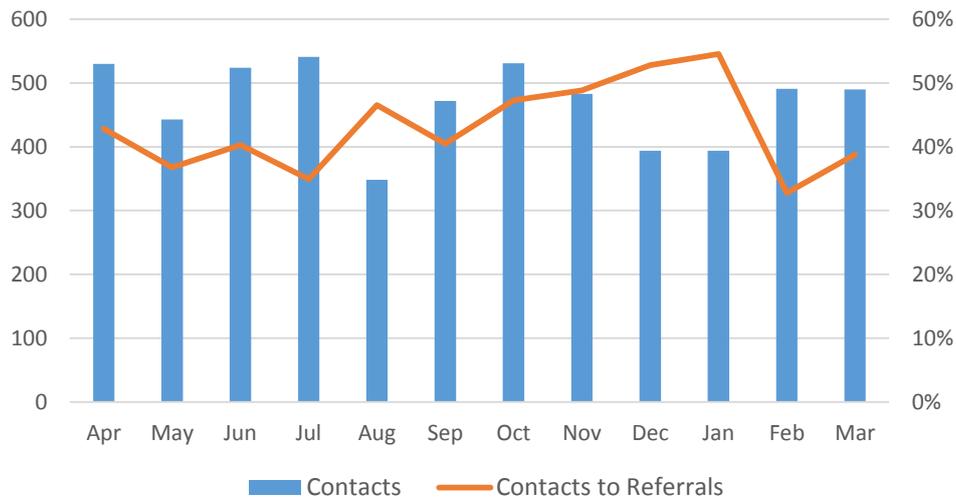
What we have learned and what difference we have made

Our plan for the year 2015-16 set out some key areas where we wanted to see improvements:

- A reduction in referral and re-referral rates to children’s social care.
- Improved quality of referrals to children’s social care.
- An increasing percentage of professionals who report they are confident in responding to concerns in accordance with thresholds document

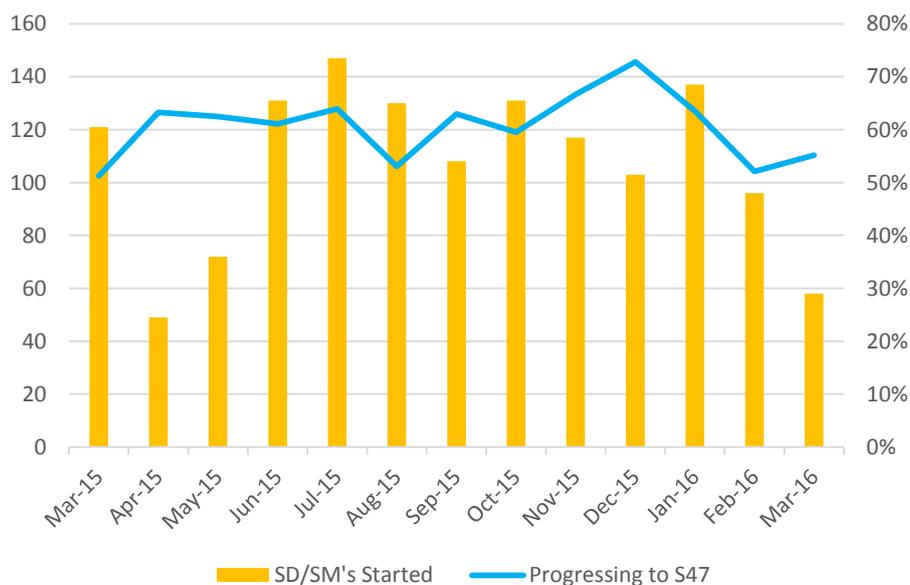
The chart below illustrates the volume of contacts received in the MASH, and the percentage of these which proceeded to be referred to children’s social care for further assessment and service.

Contacts Progressing to Referral



Contacts received in the reporting year have reduced by 19% from last year. There is a higher percentage of contacts progressing to referral (42.6% as opposed to 31.9% in 2014-15), which is positive. 96.7% of the contacts were screened within one working day. This is the correct “direction of travel” in terms of data, reflecting the aim of ensuring the most appropriate referrals go to the MASH. However, the referral rate per 10,000 population is still higher than the English average and statistical neighbours, and the reason for this is unclear. Whilst referrals have reduced compared to the previous year they are still high and this is being reviewed in order to better understand any themes or causes.

Strategy Discussions/Meetings



A strategy meeting is convened to decide whether enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 (regarding safeguarding concerns) need to be initiated. The numbers of strategy meetings/ discussions convened during the year have reduced, whilst the number of Section 47 investigations has remained similar to the previous year. This indicates an improving direction of travel in that strategy meetings are being appropriately convened.

Prompted by concerns that the MASH was not functioning as effectively as it could, and the volumes of child protection activity did not reflect Herefordshire's population and statistical neighbours, HSCB commissioned an initial analysis of the MASH by the Head of Adult Safeguarding and received a short report in January 2016. This highlighted a number of issues regarding quality and consistency of practice and led to a further 'deep dive' review being commissioned which forms the basis of an improvement plan through 2016/17 that the Board will review.

Learning from HSCB audits carried out in 2015-16 demonstrated that:

- There was good awareness of the Levels of Need Guidance but more work was needed in supporting use of this in day to day practice and decision making.
- There was limited use of any tools when practitioners were carrying out assessments or considering referrals.

What we will do next

HSCB will be working to ensure that:

- Effective decision making is taking place at the early stage of identification of needs, and appropriately directed to WISH, Early Triage (MAG) or referred to MASH
- Common Assessments are taking place within timescales and are effective in identifying needs of children and families and planning interventions (with clear multi-agency engagement in this process)
- Lead professionals are identified in each case deemed to be level 2 or 3.

Priority 4: To safeguarding and promote the welfare of children and young people who are abused and/or neglected.

What we have done

With regard to the Child Protection process, the performance information and quality assurance established by HSCB highlighted a number of areas for further work and enquiry. HSCB noted that the number of children subject of a child protection plan was high. This had been a continuing trend since December 2014, and higher than comparator authorities. In response, the Board commissioned an analysis of the Child Protection System "overheating" with a number of issues identified and strategies developed. These included:

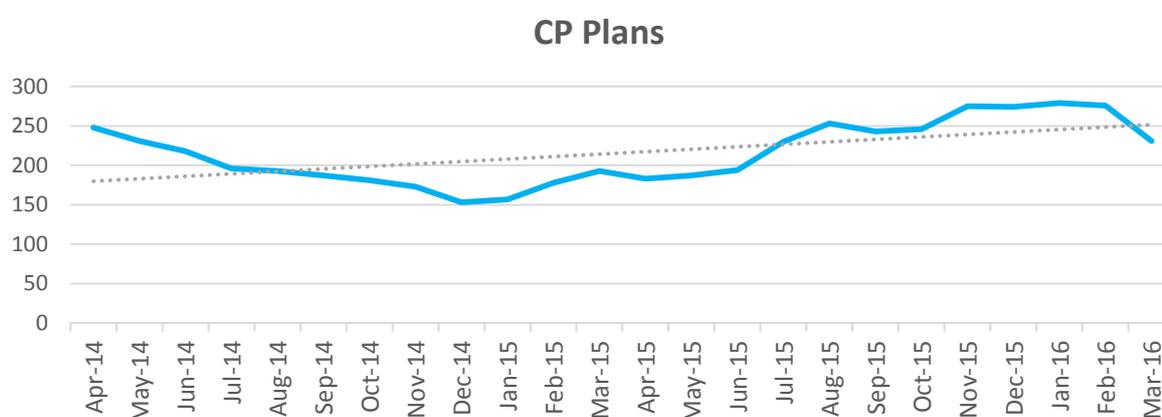
- Greater scrutiny being applied in MASH in convening strategy meetings;

- The interim implementation of a conference chair focussing solely on ICPCs and providing a higher level of challenge and scrutiny to social work teams; and
- A more robust consideration of threshold at review conferences with chairs providing a steer where necessary to the multi-agency decision-making group,

These approaches are having a measurable effect on reducing the numbers of children being drawn into the child protection system.

Following anecdotal reporting by the Wye Valley Trust of meetings being cancelled they were asked to carry out an audit, which took place over a 7 week period, and was reported back to the Board. It was identified that during this period seven Initial Child Protection Conferences and four Core Groups were cancelled, with varying reasons and notice.

Children subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time remains low in Herefordshire, falling below 1% at the end of March 2016.



It should be noted that data indicates lower rates of children subject to a child protection plan for lengthy periods of time, with the result that in November 2015 only 12% of child protection plans were more than 12 months old

Numbers of children subject to a CP plan by category as at the last day of each quarter 2015/16.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Emotional Abuse	96 (49%)	122 (50%)	152 (55%)	136 (59%)
Multiple Abuse	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)
Neglect	71 (37%)	85 (35%)	83 (30%)	71 (31%)
Physical Abuse	11 (6%)	13 (5%)	18 (7%)	12 (5%)
Sexual Abuse	16 (8%)	23 (9%)	20 (7%)	12 (5%)

In line with the national trend, Emotional Harm remains the primary category for a children becoming the subject of a child protection plan. In addition, apart from in the 4th quarter there

were more children subject of a child protection plan under the category of sexual abuse than physical abuse, which is not necessarily the case nationally.

The Office of the Children’s Commissioners committed to a two year enquiry in to intrafamilial child sexual abuse (IFCSA), prompted by findings from the study [Child Sexual Exploitation in Groups and Gangs](#). The report found that we know little about the experience of the victims of IFCSA; there was concern that children were not being listened to in planning to protect them and the criminal justice system may be inflicting further harm; there were concerns also that there are key gaps in understanding the prevalence of IFCSA. The full report [“It’s a Lonely Journey: A Rapid Evidence Assessment on interfamilial child sexual abuse](#) can be accessed here.

An audit of cases of children subject to a child protection plan was reported to the HSCB in April 2015. This audit found that for 109 children from 53 families their parenting was compromised by domestic abuse. In March 2014 the percentage of children in this cohort was similar at 54%.

What we have learned and what difference we have made

Our plan for the year 2015-16 set out some key areas where we wanted to make a difference:

- The process and decision making at the initial stages of the child protection process (strategy meetings/ section 47 investigations) comply with statutory guidance, and the decisions are consistent with the levels of need in Herefordshire.
- The child protection planning and review process (child protection conferences/ core groups) are truly multi-agency and consistent with guidance and procedures.
- Child protection plans are effective in reducing/ eradicating the risk of significant harm to children.

The Board has received evidence during the year that children and parents/ carers involved with the child protection system are having positive experiences.

Below are some responses of children and young people and parents about their experiences of working with people as part of the Child Protection plan.

2. Draw a circle around the faces that show how you felt about having a support worker.



Really sad Really happy Sad Scared Angry Confused / worried Happy Okay

it helped me to tell mummy my true feelings.

2a. If there is anything else you would like to tell us about how you felt, please write it here:
I felt comfortable working with Jo.

6. Which areas of support did you feel were most helpful for you and why?
Information - how to step back during arguments and think is this what I want

6. Which areas of support did you feel were most helpful for you and why?
relationships and keeping safe

6. Which areas of support did you feel were most helpful for you and why?
about child safety on the internet when you put something on the internet you can't delete it

4. What difference has having a support worker made to you? (You can circle all answers that fit)

1. I generally feel happier ✓	2. I have more people to confide in if I need to	3. I get on better with my mum / dad or carers
4. I feel like people listen to me ✓	5. I get on better at school/college/work	6. I feel less angry
7. Nothing has really changed	8. I feel happier at home ✓	9. I don't feel as anxious

Comments from parents included:

Female Carers:

3. Please tick the relevant boxes below to tell us what you thought of our service.

	Very Good	Good	Okay	Poor	Terrible
1. Your relationship with the worker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
2. How often you had contact with your support worker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
3. Time of visits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
4. Advice given to you	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
5. Practical help / support given to you	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

3a. If you would like to provide any other comments about the above topics please let us know this in the space provided below. It would be very useful for us to find out if any specific areas were particularly helpful to you i.e. visits scheduled around your other commitments or to fit in with the support needed e.g. evening routines; practical support; your relationship with the worker etc.:

I found the advice ^{given} really informative and useful and will continue to use the book. ^{dad} was brilliant and someone that I felt ~~heard~~ listened and was very approachable.

3. Please tick the relevant boxes below to tell us what you thought of our service.

	Very Good	Good	Okay	Poor	Terrible
1. Your relationship with the worker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
2. How often you had contact with your support worker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
3. Time of visits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
4. Advice given to you	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
5. Practical help / support given to you	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

3a. If you would like to provide any other comments about the above topics please let us know this in the space provided below. It would be very useful for us to find out if any specific areas were particularly helpful to you i.e. visits scheduled around your other commitments or to fit in with the support needed e.g. evening routines; practical support; your relationship with the worker etc.:

All visits were when I was free and ~~a~~ worked around me and the children.

5. Which of these areas did you feel that the support worker was most helpful with and why?

Substance Misuse.

Family Relationship.

Male Carers:

5. Which of these areas did you feel that the support worker was most helpful with and why?

Behaviour Management. The work I did on Triple P parenting with So has been very helpful to me and helped me to look at things in a different way.

3. Please tick the relevant boxes below to tell us what you thought of our service.

	Very Good	Good	Okay	Poor	Terrible
1. Your relationship with the worker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
2. How often you had contact with your support worker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
3. Time of visits		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
4. Advice given to you	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
5. Practical help / support given to you	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

4. Which areas did you and the support worker focus on?

1. Behaviour management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2. Parenting (basic care; supervision)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3. Routines	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4. Substance Misuse	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5. Accessing other services	
6. Relationships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7. Domestic Abuse	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8. Home Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9. Home Conditions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10. Housing	
11. Keeping Safe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12. Mental Health		13. Physical Health		14. Budgeting		15. Future aspirations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
16. Jobs		17.		18.		19.		20.	

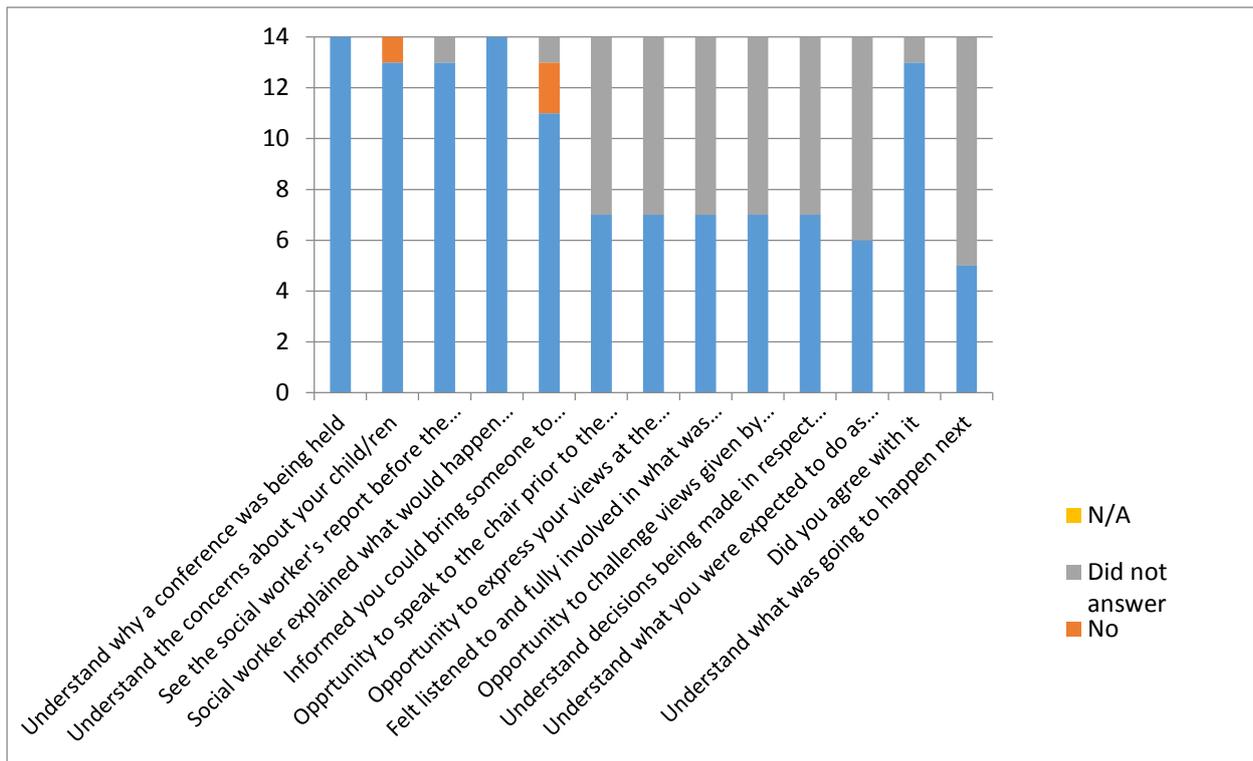
5. Which of these areas did you feel that the support worker was most helpful with and why?

parenting - helped me learn and develop more as a dad

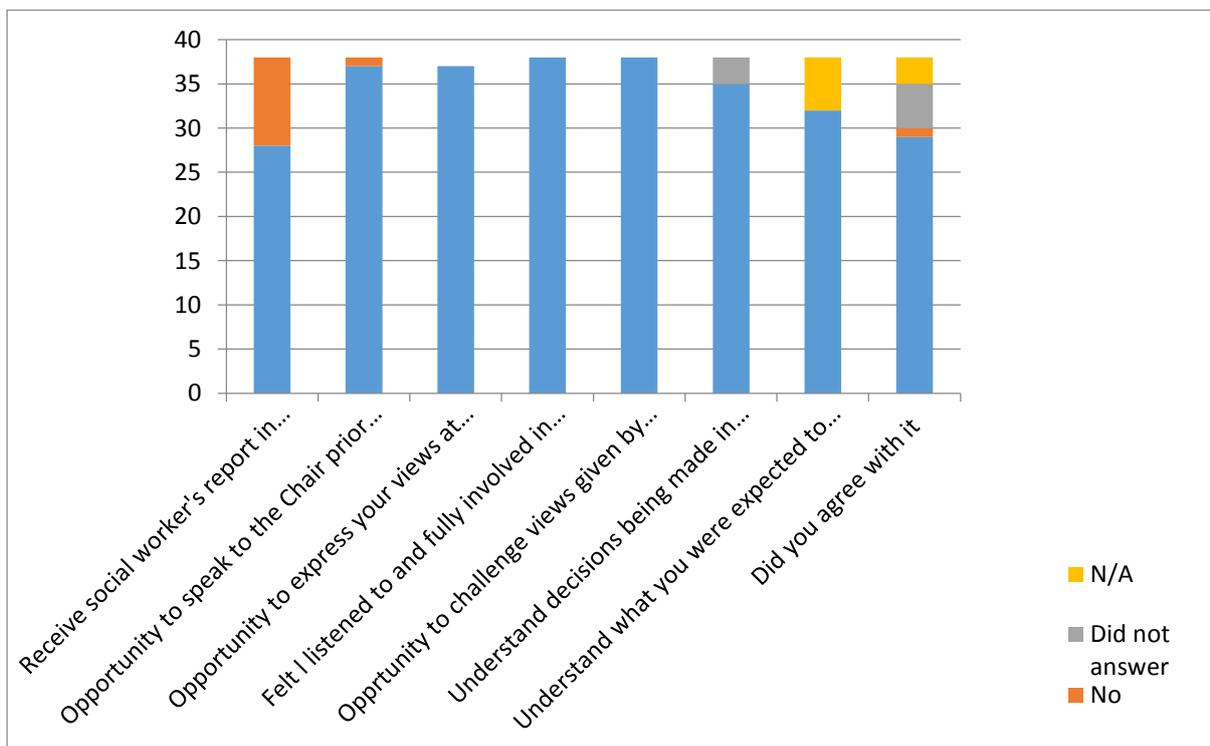
Parental feedback regarding their experience of child protection conferences (CPC), from a data set that covers the period June 2015 – January 2016, was received, which demonstrates both positive experiences and areas for improvement, the latter particularly applying to initial child protection conferences.

A total of 52 forms were completed, 14 in respect of Initial CPCs and 38 regarding Review CPC, a summary of which is given in the tables below.

Responses from parents following an initial child protection conference



Responses from parents in respect of review child protection conferences



There will be follow up of the responses relating to receiving the social worker's report "in sufficient time". Reviewing and improving the seeking of parental views about CP conferences will be considered in 2016-17, as well as exploring ways of getting children and young people's views.

What we will do next

One of the priority areas for the HSCB for 2016/17 is assuring itself that the child's 'journey' through the child protection process results in positive outcomes for the child. The Board will be scrutinising this area and this will include Board members observing child protection conferences to establish the quality of multi-agency working to safeguard children.

HSCB will also be working to ensure that:

- The process and decision making at the initial stages of the child protection process (strategy meetings/ section 47 investigations) comply with statutory guidance, and the decisions are consistent with the levels of need in Herefordshire.
- The child protection planning and review process (child protection conferences/ core groups) are truly multi-agency and consistent with guidance and procedures.
- Child protection plans are effective in reducing/ eradicating the risk of significant harm to children.

6. How the HSCB has carried out its statutory functions

LSCBs have a number of statutory functions in addition to their objectives of:

- *Co-ordinating what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area, and*
- *ensuring the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.*

This section of the reports refer to wider significant areas of safeguarding children in addition to the priority areas for 2015/16.

a. Policies, procedures, practice guidance updates

Herefordshire commissions its [multi-agency child protection procedures](#) together with the other West Mercia LSCBs - Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and Worcestershire - from Tri-X. There has been a project throughout 2015/16 reviewing any "local" procedures and where appropriate ensuring that they are reflected in the cross West Mercia procedures and guidance. A report to the Policy and Procedures subgroup in November 2015 noted that the regional West Mercia Procedures located on the Tri-X system were updated on 30 October 2015. Prior to the update, local procedures were located on both the HSCB Website and the Tri-X site under 'local' procedures. This led to practitioner confusion as to where to go to

access the correct procedure and led to duplication of procedures and poor version control, with a number of out of date procedures being located on both sites. These issues have all been addressed.

The Policy and Procedures subgroup has led on this work and specific procedures that have been developed, reviewed or updated in this year include:

- Protocol for children who go missing
- Children missing education, and elective home education
- Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage
- Serious Case Review Procedures
- Violent extremism and PREVENT Strategy
- Persons who pose a risk to children
- Substance misuse guidance updated to include misuse during pregnancy.
- Policies on Child Working and Animal Abuse
- Multi-Agency Overarching Information Sharing Policy developed
- Revision of the Common Assessment Framework and “step down” guidance
- Local Authority Designated Officer
- Child Abuse & Info Technology
- Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked, Safeguarding Children from Abroad
- West Mercia Joint Protocol for Reporting Missing Children & Young People.

Herefordshire has also been involved in the West Midlands Regional Procedures Innovation Project, which aims to develop a set of procedures that are common across the West Midlands region. The Project has developed levels of procedures to assist in planning the work of the project:

Level A: Child Protection Procedures

- *These are the overarching core child protection procedures drawn from key national documents (e.g. Working Together) and include clear shared definitions.*

These have been produced and widely circulated and have been agreed by Herefordshire.

Level B: Guidance

Level B contains the agreed regional guidance on these procedures.

A list of procedures and guidance that come under this heading has been established and plans need putting in to place to review and agree across the region.

Level C: Area Specific Information

- *Level C contains area specific information.*

This will include information such as local referral procedures and pathways, local threshold guidance, contact details.

The aim is to have agreed West Midlands procedures in place by April 2017, with an agreed process for management and review of the procedures. Until this is achieved Herefordshire will continue to maintain the joint West Mercia procedures.

b. Training

Multi-agency training

The HSCB multi-agency training offer for 2015/ 16 reflects the priority areas of the Board and wider safeguarding issues. The plan going forward also reflects the priority areas for training 2016/17. Face to face multi-agency training has included:

- Working together to safeguard children
- Working together refresher
- Childhood Neglect
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Child protection conferences

Each of the courses under these topics has been reviewed in order to reflect changes, updates, research findings and local learning.

There has also been an on-line training offer that has included:

- Safeguarding children basic awareness
- CSE basic awareness
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

These and a range of other courses around topics relating to safeguarding children have been provided by the Virtual College and accessed through a Herefordshire based service, Hoople, that operates the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on line service. This is also where the face to face courses are accessed and booked.

The Workforce Development subgroup has developed a model for carrying out a training needs analysis of agencies to identify numbers of staff and training needs at different levels. Work has also taken place to develop a multi-agency training pool. There have been colleagues, mainly from health and social care, who have contributed to the delivery of some training, but the numbers involved have not been high and it has not been well coordinated. Through promotion and development the numbers now beginning to engage in the training pool have increased. Regular support and review sessions are planned with the aim of having a well-functioning training pool in place from September 2016.

Numbers attending HSCB multi agency training courses 2015-16

Course	Numbers
Targeted Working Together to Safeguard Children, 1 day	189
Targeted Working Together to Safeguard Children half day refresher	46
Targeted Course Understanding Neglect	64
Child Sexual Exploitation, half day	30
Child Protection Conferences	22
Domestic Abuse 3 day course	70
HSCB/HSAB Practitioner Forums	109

412 professionals also accessed the E learning courses relating to safeguarding children, basic awareness; child sexual exploitation; safeguarding and leadership; hidden harm. With the development of the training pool and review of the courses the aim will be for increased number attending the multi-agency child protection training courses in 2016-17.

The evaluations of the courses were positive:

“Multiagency group was very helpful and interesting. Great to hear information and share experiences with different agencies”

“It is always good to refresh Knowledge and issues surrounding safeguarding. I felt the Daniel Pelka case study was very powerful”

“Was very useful to use a case study to highlight where children and young people have “fallen through the gaps” and use this reflection to strengthen our own service”.

“Reviewing review cases and looking back at previous case records. This is an aspect that all professionals neglect, looking deeper into previous events, to learn from mistakes”.

“I have a better knowledge of the resources and tools available to facilitate a good quality assessment”.

“Understanding of the case conference process and who has what role within it. Particularly good to clarify where GPs fit into this”

In the coming year we will be implementing a more comprehensive evaluation of the HSCB training and its impact. This will include:

- Reaction - end of day satisfaction with learning questionnaire either online or by using feedback sheets.
- Learning – 2 weeks after the training a dip sample of learners across all agencies / learning activities will be identified to secure feedback on the learning from the training through an online survey – this might for example be driven by the need to assess new training provision or a new trainer.
- Behaviour and Results- 1-3 months after the learning activity a sample of managers will be sent a questionnaire to evaluate the impact the training has had on the delegate’s behaviour, skills, practice and performance.

The HSCB practice audits will also play a part in assessing whether best practice is being applied.

Single agency training

Data analysis found that available on-line training was not being utilised as fully as it could. In addition, the HSCB reached a decision that the Board could not continue to fund universal training for single agencies (the Board had previously funded the e-learning). This meant that individual agencies are expected to take responsibility for the training of their staff at the universal level.

Whilst the Board is not continuing to fund e-learning, the HSCB website will provide signposting to free e-learning opportunities, eg for CSE, FGM, Prevent and Radicalisation, as well as to some E-learning opportunities that have a cost. The HSCB will also be reviewing and updating a Safeguarding Children Basic Awareness training pack that single agencies can use.

Practitioner Forums

The HSCB has established a series of multi-agency “**Practitioner Forums**” aimed at front line practitioners and managers. The aims of these forums are:

- To support practitioners to take professional judgement-based approach to safeguarding rather than a purely process driven approach;
- To share good practice across agencies to improve standards;
- To share learning from audits, investigations and serious case reviews
- To act as a conduit for the HSSCB to share key messages and information with front line practitioners, and to receive feedback so that the voice of the practitioner is taken into account in the work of the HSCB

A number of these forums have been run jointly with the Adult Safeguarding Board. Topics have included:

- Domestic abuse, including the work of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference in Herefordshire.
- Levels of Need, and understanding the impact of adult factors (mental ill health; domestic abuse; substance misuse etc.) on children’s wellbeing and safety.
- Information sharing.

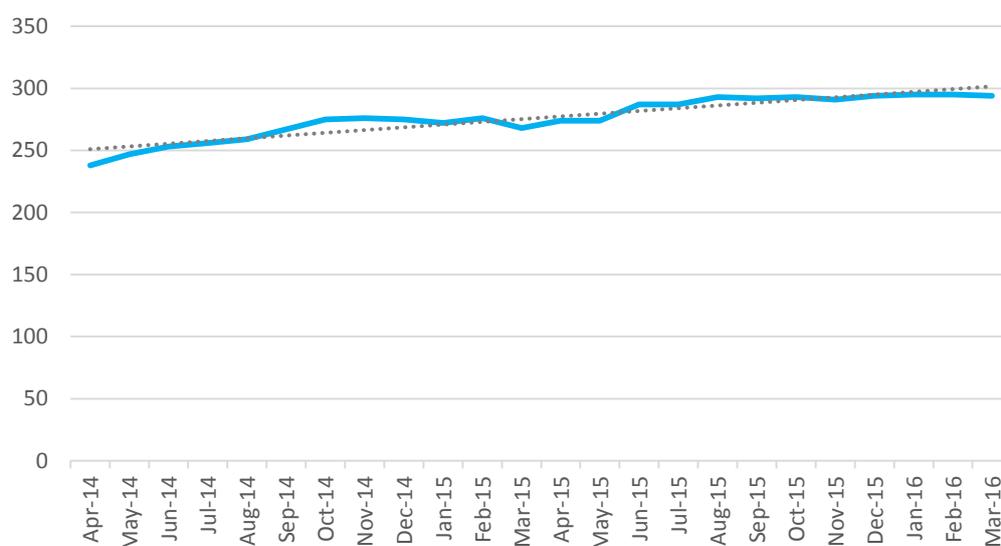
As these forums have developed, the numbers and range of agencies attending has increased. These forums will continue throughout 2016/17.

c. Children in Care

Although the local authority has the lead responsibility for children in care, many more agencies have the responsibilities of being a ‘corporate parent.’ These children are reliant on the effective working together of many universal and more specialist services, and their outcomes are too often poor.

There has been a steady increase in the number of children in the care of the local authority. The HSCB will be monitoring this in comparison with statistical neighbours to ascertain whether there are trends to be concerned about and investigate more closely.

LAC Numbers



In terms of placement stability there is a positive picture, with only 2.4% of children in care having experienced three or more placements.

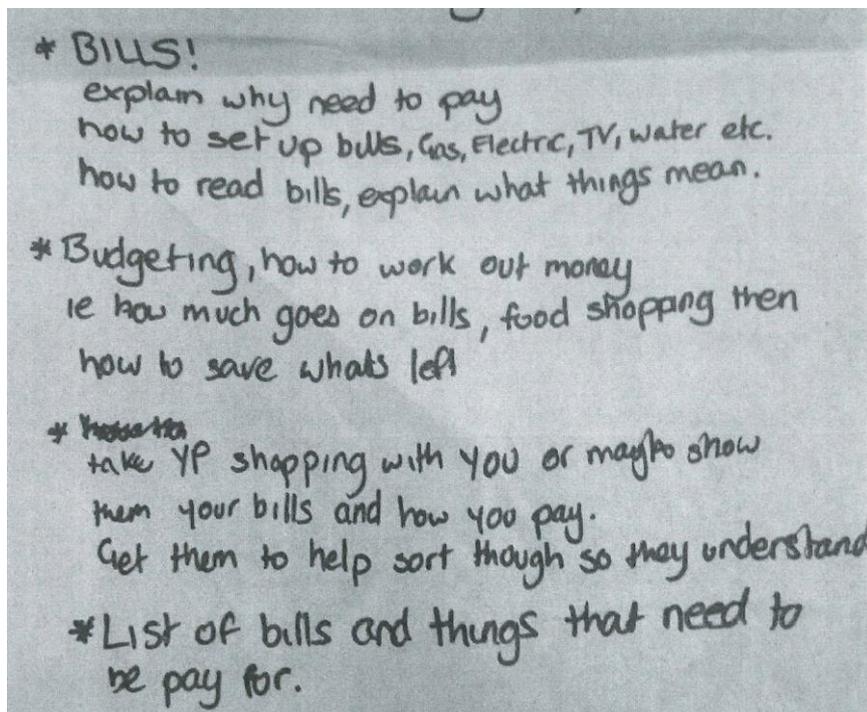
With regard to care leavers, a manual analysis of the electronic social care records indicates that at the end of the year there was one 19 year old in unsuitable accommodation, and 16 not in suitable education, employment or training. At the end of March 2016 there were over 90% of care leavers with pathway plans. This is an improvement on previous performance, although the target remains 100%.

The Children in Care Council (CICC) has been active in promoting the voice of the child in terms of views about services and being listened to in individual cases. The CICC priorities for 2015 included:

- **To improve No4 (where CICC meets) for children and young people** – including provision of laptops for children and young people at No4 - It was felt that the computers at No4 were not 'fit for purpose' and they would really like laptops which they could use at No4 and also when out doing interview panels and PEEPs (see appendix 4) training – CICC to look at funding options – achieved.
- **To review the rules for children and young people in Foster Placements** – CICC questioned the rules within Foster placements and how they impact on them socially – for example; when they aren't allowed to play the same computer games as their peers. CICC to meet with Fostering and Corporate Parenting Panel
- **Why do we have so many changes of social workers – how can we change this?** CICC to meet with Corporate Parenting Panel to discuss - virtual academy to come to talk to CICC

- **Our lives as Looked After Children and Young People in film** – Children’s Rights and Participations officer to approach local film companies – funding application on hold as Apprentice left.
- **Delegated Authority form** – can we make the form look better, why are the words so complicated, when do we get to see the form and review it? Why doesn’t the form mention our privacy/ curfew and why are we never seen as a person in control of any of the issues?
- **Choosing foster carers/ supported lodgings providers for us** – what do you tell them about us and what do you tell us about them – and why?
- **What are our rights in foster care and supported lodgings**– do all Looked After Children and Young People know about the guidance about pocket money and clothing allowance? If not why not?
- **Do you know what we really need to know for moving onto independence?**
- **How are foster carers trained to support Looked After Children and Young People alongside their own birth children – can we help you?**
- **Getting foster carers to get us!!!**

A theme that emerged regarding helping young people with greater independence was a better understanding of bills and finances:



With regard to changes of Social Workers the CICC advised that children and young people just wanted people to say goodbye and to know that there would be a change, if one had to happen. The CICC gave an indication from their experiences of the number of Social Workers they have had whilst in care;

- 6 in 5 years
- 4 in 2 months
- 9 in 17 years
- 3 in 2 years
- 6/7 in 5 years

The CICC advised that they felt a good social worker was someone who:

- visited often
- was always on time
- always tried their best
- was committed
- wanted to form a good relationship with you
- had an interest in you
- spoke to you away from your foster carer

Below is a collection of what some young people had to say about the difference that being in care has made to them.

Ben is 20 years old and he has been in care for 17 years

"I like volunteering at British Heart Foundation. I like gaming, going out with my mates. I want a job, house and family in the future. When I first moved in with my foster carers I felt nervous and uncomfortable, but they made me feel safe in the house which made me feel relaxed and ready to live. They bought me things that made me feel valued. They helped with a lot of benefits and to budget which is good because I buy expensive stuff. I think people should be foster carers as it enables them to speak to young people from different backgrounds who have been affected by not so good things. So foster carers-we need you"

Sasha is 12 years old and she has been in care for 6 years

"I like playing football and going to police cadets. I want to be a police officer. My foster carers treat me like I am their daughter and they keep me safe. They give me the right stuff when I need it. They are awesome in every way. They have taught me to become a better person."

Things don't always go so well, however. Below are some extracts from the "Journey of a Looked after Child."

Journey of a looked after Child (with thanks to the young person who provided this)

We were placed at an emergency placement by a random worker (who obviously had something else to do!) (NOBODY WAS TAKING CONTROL)

My stuff had already been packed!! (WHO HAS BEEN TOUCHING MY STUFF – I BET THEY WERE JUDGING ME!)

My brother text me to say that the carer had been through my stuff!!! My room was trashed! (NOBODY CARES, NOTHING IS PRIVATE, NOBODY TRUSTS ME, ONCE AGAIN THE FUTURE IS UNCLEAR!)

Guess what – they moved us to our Aunty's – I never went – I ran!! I was picked up 2 days later by the Police – what have you done young man?? (WHY IS IT ALWAYS MY FAULT??)

I met my brother at a building I didn't recognise – we were told that we were moving again! (GREAT!!!) But this time not together – I was going to Shropshire and my brother to another County! (IT WAS THE END OF EVERYTHING! I WAS LEAVING EVERYTHING I KNEW!)

When I went to this new placement in Shropshire the Social Worker forgot my name when she introduced to the carers! She then said she would let my Social Worker know that the move had gone smoothly – Smoothly for who?? – I never heard from my worker for days!

When I tried to get in touch with someone in Hereford, I was told that my Social Worker had left – thank s for saying goodbye!!

Nobody would tell me where my brother was!! I have spent all of my life looking out for him and YOU have even taken this away from me!

Oh and I am sorry that I am not engaging with education at the moment – my head is a bit f*****!!

These are strong messages for everyone working with children and young people from whatever agency and at whatever level. There are plans for the coming year to develop projects to improve the voice of the child, such as children chairing their own reviews. The “Voice of the Child” will be a key topic at one of the HSCB practitioner forums, and will be a standing item whenever the Board meets.

d. Allegations concerning persons who work with children

HSCB has in place safeguarding procedures which include comprehensive procedures to manage allegations against adults who are employed to work with children or who work with children in a voluntary capacity. These procedures are in line with other key statutory documents including the DfE statutory guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (2015), a new version of which will take effect in September 2016.

The Local Authority Designated Office (LADO) is responsible for the management and oversight of all investigations in to allegations against those working with children within Herefordshire. The LADO produces an annual report which is scrutinised by HSCB.

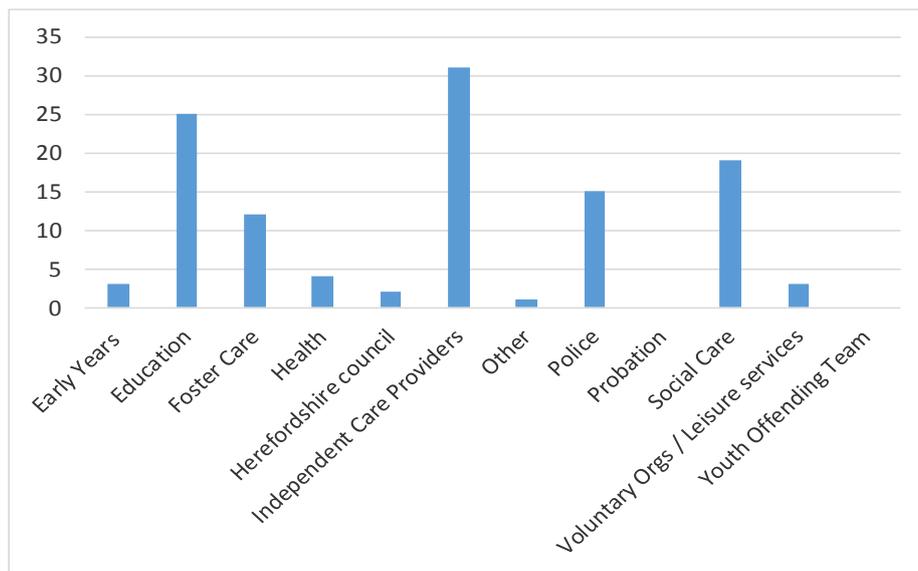
The duties of the LADO in relation to managing allegations are to:

- Manage individual cases
- Provide advice and guidance
- Liaise with the police and other agencies
- Monitor the progress of cases for timeliness, thoroughness and fairness

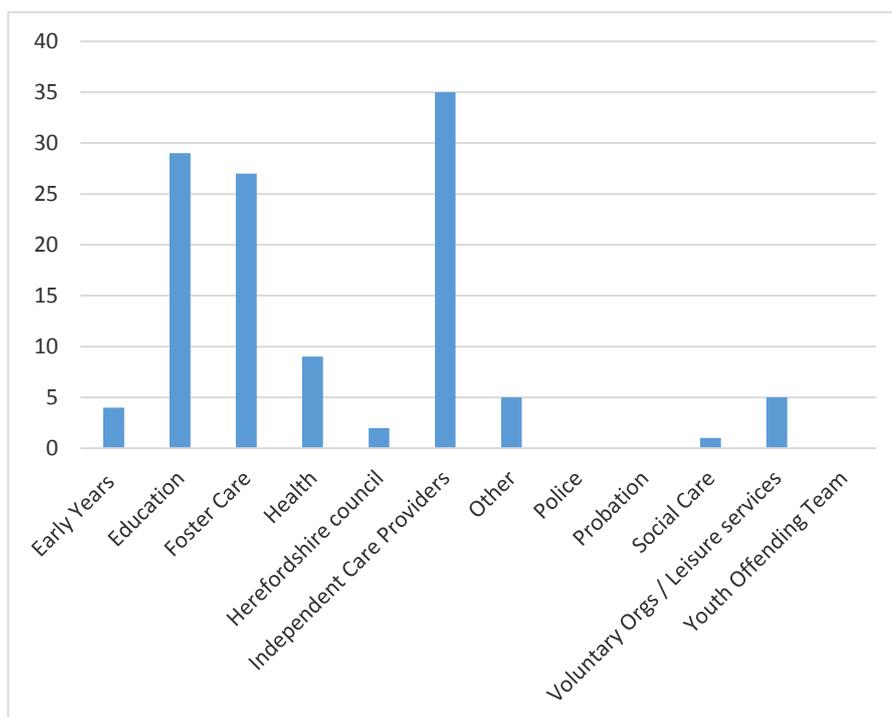
Between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 a total of 117 allegations against professionals were managed by the LADO, compared to 175 in 2014/15. Although this suggests a downward trend, figures for the preceding six years show a discernible fluctuation and the total for 2015/2016 is not significantly lower than the mean for the past seven years (139). The number of referrals averaged 9.5 per month in 2015/16.

Working Together 2015 sets the expectation that 80% of cases should be resolved within one month of referral, 90% within three months and all but the most exceptional cases within twelve months (measured as number of days from referral to case closure). In 2015/2016, 25% of cases were resolved within one month, 33% were resolved within three months and 42% were open for longer than three months. Even when taking into account the preservation of criminal proceedings in some cases and some data inaccuracies, performance in this area has been poor. Factors that have impacted on this are changes in Electronic Social Care recording systems and from a multi-agency partner perspective, delays in requested actions being completed by employing agencies.

The graph below shows referring agencies to the LADO for 2015/16



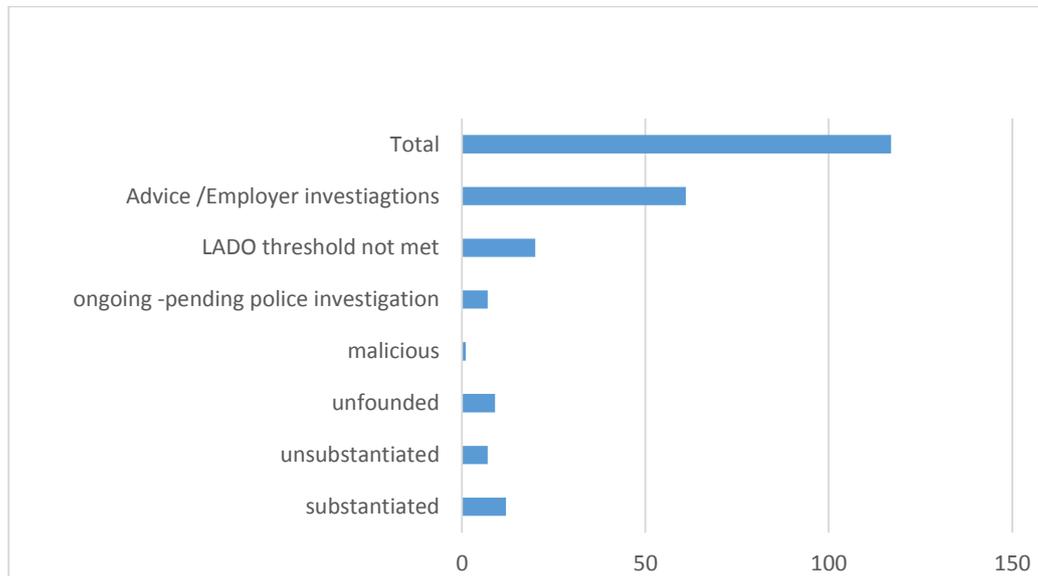
The graph below shows the employing agency 2015/16



Education and independent care providers continue to make the highest percentage of referrals to LADO. Youth offending services are highlighted again this year, as in the previous five years, for not having made any referrals or having an employee who is the subject of any referrals. The LADO will be meeting with the youth offending service manager to explore their agency's awareness of the allegations management process. Social care, fostering

services, police, education and independent care providers continue to constitute the vast majority of referring agencies, which indicates a good understanding of procedures within these key agencies.

The graph below shows outcomes of referrals 2015/2016



Priorities for 2016/17 include:

- Collection of accurate data and evolution of the existing LADO processes that removes the need for secondary recording systems and allows for accurate analysis. This is required to evidence outcomes for children.
- The time taken to resolve cases must improve in line with *Working Together* guidelines. This will be achieved through a more robust chasing of investigation outcomes with employers where there is delay, and supported by a monitoring and tracking spreadsheet which has now been implemented.
- Awareness raising is arguably the most crucial factor of the LADO role, as appropriate action can only be taken if employers are aware of and adhere to LADO processes. This will be achieved through briefings to key teams across social care and partner agencies.

e. The safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered

A child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) who is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative' is deemed to be privately fostered. Private fostering is an arrangement made between a parent and a carer for 28 days or more. The council has a legal duty to make sure that all private fostering arrangements are safe for the child, that they are being looked after properly, that appropriate arrangements are agreed between parties and that everyone involved knows who to ask for help if advice or support is needed.

HSCB receives an annual report about private fostering in Herefordshire.

In 2015/16 only three private fostering arrangements were notified to the local authority. This number is low. There is concern that other children and young people are living in private fostering arrangements that have not been assessed and this could leave children vulnerable. There is a need for on-going work to raise awareness within the community and amongst professionals to identify children who may be privately fostered and of their responsibility to notify the Council if they believe a child is living in such an arrangement.

There have been and continue to be a range of campaigns and strategies to raise awareness of private fostering, for example a radio campaign in Jan/ Feb 2015. The HSCB Joint Communications subgroup has included this in its priority areas for 2016/17.

f. Case reviews

LSCBs are required to undertake reviews of serious cases, determining and communicating lessons to be learned in order to improve practice.

HSCB, Herefordshire's Adult Safeguarding Board and the Community Safety Partnership have a Joint Case Review (JCR) subgroup which commissions and oversees any formal Case Reviews as well as identifying other learning opportunities from cases brought to the group's attention.

During 2015/16 one Serious Case Review (SCR) in respect of a child was initiated. This case initially commenced as a learning review following issues being identified through HSCB case audits, but as further information emerged a decision was made that it met the criteria for a SCR. The review will be fully concluded in 2016/17.

The JCR Group has implemented a Practice Learning Review Model for use when reviewing cases that may fall below the criteria for a SCR but where it is identified that there is learning that would benefit future practice and multi-agency working. One case has commenced using this approach which will be concluded and reported in the 2016-17 annual report.

The Business Unit of the HSCB through the relevant subgroups and partner agencies will be sharing the lessons and messages about practice. The individual and multi-agency action plans that stem from these reviews are monitored by the Joint Case Review Group and reported to the Board. An element of the quality assurance framework of the HSCB will be to include factors from these reviews into the case audit programme to identify improvements.

g. The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

Chapter 5 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* sets out the responsibilities of the Local Safeguarding Children Board “for ensuring that a review of each death of a child normally resident in the LSCB area is undertaken by a CDOP”. The CDOP has a fixed core membership drawn from organisations represented on HSCB. CDOP provides an annual report to HSCB.

There were 14 deaths within the review period April 2015- March 2016, five of which are still awaiting completion of review. Of those reviewed; all were completed within six months period from time of death. Of the five from the current year that are awaiting review completion two await post-mortem and possible subsequent inquest. Three have not been completed because of delayed submission of some of the statutory form Bs needed from agencies to enable the CDOP to complete the review. This has been an area of concern for some time and the matter has been escalated to the HSCB with corresponding challenge issued by letter to the agencies concerned.

CDOP considered the learning from this and recommended the following:

- Professionals are made aware of their role through the development of a pathway which is on the LSCB website
- A good practice guide and sample is posted on the web to assist with understanding
- The Director of Children Services, as the accountable officer for one of the agencies, has been alerted to take the appropriate action.
- A communication item on the CDOP agenda to agree dissemination of learning, with responsibility for this to the Safeguarding Board Business Unit.

The impact of actions taken in response to these recommendations will be monitored by HSCB in 2016/17.

There were no serious case review referrals made from CDOP during the year.

In addition to complying with statutory guidance, CDOP has identified key learning in the following two areas:

- **Support for and involvement of families.**

Local and national (Bliss 2016) feedback has recommended improved engagement with families. Locally the NHS team have evidenced the need for the development of an end of life individualised care plan and pathway to ensure seamless service between acute services and home.

- **Group B strep sepsis (GBS)**

A death associated with the group B streptococcus occurred during the year. This highlighted the continued national concern over the screening for this condition. *Current studies show that in the UK it affects around 1 per 1,000 births. Early administration of antibiotics is extremely effective but this depends on early clinical diagnosis.*

A new method of testing for this infection during pregnancy is available but is only available privately. NICE have reviewed the need for screening although this has not been recommended. There are national campaigns on this subject, and there is still ongoing debate of cost benefit for the screening.

Implementation of this learning will also be monitored by HSCB during 2016/17.

7. Effectiveness of agency safeguarding arrangements in Herefordshire

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. LSCBs have a responsibility to monitor how effectively they do this.

HSCB monitors a range of performance information and carries out a range of quality assurance activities to ascertain the effectiveness of local services. This work is set out in the Board's Learning and Improvement Framework and is primarily coordinated through the Quality Assurance and Performance (QA) subgroup. Case reviews in respect of both children and vulnerable adults are coordinated by the Joint Case review (JCR) subgroup, and details about this are given elsewhere in this report.

QA activities include:

- Review of external inspections of Herefordshire services and oversight of the delivery and impact of action plans;
- Discussion and analysis of a multi-agency core data set at each QA meeting;
- A monthly meeting to examine the data, ensure end of year target trajectories are on track and identify and remedy any deviation through operational leads;
- Multi-agency case audits;
- Consideration of data on family violence provided by the Domestic Abuse forum;
- Discussion of emerging local issues and trends arising from the data and identification of areas of strategic importance, which are reported to the LSCB for direction or further work;
- Regular assurance reporting from individual agencies and sectors;
- A regular 'section 11' audit of single agency contributions to safeguarding children.

A learning log has been created to capture the learning from case audits and Serious Case Reviews and is used regularly to inform training and forward planning.

Practitioners and first line managers have been actively involved in the multi-agency case audits and this allows for a much richer discussion and exchange of views and understanding that lead to better learning.

Section 11 audit

Partners of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board completed a “Section 11” Audit Self-Assessment tool in 2015-16. The tool is designed to facilitate reflection and challenge in order to improve safeguarding within services and therefore improve outcomes for children in Herefordshire. Agencies that completed the audit included:

- 🔗 **Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG)**
- 🔗 **Herefordshire Council’s Homes and Communities Services (H&C Services)**
- 🔗 **Herefordshire Council’s Children’s Well Being Directorate**
- 🔗 **CAFCASS**
- 🔗 **West Mercia Police**
- 🔗 **West Mercia Probation Trust (NPS)**
- 🔗 **West Mercia Youth Offending Service**
- 🔗 **Wye Valley NHS Trust**
- 🔗 **West Midlands Ambulance Service***
- 🔗 **Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (WWM CRC)**
- 🔗 **British Transport Police**

Based on their self-assessment, each agency (except CAFCASS) identified actions for improvement and developed an action plan in response. Some of the main themes from the audit included:

- Ensuring that single agency policies and procedures were fully up to date and regularly reviewed, taking in to account national and local changes, and that staff were aware of changes and how to access policies, procedures and guidance.
- With regard to staff, issues included ensuring safeguarding children is reflected in all job descriptions; establishing specialist posts or elements in posts to support safeguarding activity; implementing reflective supervision and auditing that supervision is taking place.
- As well as ensuring that staff received the relevant safeguarding training respective of their role, there were common issues of raising staff awareness and understanding of radicalisation and the PREVENT strategy, and child sexual exploitation.
- Continued awareness raising through e-learning regarding safe recruitment and safe working practice, including safeguarding questions in all job interviews.
- Continued promotion of the HSCB levels of need guidance and understanding of the MASH.

The HSCB has put into place a peer challenge review of the section 11 audits, consisting of panels of Board members meeting with each representatives of each agency to seek evidence for their assessments and challenge the completion of the audits. The QA subgroup will be reviewing the progress and impact of the action plans through 2016-17.

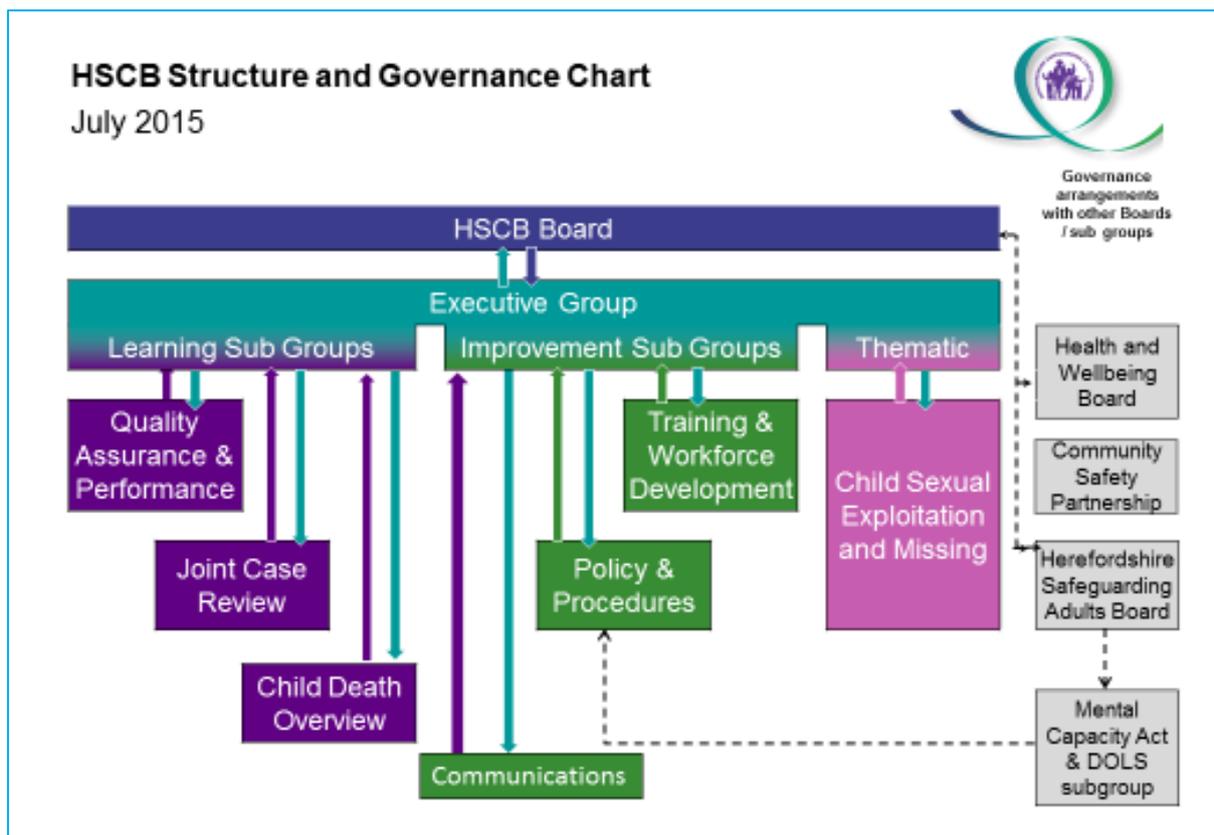
A further full section 11 audit will take place in 2017-18

8. Development of HSCB and its effectiveness 2015-16

HSCB carries out its work primarily through its subgroups, supplemented by task and finish groups as required, and through scrutiny and challenge at Board meetings.

The Board also works with other multi-agency partnerships across Herefordshire to both scrutinise and challenge their activities and to pursue joint objectives. In 2015 a regular forum was established between the Chairs of the two safeguarding boards (adults and children), the Health and Well Being Board, the Children and Young Peoples Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership, underpinned by a partnerships protocol, to clarify leadership and roles in key areas, ensure identification of common themes, align priorities and principles, and avoid duplication of activity.

The structure and governance arrangements for HSCB are set out below.



The attendance of partners at the HSCB Board meeting is set out in **appendix 1**.

Overall engagement by partners in the work of the HSCB has continued to be positive throughout 2015-16. Member reviews with the Independent Chair have ensured that agency

representatives understand their role and responsibilities as Board members. There have been a few occasions when performance has dipped, for example early in 2015-16, when membership of the Workforce Development subgroup had reduced in membership. These issues are addressed as they emerge so that remedial action can be taken and the work of the subgroups is not compromised.

HSCB has benefitted from the creation of the joint business unit at the beginning of the year, which supports the Safeguarding Adults Board and the Community Safety Partnership as well as HSCB. This is jointly funded by partners, and details of the budget, contributions and expenditure are included in **appendix 2**.

The Unit consists of:

- Business Unit Manager
- Learning and Development Officers X 3
- Business Support Coordinator X 3
- Training officer (p/t)

Each of the Learning and Development officers takes lead responsibility for one of the partnership boards and for particular areas that allow for cross cutting themes and shared work streams.

A protocol was put into place to support the efficiency of the business support process and also act as a mechanism for supporting and prompting partner agencies in respect of their contribution to the work of the HSCB and multi-agency working.

The Training Officer post has been vacant throughout most of 2015-16 and the budget for 2016-17 will be reviewed to consider whether this post can be filled in the future.

Towards the end of 2015-16 a review of the business activity between the HSCB Strategic Board, the Executive and the subgroups led to a decision to refine the process. The Executive group now consists primarily of the chairs of the subgroups. The function of the Executive is to coordinate, support and drive the business of the subgroups on the Board's priority areas and reporting to the Board to allow for reflection and a strategic steer.

The progress and effectiveness of the Unit in supporting the HSCB has been reviewed by all the Boards and it is felt to be a positive model.

The two Lay members of the HSCB have continued to attend Board meetings regularly and one attends the Communications subgroup. Both attended the Executive Group but will not be involved in this meeting in the future in order to release capacity to contribute elsewhere. Plans are to involve Lay Members in areas such as the Section 11 audit peer challenge; 'voice of the child initiatives' and bringing a community perspective to the Board.

Illustrations of HSCB challenge and impact

Throughout this annual report there are details of the work of all partners in safeguarding children, and the Board’s function in seeking assurance that partners are working effectively together. Examples of this activity are summarised below:

Challenge	Impact
Establishment of a HSCB subgroup to focus on Child Sexual Exploitation	Clear pathways and guidance and tools to support recognition, referral and response. Awareness raising campaigns and activities. An increase in cases over the 12 month period. Parents and children more involved in the process
HSCB scrutiny and oversight of the “front door” MASH services	MASH Governance Group established. Clarification of agencies responsibilities in the MASH. Continued identification of areas for improvement (deep dive analysis commissioned)
Board was informed of a lack of communication between agencies regarding “Step down” of early help cases under common assessment framework.	Work undertaken in relation to step down process. The relationship between early help and targeted services has been picked up as an issue by the Board for coming year priorities.
Planning meetings for children in the child protection process not being effective. “Spike” in numbers of children subject to a child protection plan	Report from WVT relating to cancelled meetings. Greater scrutiny of Strategy meeting thresholds; one child protection conference chair focusing solely on initial child protection conferences. Work on threshold criteria relating to significant harm.
Voice of the child needs to be heard	HSCB has included this in all Board meetings, sources of voice of the child are illustrated in this report.
Audit of CSE cases	Development of the work of the Operational Group to identify themes and factors relating to CSE to support disruption activity.
Challenge regarding the pace of the development of the early help offer in Herefordshire	Detailed report on the implementation of the early help offer measures of effectiveness to be reported to the board in April 2016. Early Help is a priority area for the Board in 2016-17.

9. Conclusion and future priorities

The focus that the Board placed on Child Sexual Exploitation in 2015/16 has led to greater awareness of CSE, more robust processes in intelligence gathering and improved understanding of what this means. The arrangements in place for responding to concerns about CSE are now more effective with the CSE checklist and assessment screening tool in use, and an increase in referrals. In 2016-17 the Board will want to see a positive impact from the recognition and responses to CSE and good reporting relationships between the CSE team, operational group and strategic group.

The balance of resources to support Early Help on the one hand and respond to concerns about children at risk of harm on the other is a complex one. Services and processes continue to be developed to recognise the needs of children and difficulties in families early, to best target resources and prevent situations escalating to a point where children may be at risk. The Board is aware of work underway regarding continuing development of the Early Help offer in Herefordshire, to achieve the vision set out in the Children and Young People's Plan that *all children and young people in Herefordshire have the best start in life and grow up healthy, happy and safe within supportive family environments*. The Board will be expecting a report on the progress of this initiative during 2016/17 and the plans for implementation.

The Board will also continue to focus on the "front door" with the commissioning of a deep dive analysis of the MASH and subsequent monitoring of an improvement plan.

Through scrutiny and challenge the Board has been able to see positive actions in improving the child protection process by focusing on key stages in the 'child's journey'; referral, strategy discussions, Initial Child Protection Conferences and thresholds for significant harm. It is noted that there have been higher numbers of children subject of a child protection plan in Herefordshire compared with similar authorities, albeit the initiatives put in place do appear to be addressing this. As is illustrated in this report however, there is also a pressure on the early help services from "step down" cases from child protection plans. There will be further work through 2016/17 to monitor these areas, and the initiatives that are being put in place, given the obvious relationship between the two. This will include observations of child protection conferences by Board members.

There has been some awareness raising in relation to Private Fostering, though this needs a stronger focus, and the newly developed joint communications subgroup of the partnership boards will prioritise this.

There are positive indications of stability and improving outcomes for children in the looked after system. Both in terms of children in care and children on a child protection plan there are some positive messages from the voice of the child in terms of the services they received. HSCB will want to continue to see a strong commitment from all agencies in seeking and taking account of the views and understanding of children and young people about their lived experiences, as well as the views of parents. There will be an expectation of reporting to the Board and demonstrating how these views are identifying good practice and supporting

improvements. Given the OCC report in to IFCSA, the Board will consider how the voice of the child in such circumstances is captured and understood.

The work that has taken place in 2015-16 in relation to the multi-agency training pool is a very positive development for opportunities to expand the multi-agency training offer and this initiative should be fully supported in the coming year.

Reflecting on the achievements through 2015-16, considering data and other evidence alongside the need to ensure continuous improvement, the HSCB has set four priorities for 2016-18. These are detailed below:

Priority 1.	Priority 2.	Priority 3.	Priority 4.
<i>Identification, prevention and response to Child Sexual Exploitation/ children who go missing.</i>	<i>The child's journey through the child protection process ensures effective planning and intervention to improve the care, safety and wellbeing of children and reduce/eradicate actual or the risk of significant harm</i>	<i>Identification and response to childhood neglect</i>	<i>The early help services effectively identify needs and concerns relating to children and families, and services address these needs through effective planning and interventions to enable families to function effectively and children's needs are met and they are supported to achieve their full potential.</i>

These have been identified by the HSCB partners as priority areas for seeking assurance of improving services and positive outcomes for children, drawn from knowledge and understanding developed through audits, review and reporting.

They also reflect the priorities set by the Health and Wellbeing Board (Priority 2 addresses the importance of keeping children safe), and the Children Young Peoples Partnership; Priority 4 of the Children and Young People's Plan is "Children and young people in need of safeguarding", and includes expectations in relation to effective early intervention, identifying children at risk of sexual exploitation, a reduction in the number of children subject of a child protection plan and looked after, and support for children with enduring needs particularly in relation to transition in to adult life.

The full [Children and Young Peoples Plan](#) can be found here.

The HSCB will have a reporting cycle that includes detailed reports on one of the priority areas each quarter, using a focused scorecard, with exception reporting on any issues identified through the Quality Assurance and Performance subgroup of the HSCB. Along with this reporting there will be findings from multi agency case audits set around the priority areas, together with data and qualitative information from other areas including:

- Single agency audit activity, findings, analysis and actions
- Board members observations of Child Protection Case Conferences
- Board members visits to front line services
- Audit of agencies responses to identified actions to improve safeguarding practice through Sec 11 Children Act 2004, Sec 175/157 Education Act 2002 audits.

In addition, the HSCB will be seeking reports and assurances from partner agencies about other safeguarding children matters throughout the year. These will include:

Safeguarding area
Looked after children
Female genital mutilation (FGM)
Prevention of radicalization and extremism
Health Services assurance reporting
Public Protection assurance reporting
Education assurance reporting
Child Death Reviews
Serious Case Reviews and other case reviews that the Board have identified should take place
Private Fostering
Adult Factors that impact upon the safety and wellbeing of children

Appendix 1

Attendance of agencies at HSCB Board meetings*

Agency/ person	Board meeting 22/4/15	Board meeting 20/7/15	Board meeting 19/10/15	Board meeting 27/1/16
Independent Chair	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lay Member 1	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lay Member 2	✓	✓	✓	✓
HC Children's Well Being	✓	✓	✓	✓
HC Adult Safeguarding	✓	✓	✓	✓
2Gether NHS Trust	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wye Valley Trust (WVT)		✓	✓	✓
Clinical commissioning Group (CCG)	✓	✓	✓	✓
National Probation Service		✓		✓
Youth Offending Service	✓	✓	✓	✓
West Mercia Police		✓	✓	✓
CAFCASS	✓	✓	✓	
Lead Member Children's Well Being	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education representative	✓	✓	✓	✓
Voluntary and community representative		✓	✓	

* In most instances agencies are represented by more than one person attending from an organisation. Herefordshire Council (HC) representation has included the Director and Assistant Director of Children's Well Being; Head of Additional Needs; Head of Quality and Review; Public Health; Health representation has included Head of Safeguarding CCG; Designated Doctor CCG; Deputy Director of Nursing 2Gether Trust; Director of Nursing and Quality WVT; Executive Nurse Quality and Safety CCG; Director of Nursing Taurus; Designated Nurse WVT. Education representatives have included representatives from the Early Years sector, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Special Schools and FE Colleges.

Appendix 2

Partnership Boards budget*

AGREED BUDGET FOR 2015/16	
Children's Wellbeing	130,028
Adults Wellbeing	103,000
Other Council Dept	7,365
CCG	80,186
Police	53,510
Probation	8,181
CAFCASS	550
YOS	1,144
TOTAL GROSS BUDGET	383,964

FINAL 2015-16 EXPENDITURE STATEMENT		
Category	Actual spend to date	Notes and comments
Salary Costs	198,209	
Agency staff costs	91,165	
Other direct employee costs	314	
Transport costs	1,027	
Independent chair costs	34,728	
Serious Case Review costs	21,488	
Training expenses	15,900	
Office expenses	51,323	Includes end of year recharges for council back office services of £36,224
Training income	-14,900	
Additional income	-15,290	
TOTAL	383,964	

*Note: this budget also covers the support of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and the Community Safety Partnership

Appendix 3

Children exposed to domestic abuse MARAC data, sourced by WMWA

Number of unique children - quarterly totals	West Mercia Women's Aid	Q1 15-16 284	Q2 15-16 376	Q3 15-16 243	Q4 15-16 273	-35%		
Number of children exposed to DA crimes and incidents	West Mercia Police	Q1 15-16 300	Q2 15-16 270	Q3 15-16 298	Q4 15-16 315	9%		Smaller is better
Children exposed to DA three or more times	West Mercia Police	Q1 15-16 36	Q2 15-16 24	Q3 15-16 26	Q4 15-16 26	8%		Smaller is better
Number of children exposed to DA as recorded by: Children's Social Care	Herefordshire Council Children's Social Service	Q1 15-16 93	Q2 15-16 50	Q3 15-16 79	Q4 15-16 32	-59%		

Appendix 4

Numbers of children and young people involved with Children’s Independent Domestic Violence Adviser 2015-16

17. IDVA SERVICE USER CHILDREN DATA	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	Total
No. of service user children recorded at the end of previous period	22	14	22	31	25	31	27	20	21	19	27	13	272
No. of new service user children recorded during the month	9	17	13	15	18	23	14	18	16	18	12	8	181
No. of service user children closed during the month	17	9	4	21	12	27	21	18	17	10	26	8	190
TOTAL NO. OF CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH SERVICE USERS EACH MONTH	31	31	35	46	43	54	41	38	37	37	39	21	453
TOTAL NO. OF UNIQUE SERVICE USER CHILDREN RECORDED DURING THE YEAR	31	17	13	15	18	23	14	18	16	18	12	8	203

19. CIDVA SERVICE USER CHILDREN AGE	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	Total
<1	1	3	0	0	4	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	13
1 - 4	10	2	2	3	4	6	1	6	4	7	0	1	46
5 - 9	9	3	3	7	5	7	7	6	5	7	7	3	69
10 - 14	2	7	5	1	4	6	3	4	2	3	3	3	43
15 - 18	9	2	3	4	1	4	0	1	3	0	2	0	29
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	31	17	13	15	18	23	14	18	16	18	12	8	203

Appendix 5

PEEPs training (definition):

Provide opportunities for professionals to understand the experiences of young people

Encourage professionals to consider and reflect on the assumptions made about care experienced by young people

Empower professionals to build on important skills that are needed when working with children and young people (Active Listening, Effective Communication, Observation and Record Keeping)

Promote the involvement of young people within all decisions that affect them, the delivery of services and importance of working together

Support learning around the importance of Children's Rights and Advocacy

Appendix 6

Single agency assurance reporting

This section includes reports direct from each of the statutory agencies involved with the HSCB.

a. West Mercia Police.

The Alliance has provided training to promote safeguarding issues, with 9031 e-training Public Protection packages completed during the last three years. These included five separate modules one of which was Child Protection. The Alliance utilises and has as mandatory the 13 strands of Public Protection training as provided by the National College of Policing. All new to role staff have an input on safeguarding.

During the period 2015/16 all officers within a Child Protection Unit were required to be trained detectives and attend a 2 week Specialist Child Abuse Investigator Course.

The Alliance is at the forefront nationally regarding the development of a course for all established front line officers and staff to look at 'professional curiosity', recognising the need to address vulnerability in a more holistic way. A pilot for 'Vulnerability' training has taken place in the Telford area, consisting of both e-learning and work with an external drama group. This pilot has been evaluated by Worcester University, and as a result a larger pilot is due to take place, with the long term aim of rolling the training out across the entire Alliance. This will mean that non specialist departments will also be provided with training on a variety of aspects of vulnerability including child protection matters. The ethos which has been promoted is that safeguarding children is a core responsibility for all and is everyone's business, not just that of specialist departments.

With the introduction of the 'pathfinder' model (further details in point 2 below) there is recognition that investigators will continue to require the same level of training to maintain their skill levels.

The Alliance document, 'Looking to 2020' sets out the vision for the future of policing, and highlights that 'Protecting people from harm' is at the core of everything we do. The overriding ambition over the next five years is to become 'great' at protecting the most vulnerable from harm.

There has been significant re-structure, with the Protecting Vulnerable Persons (PVP) department initially retaining and recruiting additional staff, whilst developing the delivery of services to communities and partner agencies. In the restructure the impact of the redesign on safeguarding, all vulnerable persons including children was paramount.

The restructure across the Alliance introduced a new 'Pathfinder' model. It is a single CID model which incorporates within it existing members of specialist PVP teams thereby retaining those specialist staff but spreading them out across the larger teams to share that expertise and experience. There is an expectation that traditional non PVP detectives will be exposed more to PVP related crimes with the knowledge and experience of those around them to support their development. It is intended that this will up skill all Detective Officers in dealing with PVP related crimes as well as other crime types thus making protecting vulnerable people everyone's business and in line with the Alliance vision to be great at protecting the vulnerable. The increased teams will identify appropriately trained staff to deal with Child Protection issues and require outstanding actions to be passed to those remaining on duty to complete. This will appropriately expedite investigations. The Pathfinder model is in the phased process of rolling out across the alliance. Operational staff have continual access to safeguarding processes, information and supervision.

The Alliance is committed and are currently actively planning an increase over the next two years in PVP related training courses to ensure that officers have the knowledge and training to complement their new role. Additional courses will take place from June 2016, which includes two new courses – Serious Sexual Assault Investigative Development Programme (SSAIDP) and Professional Curiosity. The issues of Child Protection and vulnerability are threaded throughout the content of other courses currently delivered.

The Alliance has introduced new working practices, with permanent dedicated teams to proactively target individuals involved in possession and sharing of Indecent Images of Children (IIOC) and online Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

Although the Pathfinder model is commencing across the Alliance, there remains a Strategic PVP team to ensure a full overview of policy, procedure, communication and leadership, along with corporacy and consistency.

Service delivery is also developed through engagement in Serious Case Review processes across the Alliance. A dedicated Detective Inspector for Strategic Safeguarding is responsible for thematic reviews of SCR learning across the Alliance to ensure service delivery takes into account the lessons to be learnt & ensure action plans are seen through to conclusion.

During this period there has been the introduction of 5 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) groups across the Alliance covering Herefordshire, North & South Worcestershire, Telford & Wrekin, Shropshire and Warwickshire. These co-located multi-disciplinary teams will enable improved oversight of the quality and flow of information between agencies, resulting in the ability to safeguard the vulnerable and provide the right response as quickly and efficiently as possible.

To facilitate joint working, the forces have developed a new shared vision and set of values. These provide a unified purpose for the two organisations and a clear direction to our workforce and our stakeholders as to how the forces will operate.

Vision - Protecting people from harm

Values - We will:

1. Take pride in our professionalism and standards of behaviour
2. Listen and engage
3. Use professional judgement and be courageous in making decisions
4. Seek out better ways of working
5. Lead with confidence and do the right thing
6. Work in partnership to provide the best service we can

Our vision and values form the basis of the alliance's organisational culture - a set of shared attitudes, goals, practices and aspirations.

b. The National Probation Service (NPS)

1. Hereford NPS has conducted an audit to ensure that all children's safeguarding checks are requested within 24 hours of NPS case allocation. The protocol agreed is that children's services respond within 48 hours. In the rare event of a late return NPS staff will pursue the response. Results of the audit were that returns are requested by NPS and then completed by children's services in timely fashion in almost all cases. A quick phone call to children's services has secured achievement of this target in the remainder of cases.
2. NPS offender managers are required to attend child protection conferences and strategy meetings in all cases where there is NPS involvement. Indications currently are that we achieve this expectation. An audit in respect of this is at the planning stage.
3. NPS Offender Managers prioritise Multi Agency Referral form (MARF) and PPRC2 (person posing a risk to children) completion where indicated and identify this task in risk management plans. As a result of Hereford MAPPA meetings, NPS offender managers often take action points to complete a MARF in cases where for different reasons a MARF has not already been completed. (e.g. disclosure that there is a child at risk which NPS has not previously been aware of). In these cases a MARF is completed immediately and the completion of the action point communicated to the MAPPA team.

Case examples:

CASE 1: MAPPA 3 sex offender nominal, the NPS Offender Manager was tenacious in communicating with children's services and in ensuring a strategy meeting and then child protection meeting was convened.

Case 2: (MAPPA 2 nominal) a MARF was completed in respect of disclosed Child Sexual Exploitation

4. Similarly, NPS plays a very pro-active role in MARAC which, of course, frequently contributes to child safeguarding. NPS is also a key player in Integrated Offender Management in which forum child safeguarding is a priority.

5. Currently Hereford NPS team is also developing a close working relationship with Troubled Families through regular liaison/case discussions regarding cases supervised by NPS. This adds to intelligence regarding children who may be at risk and raises NPS awareness of families who may be in difficulties in parenting their children so that this can be addressed on a multi-agency basis.

c. Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (WWM CRC).

Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company is one of the 21 Community and Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) across England and Wales. We cover Warwickshire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire and Telford & Wrekin.

CRCs were formed as a result of the government's Transforming Rehabilitation programme which split the existing 35 Probation Trusts into two parts - a National Probation Service and 21 CRCs. Warwickshire and West Mercia merged to become Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (WWMCRC).

We aim to work closely with partner organisations across Herefordshire.

Warwickshire and West Mercia CRC work directly with offenders to tackle the causes of their offending behaviour and help them to stop re-offending. Our aims are to:

- Protect the public
- Reduce reoffending
- Ensure proper punishment of offenders in the community
- Ensure that offenders are aware of the effects of crime on the victims and the public
- Rehabilitate offenders

Safeguarding Children

WWMCRC continue the approach taken by West Mercia Probation Trust in holding annual audits on issues relating to safeguarding children as a way to assure the quality of this element of its work in house and to partners and to highlight its importance generally.

WWMCRC recognises its responsibility to ensure that staff are aware of and responsive to issues of safeguarding children, and that this should be one of the underpinning elements of all aspects of service delivery for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area.

Inspections and Audits

WWM CRC Child Safeguarding Audit: Spring 2015

This audit was undertaken in the context of a thematic inspection of Safeguarding work in six former Probation Trusts which was published in 2014 and highlighted a range of issues for improvement.

Although neither of the CRC's predecessor trusts were part of the inspection, its findings appear to have general relevance and have therefore led to an action plan for the CRC to target the highlighted issues. The inspection finding of a generally poor quality in assessments of risk to children in domestic abuse cases is the basis for the theme of this audit.

A list was generated of offenders with a register for domestic abuse on their case record who also show as having "parental responsibilities" within their latest Offender Assessment System review. From that a random sample of 20% per office was selected and Senior Probation Officers completed an audit checklist to assess specific elements of assessment and casework as good, adequate or needing more work and to record a commentary on the reasons for that assessment.

Findings

Despite some good practice across the organisation, the findings of this audit largely reflect those of the Thematic Inspection in these respects:

- No routine use of home visits to inform safeguarding assessments
- Inaccurate assessment of risks to children in relation to domestic abuse
- No sharing or alignment of assessments and plans between Probation staff and Children's Social Care staff.

In addition, as had already been identified within a recent Serious Further Offence investigation, practice in relation to the use of Spousal Abuse Risk Assessment (SARA) is not consistent. Concerns have also arisen in relation to the management of standalone Unpaid Work (UPW) requirements which involve a risk of domestic abuse. The positive evaluation of the ongoing work to reduce risk to children is encouraging.

Actions

- CRC to agree a protocol for SARA completion with the National Probation Service

- Learning and Development staff to include SARA training as an ongoing element in training planning
- Offender Managers (OM's) to be provided with places on the Freedom Programme training
- Safeguarding Procedures and training to be rolled out to all OM's, including specific input on home visiting.
- Senior Probation Officers (SPOs) to undertake structured reviews of one domestic abuse case per OM per quarter.
- LDU meetings to continue to monitor home visit rates.

Further actions prompted by this audit:

- SPOs and Unit Performance Officer's (UPO's) to review the allocation of domestic abuse cases against the Role Boundaries agreement.
- SPOs to decide on need for and format of any extra briefing on SARA use.
- Senior Managers to decide on how and when to issue guidance for the management of standalone UPW requirements with a domestic abuse risk.
- SPOs to decide on how to use the findings of this audit as a means to focus and develop practice locally.

Learning and Development.

All new staff completes the mandatory e-learning course Awareness of Child Abuse & Neglect. This course covers:

- What to look out for and how to respond in situations where child abuse or neglect are suspected
- Recognise the signs of, and be able to respond appropriately to physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.
- Know what to do if abuse or neglect are suspected.

All Probation Service Officers (PSOs), POs & SPOs then attend a multiagency event run by the Local Safeguarding Children Boards. Additionally, within Herefordshire there are further courses/training offered and the expectation is that staff will complete these:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Understanding Neglect
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Training for Practitioners involved in Child Protection Conference
- Domestic Abuse Awareness.

In order to improve our overall response to public protection in general, and safeguarding children and adults in particular, there is:

- An urgent need to ensure effective join up or access to Police information systems
- A need to engage with Police on their change programme review of public protection and IOM and
- Develop and implement plans for co-location with the Police and MASH

d. West Mercia Youth Offending Service

In 2015/16 the service was subject to a SQS inspection by HMI Probation. The inspection found some weakness in the assessment and planning processes and the management oversight of these. Work commenced following the inspection to make improvements in the quality of both assessment and risk plans, and monthly audits have confirmed continuing improvement in these areas of work. Work in 16/17 will continue to improve assessment and planning, in particular through the implementation of both a new case management system and a new assessment framework. The service will also transfer to the Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner and be subject to a re-structure

The new assessment framework includes a single assessment and integrated plan for the risk areas of re-offending, harm to others and the safety and wellbeing of the subject. All practitioners will undertake a foundation course in assessment and planning and attend further training on the assessment framework and the case management system. Through the restructure of the service there will be increased support for managers in providing oversight of case work and quality assuring assessments and plans through the establishment of senior practitioner posts within the area based teams of the service.

The service will continue to undertake critical learning reviews when young people under the supervision of the Youth Justice Service commit defined serious further offences or where they have died, attempted suicide or been a victim of serious offence. The Youth Justice Service will identify learning points from these reviews and communicate the findings and resulting actions to the LSCB through the annual assurance report. Following a recommendation from a thematic inspection report (which did not include West Mercia) the service will work towards making the serious incident review process more multi-agency where relevant.

e. Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) brings together GP practices in Herefordshire to buy and shape health and care services for the people of Herefordshire. It achieves this by putting patients at the heart of everything it does.

The CCG contributes significantly to the work of the LSCB, including providing leadership in the Board's committees and subgroups. We are committed to working in partnership with other agencies and services in order to improve the health and welfare of all children and young people in Herefordshire. We do this by ensuring that all CCG contracts include safeguarding standards such as policies, staff training and supervision. We also hold provider organisations to account for the quality of services delivered by talking to children and young

people to ensure that services meet their needs. We also monitor the work of providers regularly, ensuring that safeguarding standards are met.

As part of their commitment to improve services the CCG is supporting a national campaign 'Speak out Safely.' The CCG believes that members of the public and staff should feel able to raise concerns about wrongdoing or poor practice and are confident that their concerns will be addressed in a constructive way...

The CCG has worked hard with the community to improve the lives for children/young people across Herefordshire in 2015 and will continue to do so in future years.

f. 2Gether NHS Foundation TRUST

2GetherNHSFT provides a range of mental health services for children, young people and adults. This includes a range of services for adults with learning disabilities. The Trust is fully committed to collaboration and partnership working with all partners including the Herefordshire HSCB (and HSAB). The Trust has played a key role in improving the outcomes for children and young people in Herefordshire through strengthened relationships and collaboration during the last 12 months.

For example, 2GetherNHSFT have worked to improve the training of the 'Think Family' approach to safeguarding children; have learnt from single and multi-agency audits with particular reference to capturing and sharing information; worked closely with the MASH to improve communication channels with mental health services and have fully participated in all Board activity at all levels. 2GetherNHSFT believes that it has been a diligent and active partner in the last years HSCB work plan.

Looking towards 2016/17 the Trust is keen to assist in participating in the HSCB's joint work on improving services and outcomes for children and families. The Trust's safeguarding priorities remain aligned to the HSCB business plan. 2GetherNHSFT will also be paying particular attention to learning from Serious Case Reviews; building on and improving the quality of recording safeguarding information with particular reference to parents with mental health issues whilst improving access to training for professionals in this area. In addition, we will focus to improve safeguarding practice and partnership working specifically around Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Prevent; Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV).

The Trust is keen to ensure continual learning and improving practice during 2016/17 thus safeguarding the needs of children and young people in Herefordshire.

g. Wye Valley NHS Trust (WVT)

Wye Valley NHS Trust is the provider of healthcare services at Hereford County Hospital, which is based in the city of Hereford, along with a number of community services for Herefordshire and its borders. We also provide healthcare services at community hospitals in the market towns of Ross-on-Wye, Leominster and Bromyard. We work hard to deliver across traditional boundaries to provide integrated care in order to deliver a standard of care we would want for ourselves, our families and friends.

The Trust works collaboratively to support the business of the HSCB in a number of ways, aligning safeguarding children priorities to those of the HSCB business plans and contributing to the work of the board and subgroups for example during 2015-16 WVT supported the work of the board in the development of policy and the development and delivery of multi- agency training on behalf of the board.

WVT has been in special measures since June 2014 following a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection rating of inadequate. Since this time a quality improvement programme has been in place and significant improvements have been made. A re-inspection in September 2015 found improvement was required to ensure services are safe and responsive to patient's needs. Overall the services at the trust were judged as good for caring. Patients were treated with dignity and respect and were provided with appropriate emotional support. Caring in community adult services was rated outstanding. The trust remained in special measures. With specific reference to safeguarding children key findings were:

Outstanding Practice

- The young people's ambassador group -a group of children aged 11-16 years who meet regularly and are consulted on changes and developments, e.g. they have recently introduced a 'Saturday club' and have been involved in the ED Patient-Led Assessment of the Care Environment audit (PLACE) redesign of the children's waiting area; also they are involved in interviews for new staff in community children's services.
- A number of health visitor led projects were highlighted as good practice together with recognition of a national award for a school nurse in relation to a domestic abuse peer support model.

Practice in accordance with expectations

- Staff in ED and MIU's knew when and how to make safeguarding referrals and a review of records found appropriate safeguarding documentation.
- Generally robust arrangements for safeguarding children and adults in maternity services.
- Within community health services for children the inspectors found that there were clearly defined and embedded systems and processes to keep children and young people safe and safeguarded from abuse. Staff received up to date training; and took steps to prevent abuse from occurring, and responded appropriately to any signs or allegations. There was active and appropriate engagement in local safeguarding procedures and effective working with other relevant organisations.

However, areas of concerns were highlighted which included:

- Safeguarding referrals were not always made when required by paediatric ward staff, although staff could articulate the types of situations when they would refer.
- The trust was not meeting its 90% compliance rates for Levels 1-3 safeguarding children training within a number of services.
- Lack of a paediatric liaison post and delays in sending out notifications to health visitors and school nurses about ED attendances
- Out of hour's delays in obtaining a mental health assessment which led to delays in children receiving appropriate support.
- Safeguarding children caseloads within midwifery were not always consistent with level of experience/ job banding of midwife
- Concerns were raised about some environmental risks on the paediatric ward; however the outside play area improvements undertaken since the last inspection were deemed safe.

Following inspection findings a Quality Improvement Programme for safeguarding Younger people was put in place. This forms part of the overarching "Quality Improvement Plan" and is monitored by the trust's safeguarding committee and reported through the trust's governance structures to board. Action plans will be monitored externally by the trust development authority and Herefordshire Clinical commissioning group (HCCG.)

A re-inspection of services is planned for July 2016. The WVT report back regularly to HSCB regarding the progress of the Quality Improvement Plans.

h. Education and Schools

Schools are critically important partners in our shared responsibilities towards safeguarding children. Herefordshire schools continue to fund 1.5 education officers in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. The education officers form an integral part of the MASH in the gathering and dissemination of information to and from education partners. In addition, the MASH education officers offer advice, support and training to schools to assist with the development of best practice and statutory compliance.

The academic year 2015/16 has seen significant changes in schools as we continue to shape our work in response to new and challenging circumstances. Various, this has included: the development of policy and practice in the light of the Savile inquiry; the participation of professionals in Workshops to Raise Awareness of Prevent; Learning from inquiries into Child Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking; the audit of our practice with regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE). Responses to the audit have been encouraging, but a renewed focus on this work is required with support for those schools and governing bodies who are yet to sign off completed audits.

2016/17 will be no different as, collectively, we address our policy and practice in response to the updated version of KCSiE, 5th September 2016. We anticipate further change, for instance, with the opportunity and duty to meet the needs of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and to participate in the safe settlement of Syrian refugee families.

The HSCB has been monitoring key indicators in education during 2015-16:

Children Missing from Education (CME)

The tracking down of children referred as 'missing from education' has been increasingly successful over the past 3 years, with fewer children remaining as 'missing' from one quarter to the next. During 2015-16, fewer than 10 children reported missing in each quarter remained missing from education by the end of that quarter (with the exception of quarter 2). There has been a steady improvement in the tracking and location of CME year on year.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

2015-16 saw a further increase, from 102 to 118, in the numbers of children known to the local authority who are educated at home. There were 85 children educated at home 2011-12. It is likely that the proportion of parents registering children as Electively Home Educated with the local authority is increasing, in addition to a growth in this parental choice. The EHE officer continues to offer guidance and to make robust monitoring visits about outcomes for children. The feedback from parents who receive advice and guidance from the EHE officer remains overwhelmingly positive.

Reporting by schools of bullying and racist incidents

Reported incidents of bullying have reduced significantly compared to the previous year. However, there has been a slight increase in the reporting of racial incidents in schools. Whilst there has been an improvement, in recent years, in the number of schools complying with the request to submit a return, further work is required around the number of schools providing nil returns, i.e., no reported incidents. There would appear to be too many nil returns relative to what is known about the expected incidence of bullying. This area of work will require proactive planning ahead of the expected arrival of Syrian refugees and unaccompanied asylum seeking children during 2016/17.

i. Herefordshire Council: Children's Wellbeing Services

In March 2015, the Minister lifted the intervention notice which had been in place since the Ofsted judgement in September 2012 that services were inadequate, and the further period

of consolidation and improvement subsequent to the May 2014 Inspection when a 'Requires Improvement' judgement was made. The minister confirmed that, 'Herefordshire has made good progress since the September 2012 inspection. I want to congratulate you and acknowledge the hard work of staff, leadership and partner organisations in bringing about this change...embedding and sustaining these improvements will require a continued sharp focus. I understand that these requirements are captured in your improvement plan and that you and children's services leadership and staff are dedicated to achieving 'good' or better for your provision'.

During 2015 – 16, the Service has consolidated its leadership through the appointment of permanent Heads of Service for Fieldwork and Looked After Children and a new permanent Assistant Director from January 2016. This has provided significant clarity and strategic focus, leading to a sharpening of expectations around the application of thresholds for social care intervention and greater consistency as to decision making.

Social Care Workforce

There has been a significant increase in the percentage of permanent Social Workers in the establishment, building on the success of the Social Work Academy by increasing the number of Newly Qualified Social Workers joining the organization and reducing our agency dependency. There are currently 9.0 SW posts vacant and filled by agency staff therefore, albeit these posts are in the critical MASH and CiN areas of the service. A revised recruitment and retention strategy has been endorsed to ensure that the offer to new staff considering joining Herefordshire is both competitive financially, and critically offers a career development path with workers enabled to ensure their continuous professional development. The most significant challenge in recruitment terms has been to secure permanent team managers across our CiN service, where agency dependency continues currently.

During the course of 2015/16, there has been a strengthening of the quality assurance framework, in particular the development of an audit cycle and associated targeted improvement activity. A good example of the impact of this has been the continued concern as to the quality and consistency of reflective supervision being offered to social work staff, which has been identified. This has triggered a thematic audit of staff supervision records, a revision of our supervision policy and targeted training being delivered by the NSPCC in September 2016.

It is also gratifying to note that audit activity is reporting a much more consistently positive recognition of the voice of the child being listened to, recorded and impacting on plans, and indeed a growth in the number of commendations received where the work of social care staff has been positively praised or recognized.

Herefordshire **Safe guarding** Adults board



Annual Report

2015-2016

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Welcome

Welcome to Herefordshire's Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2015-16, which provides the Board and partner agencies with the opportunity to reflect on their achievements and to consider our plans for the year ahead.

The commitment of Board members and those who work on the supporting sub groups is very positive. There is a culture of genuine inter agency working together with constructive challenge across and between the agencies, the result of which is a strong collaborative inter agency approach to safeguarding adults.

Our three year strategic plan is supported by an annual business plan, against which each sub group is tasked with delivering progress and reporting to the Board accordingly.

The Board has held two development days this year, which have given us the opportunity to reflect on the content of our strategic plan and next year's business plan to ensure they are fit for purpose

The past year for staff has been a time of change, a need to work on revised policies and procedures, and in particular to focus on making safeguarding personal, that is the process by which we put the adult at the centre of our work. Some adults do choose to live in risky situations. Some of the work the Board does is to ensure staff and the public understand that although much can be done to support adults who are at risk, we also have to respect their right to live as they wish. We cannot insist they follow what might seem sound advice, and we continue to recognise that this will remain a challenge.

We remain committed to working more closely with individuals, their families, friends and carers who have been through the safeguarding system to learn from their experience. We have made some progress in this key area, but more remains to be done during the forthcoming year.

Over the past year, we have done more to prevent neglect and abuse. Welcome, thoughtful and professional contributions have come from all Board members, notably our Faith Groups, Social Housing Providers and the Care Sector, but again there is further work to be done under the preventative agenda.

The work to raise awareness and understanding of the law regarding mental capacity and deprivation of liberty has led to a very significant increase in requests for the assessment of people who may lack capacity to make decisions and where there is a need for a decision to be made on their behalf, or indeed in some way they are being deprived of their liberty. This is not unique to Herefordshire and is reflected nationally, again this remains a significant interest moving forward for the Board.

I hope you find the content of this report interesting and informative, and I ask that you use it to raise awareness within your own organisation. My thanks to all of you who continue to work to support and protect some of our most vulnerable people in Herefordshire.



The Board has been working on its four main priorities for the year 2015/16, these are
“Partnership working” ensures effective relationships with all agencies in Herefordshire that provide care and / or support to adults.
“Prevention and protection” works with professionals and communities to ensure safeguarding is built into day to day practice.
“Communications and / or engagement” messages from the board are communicated in the most effective way and the voice of the adult is incorporated into safeguarding.
“Operational effectiveness” encompasses the quality of service provision, policies and training as well as being responsible for the tracking of priorities.

The following section details some of the individual projects that have been delivered to meet these priorities and some case studies that show the impact of this work on individuals.

How well are we doing?

Performance against last year's key outcome measures

Partnership working to ensure positive outcomes for adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

We continue to develop the membership of the Board and have recently recruited new members from further education and faith groups to represent the views of the adult in safeguarding processes.

We invite representatives from key agencies to present the work that they do with the adult at risk to practitioners and key frontline staff. We recently had the annual report from the West Mercia Rape and Sexual Assault Centre presented to inform staff of the work that they undertake for the residents of Herefordshire.

How partnership working has helped a resident in Herefordshire

Mrs D came to the attention of trading standards through a neighbour and the local policing team who were concerned that she was being targeted by scammers. A home visit was made and it became clear that Mrs D was being bombarded with mail and phone calls from individuals and business trying to extort money from her. The problem was so bad that she was receiving dozens of letters each day and sometimes up to 20 scam phone calls through the day and night. Her home was filled with catalogues of medicinal products, which had been marketed at her knowing she had existing health problems as a way of preying on her vulnerability. Mrs D was spending up to £400 a month on products, thinking that the scammers were actually trying to help her, when in fact their only interest was in exploiting her.

As an incentive the fraudsters offered her free entry into a non-existent prize draw every time she ordered a

product from their catalogue. Guess what happened next? They then wrote telling her she'd won a big cash prize and needed to send a £20 administration fee to process and deliver her winning cheque securely, which she thought was genuine - clearly something needed to be done.

Following long discussions with Mrs D, the biggest issue for her personally was the constant phone calls that she simply couldn't ignore or escape: even with serious mobility problems, she felt she had to answer every call in case it was somebody she knew who was in trouble. Her health was deteriorating rapidly as a result and she couldn't think straight. Trading standards were able to install a sophisticated call blocking device in her home to ensure that the scammers couldn't get through to her, and more importantly the phone wouldn't ring and wake her during the night. She started to relax in her own home again and had time to contemplate

her spending. Mrs D soon realised that the amount of money she was spending on the array of worthless products was completely unnecessary and she recognised that she was being financially exploited. A 'scam mail bin' was provided as a way of empowering Mrs D to simply throw away the mail she was receiving, whilst providing trading standards with tangible examples of current scam mailings, which would help protect other consumers.

To date, Mrs D's quality of life has dramatically improved and she has stopped sending thousands of pounds a year to the fraudsters. She no longer feels a prisoner in her own home and has become quite an expert at identifying scam mail.

If you think you know a scam victim then please contact Herefordshire trading standards service on 01432 261761.





Partnership working to ensure best practice is maintained across all agencies

We have been working with other Boards across the region to develop safeguarding policies and procedures to support staff. These policies have been adopted by the Board and shared with providers and all partner agencies. Having one set of policies and procedures across the whole system helps to ensure that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards are embedded into practice

A new policy to aid professionals to understand their responsibilities in both of these areas has been agreed and is available on our website.

New guidance has been developed for other interested parties and is available on both the HSAB website and the WISH website (the newly launched Wellbeing Information Service for Herefordshire) www.WISHerefordshire.org



How partnership working has helped a resident in Herefordshire

Miss Jones was 79 years old and lived alone in her own property. Diagnosed with Schizophrenia she was under the care of Mental Health Services. Although she was able to manage her daily needs, she also had the support of carers who visited her at home, but she was often reluctant to engage with the carers, apart from one that she got on well with. Miss Jones had no family who can support or advocate on her behalf but she did have a deputy appointed by the court of protection to manage her finances.

Although Miss Jones' day to day personal care needs were met, she had been assessed as lacking the capacity to look after and maintain her home. Carers had noted the house was in such a bad state of repair it was becoming dangerous to her and her neighbours. Pipes were leaking, part of the ceiling had collapsed, the electricity supply was unsafe and a fire risk. Miss Jones used electric convection heaters for warmth.

Miss Jones refused to allow professionals into her home to address these issues. Due to the concerns about the house the council had approached the Court of Protection which, after consideration, had made a court order giving the council the power to maintain the property on her behalf and in her best interest.

In spite of the court order, Miss Jones continued to be resistive to anyone entering the property to assess what needs to be undertaken. Mental Health Services arranged a best interest meeting with involved professionals to discuss how to progress the situation.

The meeting considered the following options: to remove Miss Jones from the property and place her in care, assess her under the Mental Health Act and detain her to a psychiatric hospital whilst her home is repaired or allow her to remain in her home and try to obtain her agreement to let contractors in.

It was felt that to place Miss Jones into care would cause her great distress and was not necessary as she was, with support, able to look after herself quite well in the community. An admission to hospital would not be appropriate as Miss Jones was mentally stable she did not meet the criteria to be detained under the Mental Health Act. It was agreed that it would be in Miss Jones best interest for the carer she got on well with to talk to her about allowing people to assess the work that needs to be done. Although this may affect the future relationship with the carer it was felt to be the only viable option.

Following the talk with the carer contractors were able to access the property and completed an initial assessment of the work, however Miss Jones was unhappy and threatened to call the Police. A further electrical assessment was needed and this was then conducted by an electrician with the support of the police and a fire officer as Miss Jones respected the authority of the Police.

Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) is embedded into practice

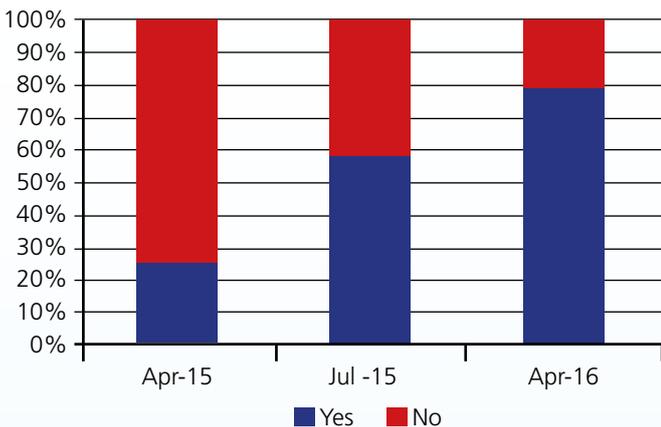
The implementation of MSP was endorsed by the HSAB. This was followed by an intensive training programme for all front facing council staff. Processes and paperwork were redesigned alongside this to ensure compliance with the Care Act.

In order to measure the impact of this on those that have been subject to safeguarding investigations, we have undertaken three audits, one in April 2015 before we started the journey to get a picture of current practice, one in July 2015, and the last in April 2016 to allow us to gauge progress.

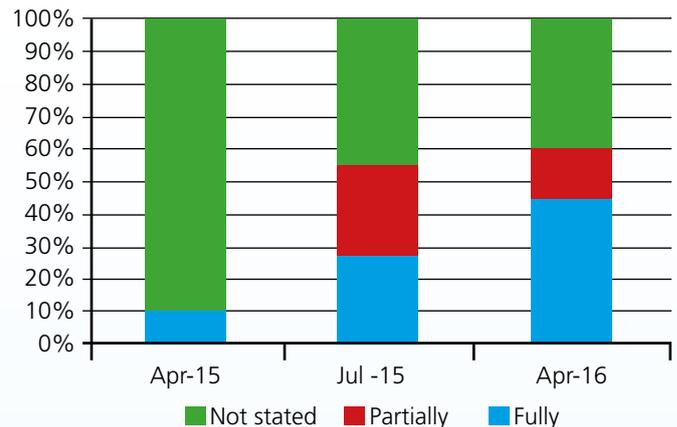
The local authority launched and commenced the implementation of MSP in January 2015. This strategic action was endorsed by the Board.

MSP Audits – results

Did the investigating officer ask the service user or their representative what outcomes they wanted to achieve from the safeguarding process?



Did the investigating officer consider/ask whether or not these outcomes had been met and whether the service user or their representative considered that the safeguarding process had been worthwhile?



The project team that were responsible for the implementation of MSP undertook a review in April 2016. When the results of this have been shared with the HSAB, an action plan will be developed, identifying areas for improvement and this will be monitored throughout the year. The results of this will be reported in next year's annual report

The voice of the adult informs decisions

We have committed to listen to people who have been subject to abuse and / or neglect, and to ensure that they are empowered to make decisions and can achieve their best outcomes and if necessary are supported to do this.

How an individual's choices are supported by professionals

Miss A is a 33 year old lady who has a supported living tenancy in a shared house. She has a learning disability and a significant mental health condition. She has capacity to make her own decisions but is extremely vulnerable.

Mr B was appointed to the staff team providing support at Miss A's home. He was observed by other staff to be behaving inappropriately towards her. Mr B was interviewed by his line management and the importance of an appropriate and professional relationship reinforced. Staff again reported concerns and Mr B's line manager arranged an investigation, but Mr B immediately resigned, before the meeting took place.

It became clear that there was a relationship between Miss A and Mr B. Support

staff ascertained that Miss A's finances were being controlled; a mail order account was taken out in her name and expensive items purchased. She was observed outside a bank while Mr B withdrew money from her account. Miss A told her support team that she agreed to this because she wanted to maintain the relationship. Professionals may consider that this relationship is unwise but it is Miss A's choice and it is the role of agencies to respect her decision and to work with Miss A to minimise the risks she faces. She considers herself a more capable and confident person and feels loved and needed when in the relationship.

The support provider raised a safeguarding alert for suspected financial abuse, and the police were informed. The police added a 'flag' to Mr B's name so any application to the Disclosure and Barring Service

(DBS) would indicate concerns if he applied for another caring role working with vulnerable people (Notifiable Occupation). The safeguarding alert was closed.

There have been intermittent breaks in the relationship, when Miss A can become extremely distressed and needs extensive additional support. Immediate intervention has been necessary to avoid Miss A self-neglecting and to avoid further risk to her mental health. She also needs support to maintain her tenancy. Collaborative working between all stakeholders including GP, mental health nurse, social worker and care provider ensures she has a consistent support network and manages the impact of the breaks in the relationship.



Partner agencies and providers are aware of legislation and raise appropriate referrals

As part of the implementation of MSP, a review of the structure of the council's "Advice and Referral Team", which is responsible for the receipt of all safeguarding concerns raised was carried out. Following this review, the way that staff handled concerns changed. Where a concern is found not to meet the threshold for safeguarding, a discussion is had with the person who raised the concern to help them understand when safeguarding is appropriate and when some other recourse may be used. This has led to fewer unnecessary investigations being carried out.

Communities and individuals are aware of what safeguarding means and who to contact and when

To raise awareness of safeguarding and provide information that is easy for individuals to access, we redesigned our leaflets. Copies were then issued to GP surgeries, dental surgeries and community areas.

A new website has been commissioned and is in the process of being populated as we go to press. This will have more information for individuals and communities on the work that we do throughout the year.

Take a look here:

www.herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk



Herefordshire
Safe guarding
Adults board

How to report an adult safeguarding concern

- physical
- domestic
- discriminatory
- financial
- psychological
- sexual
- emotional
- neglect
- self neglect
- organisational
- modern slavery

Abuse of any description is wrong.
By reporting abuse you can help bring it to an end.

To report a concern ring
01432 260715 (week days 9am-5pm)
0330 123 9309 (after 5pm, weekends and public holidays)

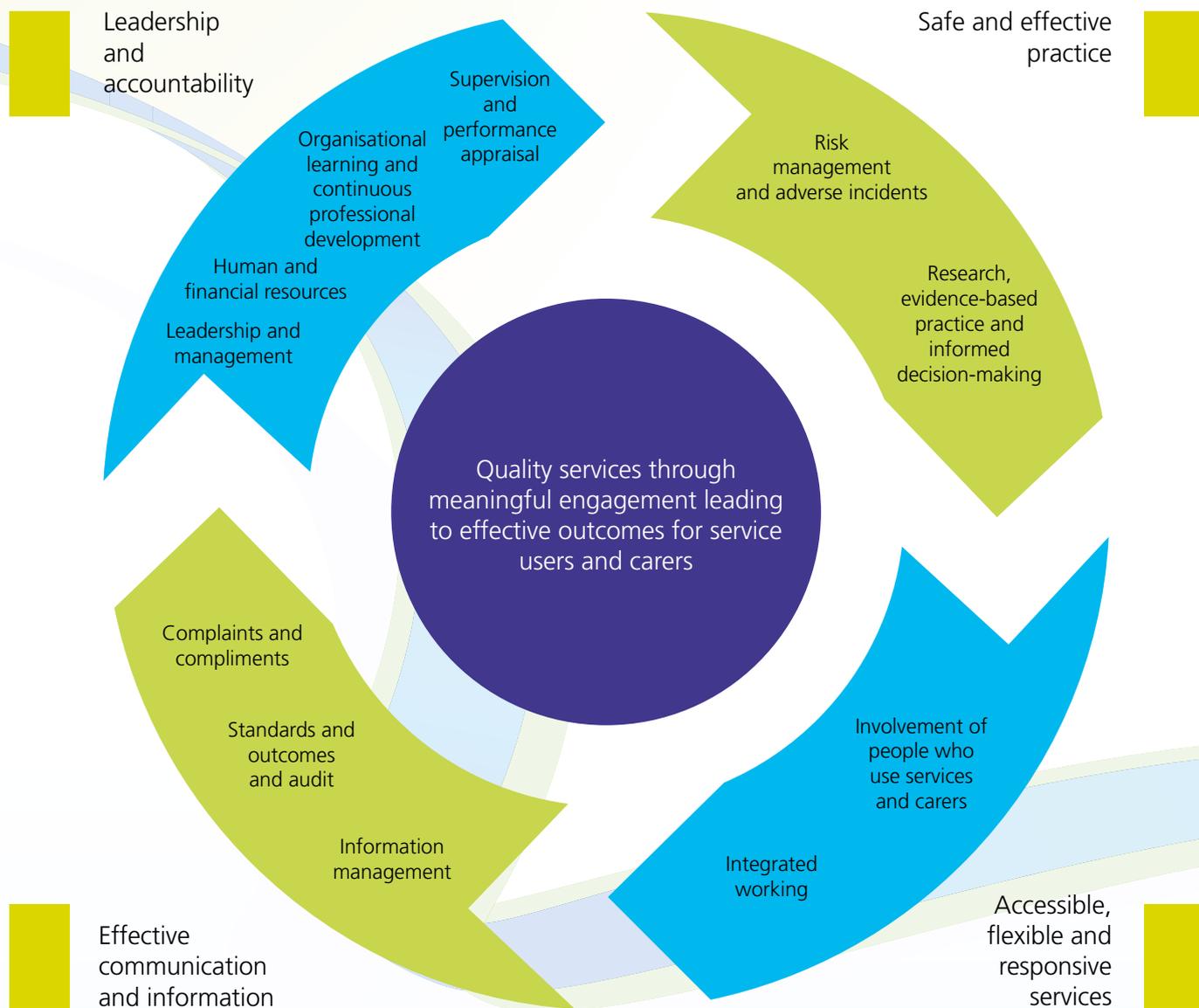
If someone is injured or in immediate danger dial 999.
If there is no emergency but you think a crime may have been committed ring West Mercia Police on 0300 333 3000 or 101.

Service providers deliver quality care

Herefordshire Council, in conjunction with the CCG, Police, Healthwatch and CQC, has introduced a new approach to the quality assurance of care and support services offered in the county. The new Quality Assurance Framework has been designed to ensure that local care and support services provide the appropriate care and support that individual adults need. It is a set of processes which are put in place with one goal; to deliver high quality care and support services in Herefordshire.

Building positive relationships between the range of agencies, care providers and adults in Herefordshire is fundamental to achieving this. It is through supportive partnership based working that continued improvement in quality can be delivered with better, innovative and cost-effective outcomes that promote the wellbeing of people who need care and support.

As part of the framework, new quality standards, reflecting what good practice looks like, which includes reference to the newly developed West Midlands Adult Safeguarding Procedures, that has been communicated to all stakeholders. These will be required to work collaboratively to make sure that good quality care and support is delivered.



Staff are well trained and learning from audits and Safeguarding Adults Reviews are embedded into practice

We have introduced a competency framework relevant to all areas of service delivery, including providers, practitioners and other professionals. This framework outlines the levels of training required for each role and provides monitoring information which can be fed into the Quality Assurance Framework.

Practitioner forums continue to be run on a regular basis and are available to all agencies, recent subjects have included domestic abuse and information sharing.

These learning events are targeted across adults' and childrens' services where possible to encourage cross agency knowledge and working and to make the best use of resources.

This year we have undertaken four reviews of practice

The Joint Case Review sub group received four adult's referrals in 2015/16. These are referrals that are made by professionals when they feel that multi-agency practice has not been as effective as it should have been. Two of these cases were deemed to meet the threshold for a full Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR). Of the remaining two, one was passed to our public health team as they have a statutory requirement to investigate drug related deaths and one was managed through a practice learning review.



A Herefordshire Evaluation Learning Process (HELP) was commissioned for the first case, which involved an elderly gentleman in a care home who had a history of repeated falls. This review was the first that the Board had commissioned using this process and, subsequently, the JCR sub group felt that the report needed further detail. Although this meant that more time was required before the report could be finalised, the group felt this was absolutely necessary in order to consolidate the learnings and the recommendations from the review. The process in itself was a learning for the JCR subgroup. As a result, the commissioning process is now being more robustly considered at the beginning of the process. This will improve how adult reviews are undertaken in the future.

The second SAR involved an elderly gentleman in his own home. As the learnings from this review mainly focussed on Health and Adult Social Care, a root cause analysis and a chronology from Adult Social Care were commissioned and reported to the sub group.

The learnings from both of these reviews will be built into our work with practitioners once finalised.

A Practice Learning Review (PLR) was identified as being the most appropriate review process for one referral, with a multi-agency review meeting taking place with 6 agencies present. A report has been written by a member of the JCR sub group, independent of the case. The report has been considered at JCR Sub Group meeting, where recommendations and an action plan were agreed.

The following actions and learnings were identified as a consequence of the four reviews undertaken:-

- 1) The Community Safety Partnership reviewed the domestic abuse care pathway to capture adult facing services and ensures the pathway is underpinned by a training strategy.
- 2) The HSAB set multi-agency standards for safeguarding supervision in statutory agencies.
- 3) Wye Valley NHS Trust reviewed their processes regarding Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (MCA/DoLS) and the support offered to front line staff.
- 4) The Clinical Commissioning Group and Adults Wellbeing Directorate reviewed the pathway for people suffering from an acquired brain injury to ensure that the pathway is fit for purpose.
- 5) The HSAB ensured that Best Interest Decision making is included in the MCA/DoLS suite of procedures.

JCR will continue to regularly monitor the recommendations and actions arising from reviews for implementation and improvement to practice.

Other achievements for 2015/16

Making safeguarding personal

MSP was successfully launched across the council/adults social care in January 2015. This followed the training of social work teams to the level assessed as being needed for their role. A review was recently carried out by the council to evaluate how successful the implementation has been, and to make recommendations to aid in embedding this way of working. It will also make recommendations to inform the embedding of MSP across partner agencies.

The Care Act 2014

This legislation, which was implemented in April 2015, heralded a change in the Board's way of working, as it places the Board on a statutory footing for the first time.

During this year, we have reviewed our meeting structures, streamlining membership in consideration of members' other commitments, and also reduced our meeting frequency to allow for more meaningful work to take place between meetings.

We continue to develop the work of the Board in line with the requirements of the Care Act and have recently introduced an engagement group to improve the methods of gaining the views of the general public in matters of safeguarding.

Peer Challenge

A peer challenge is designed to help the local authority assess its current position and to advise on areas for improvement. It is carried out by professionals external to the authority.

The challenge, which took place in September 2015, was commissioned by the council and included a review of the Safeguarding Adults Board.

Whilst they found many encouraging things to report on, such as positive partnerships across agencies, good political leadership and the implementation of the cross cutting business unit, they also identified some areas for improvement. Some of these, such as the Independent Chair becoming a member of the Executive Group were implemented immediately. Others will take longer to achieve and there is an action plan which is regularly monitored and updated to show progress.

If you would like to see the full report and corresponding action plan you can visit <https://herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk/herefordshire-safeguarding-adults-board/for-professionals/learning-and-improvement/> and review the documents in the external reviews of our effectiveness and self-evaluation section.

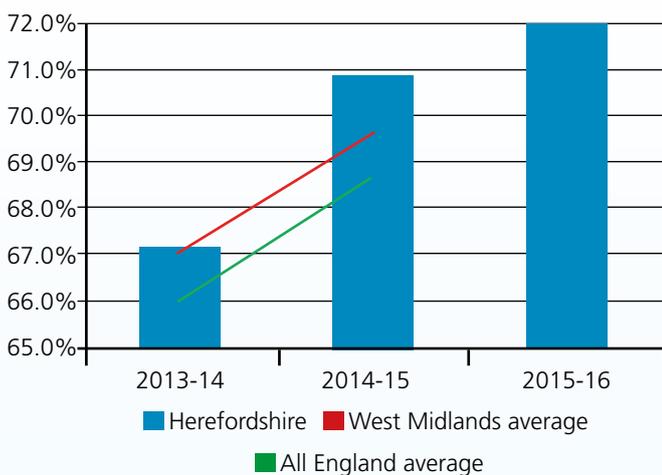
What does safeguarding look like in Herefordshire?

Every year the local authority takes part in a survey, commissioned by the government, collecting multi-agency performance data and asking individuals that they have worked with about how the safeguarding experience has been for them.

Some key highlights are:

Proportion of people who use services who feel safe

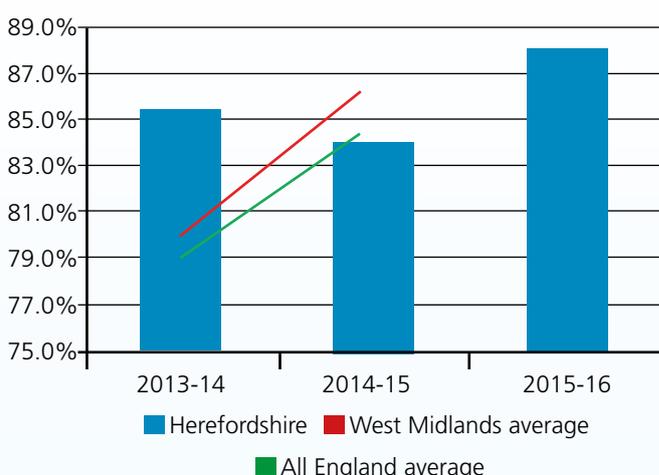
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16*
Herefordshire	67.10%	70.90%	72.00%
West Midlands average	67.10%	69.50%	Not yet available
All England average	66.00%	68.50%	Not yet available



*Figures for 2015/16 are not yet finalised and may be subject to change

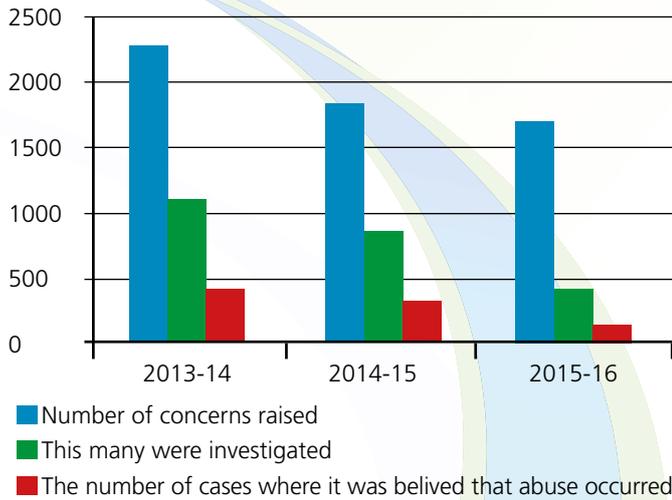
Proportion of people who use services who say that those services have made them feel safe and secure

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16*
Herefordshire	85.50%	83.90%	88.00%
West Midlands average	79.90%	86.10%	Not yet available
All England average	79.20%	84.50%	Not yet available



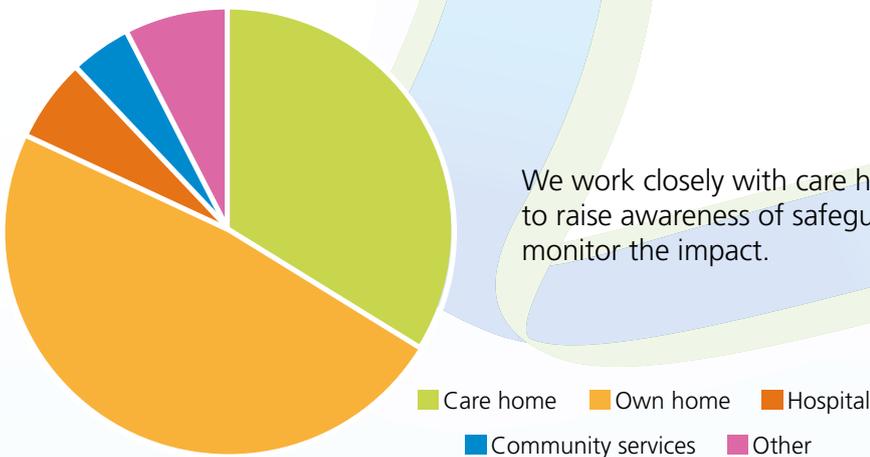
*Figures for 2015/16 are not yet finalised and may be subject to change

About the concerns regarding abuse that have been raised



Although the number of concerns raised has not differed much over the last two periods the reduction in the number of investigations is as a result of the introduction of MSP as, generally, concerns are no longer investigated unless there is agreement from the individual involved.

Where abuse has occurred



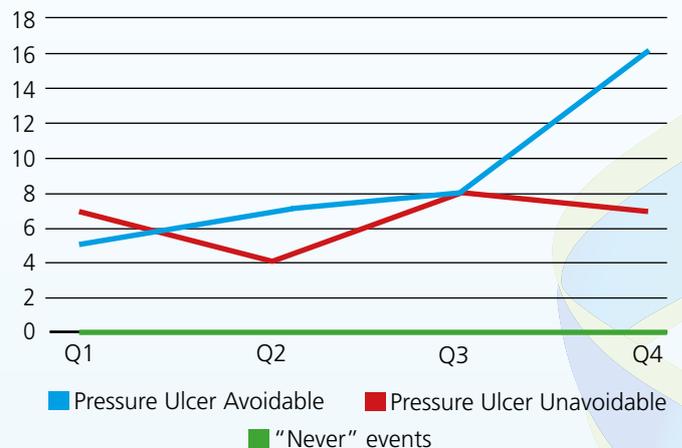
We work closely with care homes and providers in the community to raise awareness of safeguarding and we will continue to monitor the impact.

Wye Valley NHS Trust

During the course of the year Wye Valley NHS Trust, a Board partner, which provides health services in Herefordshire, report key figures with regard to patient safety.

We are pleased to report that they have had no "never" events during the year. These are, as the name suggests, events that should never happen, such as instruments being left in situ after an operation.

Pressure areas, both categories 3 and 4, are also reported. For each reported incident a root cause analysis is carried out and learnings from this are shared with hospital staff, with a view of increasing awareness and knowledge across the Trust.



How the Board works to deliver results

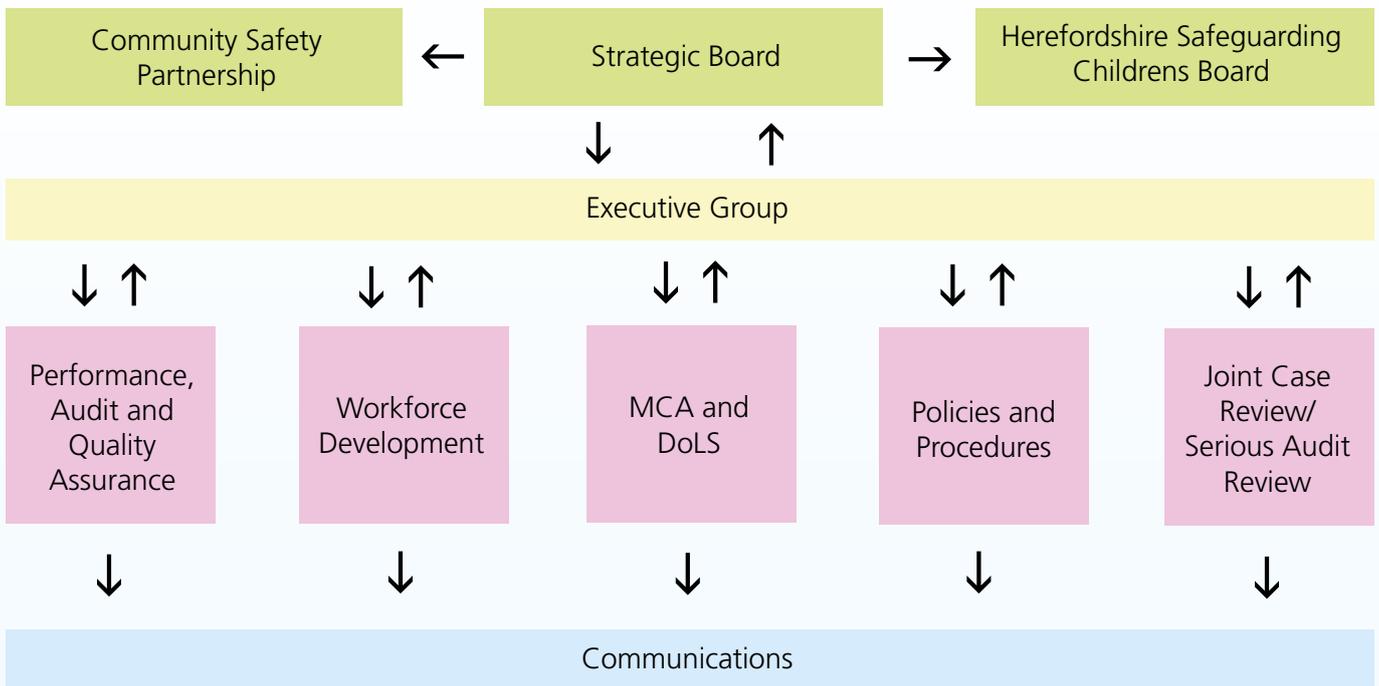
The Board brings together representatives from

- local authority (social care)
- the clinical commissioning group (responsible for the purchase of health care)
- Wye Valley Trust and 2Gether NHS Trust (health care providers)
- Healthwatch
- West Mercia Police
- National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company
- Herefordshire Housing
- West Midlands Ambulance Service
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue
- Members from provider and voluntary services.

This multi-agency approach ensures that all partner organisations work cohesively, using the same information and communicate consistent messages to provide the strategic direction for the work undertaken on their behalf.

It is the task of the Strategic Board to agree the priorities for the year and to inform the Executive group of these.

Sub groups then develop work plans aligned to each priority. These contain the activity required to deliver the priorities. Each sub group chair has the responsibility of reporting back to the executive the successes, developments and any barriers to progress.



What the sub groups have delivered this year:

Performance and Quality Assurance

This group is responsible for data quality, audit and effective information systems to meet current and future expected national and local data reporting requirements and enable performance to be managed and reasonable assurance secured on the quality of local safeguarding.

CHAIR'S UPDATE (Lynne Renton, Deputy Chief Nurse, CCG).

The group has developed a performance scorecard; this allows us to consider multi-agency information that has an impact on safeguarding.

We have carried out multi-agency case audits which have highlighted learning needs across agencies which are being delivered via the workforce training sub group.

Together with the MCA sub group the PAQA group has conducted a multi-agency MCA awareness/governance audit to ascertain each agency's compliance with MCA legislation. As a result of the findings the Board has designed MCA leaflets, enhanced the content of the MCA information on the web site and started a system wide review of the MCA/Do Not Attempt Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation processes.

We have carried out a review of the multi-agency self-assessment audit to ensure that agencies actions which were agreed in 2014/15 have been progressed.

Policies and Procedures

This group aims to ensure there is a comprehensive catalogue of policies which underpin the multi-agency safeguarding procedures. Its goal is that staff across the partnership have access to the necessary range of multi-agency safeguarding and adult protection policies and procedures and that these are embedded into practice. It also includes the review and maintenance of existing policies. The next steps are for the board to receive the report and for board members to develop an action plan to embed MSP across the partnership.

CHAIR'S UPDATE (Mandy Appleby, Principal Social Worker, Herefordshire Council)

HSAB Policies and Procedures sub group are contributing to the development of the multi-agency policy & procedures for the protection of adults with care & support needs in the West Midlands which has now reached editorial stage.

During this year we have worked with colleagues to promote making safeguarding personal (MSP) in Herefordshire, to develop the self-neglect policy for Herefordshire and to develop and disseminate the revised information sharing protocol.

We have also contributed to the development of the prevent strategy for Herefordshire, and the implementation of the channel process, input into the domestic abuse referral pathway and made representation on both the multi-agency child sexual exploitation strategic group and the Herefordshire female genital mutilation strategic group to develop safe pathways for those adults at risk.

The sub group has met on four occasions since April 2015. With attendance at meetings becoming challenging as we moved into 2016 most of the work has been developed virtually.

The sub group develops and adopts policy, but works closely with the Joint Workforce Development and Training sub group and the Joint Communications sub group to ensure dissemination and training concerning the policies and procedures is delivered in a co-ordinated manner.

Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

This group provides clear leadership on the promotion of the application of the Human Rights Act, Mental Capacity Act and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards in everyday clinical practice and ensures that a framework is in place to support staff in relation to their responsibilities and monitor compliance with this legislation.

CHAIR'S UPDATE (Jane Higgins, DoLS Lead, Herefordshire Council).

Following on from a supreme court judgement in 2014 which stated that "Incapacitated people subject by state decision to continuous supervision and control without option to leave setting are deprived of their liberty" care providers have had to review where they might be restricting someone's freedom in order to keep them safe. As a direct consequence the number of people being referred to the Herefordshire DoLS service for assessment has continued at a high level.

In response to this demand, Herefordshire has created a dedicated DoLS service. We now have a full time permanent senior best interest assessor, a number of permanent full time best interest assessors and in addition to this have increased our pool of independent assessors who can help meet demand. (If you want to read the full report it can be found here: https://www.supremecourt.uk/decided-cases/docs/UKSC_2012_0068_Judgment.pdf)

Over the last 12 months we have sought to raise awareness of the MCA and DoLS and increase effective practice in a number of ways: we have created multi-agency policies for the MCA and DoLS, have put information regarding MCA and DoLS on the HSAB Web site and on the Local Authorities Wellbeing Information and Signposting (WISH) web pages,

We have also developed information leaflets regarding MCA and DoLS and have started to undertake engagement work within the wider community.

Training in relation to MCA and DoLS continues to be provided to partner agencies and providers of care.

Joint Training and Workforce Development

This group is responsible for developing and maintaining Herefordshire's competency framework and provides evidenced assurance that partner agencies are meeting the requirements of the framework.

The group has particular responsibility to ensure that multi-agency development opportunities exist for all practitioners. By undertaking such activities the group will ensure people working with or engaging with adults at risk in Herefordshire understand their responsibilities.

CHAIR'S UPDATE (Ali Chambers, Senior Manager Workplace Learning Support Services, Hoople)

At the beginning of the year a focused working group developed the new multi-agency workforce strategy which determined the workforce development plans for those who work with and support adults at risk to ensure that they are skilled and competent.

The HSAB multi-agency workforce development strategy also contains the new HSAB competency framework. The competency framework aims to;

- Raise standards and ensure consistent and proportionate response to safeguarding issues for adults at risk of abuse and neglect
- Improve partnership working and consistency to secure better outcomes for adults at risk of abuse and neglect
- Support work based evidence of learning and competence in practice
- Provide managers with a framework to evaluate performance, and identify workforce development needs
- Clarify expectations of the role of all relevant members of the workforce in safeguarding
- Provide a quality assurance tool for commissioners of services and for contract monitoring.

A set of recording forms have also been developed to compliment the Framework for agencies to use.

Work is continuing by the sub group through the training needs analysis (TNA) to establish training needs for the workforce in the coming year. There has been low numbers of completed TNA forms coming back to the sub group. This will make it more difficult to determine what learning resources will be required for the coming year to meet the needs of the workforce.

A new evaluation process has also been established and all training delivered on behalf of the HSAB will be subject to this new process. This will enable the sub group to measure if training has made an impact on the knowledge and skills of the workforce and in turn improved the experience of those who access services.

Safeguarding Practitioner Forums are now well established. During the year 166 practitioners representing 20 agencies have attended the 5 sessions held.

This forum includes dissemination of learning from SARs, informing practitioners about the work of the Board and sharing knowledge and best practice across agencies.

As the Care Act is not prescriptive over the methodology used, the joint case review sub group will use their discretion to decide on the most appropriate methodology on a case-by-case basis in order to optimise the learnings.

HSAB have also been actively involved in the consultation process to establish a regional learning repository for the outcomes from SARs.

Joint Case Review

The Board has a legal duty to undertake reviews of cases where an adult at risk has died or suffered serious harm as set out in the Care Act 2014. The reviews involve all agencies which were, or should have been, working with the adult and are used to identify learning outcomes for practitioners.

CHAIR'S UPDATE (Adam Scott, Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help, Childrens Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council).

Since the Care Act 2014 made Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SAR) statutory, a Case Review Toolkit has been developed which overarches both adults and children's reviews.

The Toolkit details the processes to be followed from receipt of a SAR referral, through to publication. It sets out the thresholds and procedures for safeguarding adult reviews and also for reviews which do not meet the threshold.

Communications

This is a joint group across the Safeguarding Adult and Children Boards and the Community Safety Partnership. It was fully established in February 2016, and works to ensure a more coordinated and effective approach across the three partnerships.

CHAIR'S UPDATE (Bill Joyce, Business Manager, Safeguarding Boards Business Unit)

Immediate benefits were realised by the group in terms of sharing communication activity.

There was a very effective campaign in March 2016 promoting awareness of child sexual exploitation around CSE awareness day 17 March 2016. Messages from children's services, health and police were well coordinated for maximum impact.

We will continue to work together to co-ordinate the communication of safeguarding messages to maximise impact.

What the sub groups will deliver next year:

The review of progress against the priorities for 2015-16 took place in November 2015. Additionally future improvement opportunities were identified:

- Partnership working (including annual review of Board membership and effectiveness and build inter-relationships between Boards / partnerships)
- Prevention and protection (including care homes, carers and young carers, self-neglect)
- Communications and engagement
- Operational effectiveness (including workforce development, statutory functions and performance)

The document at appendix 1 shows the proposed 2016-17 strategic priorities and the sub groups work plans to deliver against them. The Board will now be consulting with Healthwatch and the local community to seek feedback on these priorities.

Budget 2016/17

Contributions from statutory partner agencies for 2016/17 remained the same as in 2015/16.

Total £383,964

Note: This total contribution is for the support of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, the Safeguarding Children Board and the Community Safety Partnership.

Projected costs 2016/17:

Staffing costs:

The staffing complement as identified in the establishment of the Business Support Unit is as follows:

Business Unit Manager: F/T

Learning Development Officer: F/T X 3

Training Officer: P/T 0.41

Business Support F/T X 3

Basic pay and on costs £292,738

Independent Chairs HSCB & HSAB: £38,520

Council recharge costs: £32,000

Total expenditure £363,258

Balance: £20,706

Potential income from training based on 2015/16 figures: £14,000

Final balance (assuming same income from training): £34,706

Proposed use of partnership budget 2016/17:

Workforce Development (WFD) training offer:

Administration of training programmes (face to face, bookings; evaluation; reporting; training needs analysis etc.) £15,900

Cost of Face to face training: HSCB; joint HSAB/HSCB practitioner forums:

To be covered by the £10,034 designated to Training Officer Post (staffing costs above).

Note: The Business Unit are developing a multi-agency training pool, for partners to deliver training together (contributions in kind), wherever possible to use free venues where refreshments can be easily purchased by course participants (e.g. Local Authority Plough Lane Offices).

The Business unit are also collating and making available any free to access E-Learning courses, which will be made available on the HSAB/HSCB joint website.

Total cost of training offer: £25,934

Residual balance: £18,806

The remaining balance is what remains to cover any Serious Case Reviews, Serious Adult Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, annual conference/ promotions and any sundry costs.

Appendix 1

2015-18 Business Plan

Strategic Priorities	Partnership working	Prevention and protection	Communications and/or engagement	Operational effectiveness
Focus for 2016/17	All partners have a shared and universal understanding of safeguarding Increased involvement from voluntary sector Active participation from all partners Multi-agency focus Sharing the right data Connectedness with other boards	Service user involvement Good mental health Greater focus on prevention	Awareness raising Understanding the work of the Board Reach to smaller / community organisations MCA and DoLS	Challenge single agency issues Shared learning Links into commissioning and public health Embed MSP Embed competency framework Multi-agency training Better tracking of priorities

Sub group work plans

Delivery group	Partnership working	Prevention and protection	Communications and/or engagement	Operational effectiveness
Executive Board	<p>Monitor actions arising from peer review</p> <p>Learning from other areas including DHR's, SAR's and SCR's</p> <p>Risk register</p> <p>Ensure the needs of adults at risk are addressed in the Joint Strategic Need Analysis and Health and Wellbeing strategies</p>	<p>Monitor relevant sub group work plans</p> <p>Risk register</p>	<p>Monitor relevant sub group work plans</p> <p>Risk register</p>	<p>Monitor relevant sub group work plans</p> <p>Risk register</p> <p>Publish annual report on the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements</p> <p>Better tracking of priorities</p>
Policy and Procedures	<p>Maintain up to date HSAB procedures that align with sub regional arrangements and address cross border issues.</p> <p>Embed MSP protocols into practice</p> <p>Embed MCA protocols into practice</p>	<p>Embed self-neglect policy into practice</p> <p>Develop arrangements to gather service users feedback of the safeguarding experience (MSP)</p>	<p>Launch of new policies</p>	<p>Embed new policies</p> <p>Contribution to the annual report</p>

Delivery group	Partnership working	Prevention and protection	Communications and/or engagement	Operational effectiveness
Communications	<p>Consider the experiences of adults at risk at each Board meeting via case study</p> <p>Introduce "Chairs Message"</p>	<p>Increase awareness of DoLS and MCA</p> <p>Promote community resilience for town and parish councils.</p>	<p>Raise awareness of adults at risk</p>	<p>Pilot a safeguarding initiative with existing community champions</p> <p>Contribution to annual report</p>
MCA and DoLS	<p>Develop shared learning tool</p> <p>Multi-agency audit</p>	<p>Gather from Best Interest Assessors evidence of the voice of those without capacity</p>	<p>Raise awareness of MCA and DoLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Roadshow • Newsletter 	<p>Contribution to annual report</p>
Performance and Quality Audit	<p>Monitor multi-agency and single agency scorecards</p> <p>6 monthly reports from Making It Real evaluating their work with vulnerable groups</p>	<p>Monitor results of the support provided via the Domestic Violence, Substance Misuse and Reducing Reoffending work plans held by the Community Safety Partnership (annual)</p>	<p>Monitor support provided to carers and young carers</p> <p>Adapt LA audit format to include the voice of the carer</p>	<p>Monitor the effectiveness of services provided to adults at risk via 6 monthly report from Quality and Review team</p> <p>Contribution to the annual report</p>
Workforce Development	<p>Practitioner forum</p> <p>Engage with front line staff and use their experiences to inform HSAB activity.</p>			<p>Develop guidance to support partner agencies to evaluate training</p> <p>Contribution to the annual report</p>

Delivery group	Partnership working	Prevention and protection	Communications and/or engagement	Operational effectiveness
<p>Key Outcome Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner agencies are committed and attendance at meeting is at least nn% • More voluntary organisations are aware of the work of the Board and engage effectively when required • Other Boards are aware of the work of the Board and engage effectively when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production and publication of a prevention strategy • Partner agencies and providers are aware of legislation and raise appropriate referrals • MCA and DoLS are embedded into practice • MSP is embedded into practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messages from the Board are effectively disseminated • Communities are aware of what safeguarding is • Individuals are aware of what safeguarding is • Communities are aware of Mental Capacity Act • Individuals are aware of Mental Capacity Act • Communities are aware of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards • Individuals Communities are aware of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards • Communities are aware of Lasting Power of Attorney • Individuals are aware of Lasting Power of Attorney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers deliver quality care • Staff are well trained • Learnings from SARs are embedded into practice • Priorities are tracked effectively









Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	13 October 2016
Title of report:	Customer services and libraries
Report by:	Cabinet member contracts and assets; cabinet member economy and corporate services

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates and because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To agree the model for future operation of customer services and libraries across the county.

Recommendations

THAT:

- a) option three as detailed in the report and appendix 1 be approved providing:
- retained library service in Hereford city and the five market towns;
 - realign customer services in the five market towns to form a centralised face to face service in Hereford city, supported by improved online access using the 'Better Off' service;
 - transfer of delivery of library services at Belmont library to a community group;
 - operational delivery of Bromyard library to be provided by HALO under a service level agreement;

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- **subject to council approval of the capital programme, £133,000 investment in equipment and remodelling of existing premises to provide more efficient utilisation of space and increased access to online payment facilities;**
 - **remodel the operation of the county library service, retaining delivered library and schools library services with a view to achieving more integrated and efficient delivery; and**
 - **a review of the charging model and income generation potential;**
- b) **with a view to development of a longer term enhanced service model providing prevention and early help to children, families and vulnerable adults an option appraisal on the potential use of children centre buildings and libraries be undertaken along with the opportunity of creating a network of well-being hubs;**
- c) **soft market testing of future delivery of the remodelled library service be undertaken during 2017; and**
- d) **the assistant director communities be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement recommendations a) and b) and c) above within the agreed budget envelope.**

Alternative options

- 1 The alternative options are listed in appendix 1 “Profile of service and options”. These are based on:
- 2 Savings programme – retaining the current network of libraries and customer service centres with a range of savings. However, this does not meet the budget saving requirement of the medium term financial strategy (MTFS).
- 3 Centralised model – focus service delivery on Hereford through retaining the customer services centre and library in the city. There would be a withdrawal of funding from libraries in the market towns, with the option of becoming community libraries (e.g. self-financed locally with an element of support from the county library service). Although this is the only option which delivers in full the savings proposed in the MTFS it is not recommended because of the negative impact on communities in market towns reflected in the findings of the needs and impact assessment. This is combined with the risk of legal challenge associated with closure.
- 4 Enhanced service – to provide additional service from the library sites based on additional early help, well-being, provision for children, and advice that would support wider priorities of the council and activities outlined in the corporate plan. This to be part of the recommendations developing a cross directorate approach to maximise the use of the retained libraries.

Reasons for recommendations

- 5 The recommendations are reflective of the public consultation and the mitigation outlined in the needs and impact assessment. The recommendations meet a high proportion of the budget savings whilst retaining the library presence in the market towns, support for community libraries, retaining the schools and delivered library service and customer services in Hereford where the bulk of the queries are dealt with.

- 6 Over the next year the council will continue to review its support for signposting, advice and early help, along with the operation of children’s centre services and creation of well-being hubs outlined in the corporate plan. These decisions are to be made mindful of the roles customer services and libraries can make in being existing public access sites.

Key considerations

- 7 There is considerable pressure on the council’s budget due to a reduction in Central Government grant and the need to ensure the safeguarding of children and adults. The MTFS saving target for customer services and libraries is £760k, split evenly over the financial years of 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- 8 Savings plans have been in place (and met) by the services as outlined to cabinet of September 2013 and January 2014 – with a total saving of £849k relating to those cabinet decisions. There has been a combined approach in service transformation (outlined in more detail in appendix 1) based on reducing the need for people to contact the council, efficiency savings, remodelling how the services are operated, promotion of self-service and reduction of staffing.
- 9 The table below shows the customer service and library use across the sites and change in overall demand from 2012.

Customer service centres and libraries	Library visits	Customer services face to face enquiries	Customer services e-mail enquiries	Customer services telephone enquiries	Customer services payments
Hereford library*	96,692				
Belmont library	34,697	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hereford customer service	n/a	40,057	10,238	142,598	22,843
Leominster	102,211	6,764	1	3	4,721
Ross-on-Wye	103,683	5,529	7	14	2,378
Ledbury	110,450	2,422	12	15	2,683
Kington	20,769	478	1	1	1,823
Bromyard	12,448	1,588	2	26	1,609
Community libraries and delivered service	19,895				
Totals	500,845	56,838	10,261	142,657	36,057
2012/13	652,530	96,748	7,896	174,485	-

*2014/5 figures – 184,434

- 10 23% of the population are regular library users (definition by CIPFA - Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting) and in 2015 18% of the population had at least one item out on loan. Hereford library has been closed during the year due to the finding of asbestos in the planning of improvement works with temporary arrangements in place. Ledbury library at the Masters House was opened in 2015 and as a result has seen a doubling of visits (visits are measured by using the library space rather than the whole building).

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11 Visitor numbers (outlined in appendix 1) show a mixed picture of use during the comparative years. Leominster and Ross are very consistent whilst both Kington and Bromyard have seen a decrease in use. In Kington there has been investment in a wellbeing centre with funding from public health due to come to an end on April 2017.

12 Changes within customer service and libraries are reflective of national trends. Nationally there have been a number of library closures and alternative models for delivery generally based on shared services and sites. This is a familiar approach in Herefordshire with combined libraries and customer services in place for many years which has helped to sustain and even develop the services over the last few years with no closures. The high numbers of users and the long established community spaces make the sites ideal for single access for the customer - this is the rationale for WISH (Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire) being located at Hereford library.

13 However, the consultation results show that the highest use of a library and customer service centre is still to borrow, renew or return a book or other item (88%).

14 Objectives

15 Based on a combination of factors including national policy, user trends, consultation and the council's corporate plan, a set of objectives for the services are based on the following:

- Provide and enable a free core library service across Herefordshire, supporting social interaction and reduce isolation.
- For centres to provide shared spaces as part of the community life of an area, fostering local regeneration and local identity.
- Promote reading for all ages and access to books in supporting learning and discovery.
- Enable self-service and reduce the need for customers to contact the council, including opportunity to transact on-line and support access to the internet use.
- Work with the community to provide the level of library and customer service they want through support of community run libraries, local contributions and volunteering.
- Follow a case based approach for customer service in addressing the combined needs of an individual to provide early help whilst addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in the community through advice, help and guidance.

16 Financing the service

17 Customer services and libraries is a largely shared service – with staff in the market towns fulfilling both functions of libraries and customer services. The following is a summary of costs per centre and service:

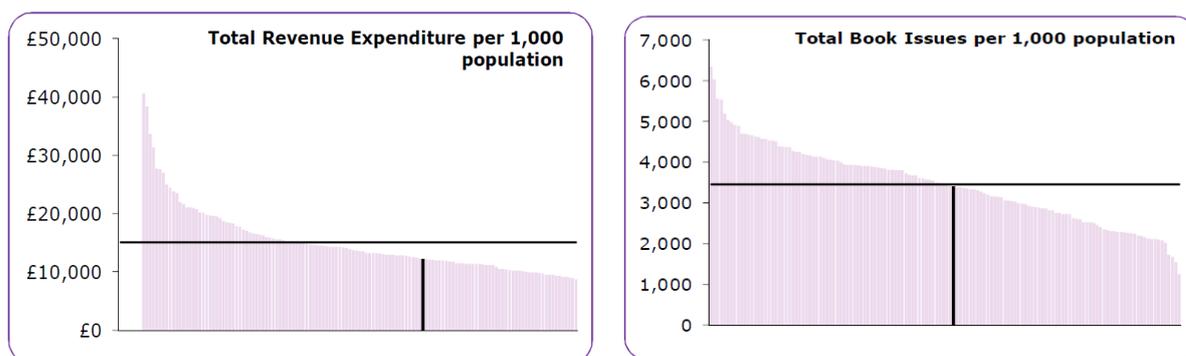
Sites and Services	Rent	Rates	Utilities	Revenue (sites)	Income	Staffing	County Book Fund	Total
Hereford Library	0	30,805	17,790	1,835	-26,981	151,859	62,416	237,725
Ross	-19,300	24,404	13,006	580	-14,068	151,667	29,459	185,748
Leominster	200	25,636	7,858	1,302	-16,499	163,382	37,858	219,737
Ledbury	0	0	556	5,164	-14,730	51,690	15,440	58,120
Belmont	5,960	0	0	0	-1,658	14,269	10,688	29,259

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Sites and Services	Rent	Rates	Utilities	Revenue (sites)	Income	Staffing	County Book Fund	Total
Kington	0	7,080	3,732	110	-1,500	0	9,147	18,569
Bromyard	9,065	0	0	0	-1,530	31,867	7,182	46,584
Delivered Library Services	0	0	0	9,175	-92	94,717	12,769	116,569
Schools Library Service	0	0	0	18,430	-66,000	40,121	13,000	5,551
Community libraries	1,030	4,620	6,170	0	-13,597	36,577	20,556	55,355
Courier Service	0	0	0	25,500	0	0	0	25,500
Franklin House	40,000	24,998	27,430	26,112	-40,978	479,508	0	557,070
County Library Team	0	0	0	10,135	0	198,033	17,485	225,653
IT Costs	0	0	0	103,300	0	0	0	103,300
Grand Total	36,955	117,543	76,542	201,643	-197,633	1,413,690	236,000	1,884,740

18 The book fund is held centrally, a proportion of the fund has been allocated to each site / service to understand the full costs, based on the proportion of stock held at each location from the 2016 annual stock count. If stock is purchased out of the regional consortium an additional 40% would be required. Cost of supervisor cover is attributed to sites (hence higher staffing levels at Leominster) and element staffing costs from the county library team attributed to their work to support the community libraries.

19 Benchmarking as part of the CIPFA analysis of libraries across the country shows that whilst revenue expenditure on libraries in the county is below the national average (black horizontal line marks the average) the issue of book stock (a measure of use) is at national average (see tables).



20 Recommended service change

21 The recommendation is based on pursuing option three (see appendix 1) having regard to the needs and impact assessment and consultation balanced with meeting the requirements of the MTFs. This would mean the following delivery models for the service:

22 Hereford customer service centre – the service relocation with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in 2017 as a shared site for face to face and phone contact. Consider the rebranding of “customer services” to be reflective on the changing

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- nature of the service. Increased capacity for public access PCs and increase the range of advice and support that can be offered based on early help via an appointment system. Responsibility for council tax calls to be transferred to the back office to enable direct response to those queries and maximise flexibility in that team; combined with greater responsibility for the face to face team to deal with council tax queries at point of contact and follow a “case-based” approach to support with wider issues e.g. debt advice. Non-replacement of another two members of staff compensated by increased access to services on-line.
- 23 Hereford library – reopening of the library at Broad Street with WISH within a reconfigured space to support self-serve.
 - 24 Belmont – to become a community library operated by local community group, with staffing support provided by the local authority as a high use site. For capital investment to be made to enable the space to be more flexible and used for other activities to recoup any lost rental income.
 - 25 Ross – retain the library function, withdrawal of the face to face customer service element mitigated by self-serve and support for people who need it.
 - 26 Leominster - retain the library function, withdrawal of the face to face customer service element mitigated by self-serve and support for people who need it.
 - 27 Ledbury – retain library function, withdrawal of the face to face customer service element mitigated by self-serve and support for people who need it.
 - 28 Bromyard – to become a community library operated by Halo at the current centre. For library duties to be conducted by Halo staff under a service level agreement.
 - 29 Kington – retain as a library by reinvesting staff from the Leominster team. Hire / full cost recovery of the facilities to local groups and organisations who wish to continue to use the centre for health and well-being promotion to offset costs.
 - 30 County library service – renegotiated book fund and staff savings based on non-replacement of posts.
 - 31 Delivered library service – retained service to support people who are housebound, with charging for residential homes with potential additional services e.g. reading sessions. Review connection with other services in reaching people who need additional support.
 - 32 Schools library service – create an integrated service with delivered library service resulting in efficiencies, multi-skilling of staff and maximising capacity. Also, increased offer of shared library system and sharing of stock purchasing including with schools and higher education establishments. To conduct consultation with schools / colleges on future options.
 - 33 Charging, donations and top-up services – to instigate reasonable and comparable charging (based on consultation respondents increased charging would be acceptable in some areas). Also donations will be encouraged to support specific elements of the library service (via friends groups, fundraising and individuals); and local councils if inclined to contribute to increase staffing (for additional library hours or a customer service presence) or other provisions e.g. newspapers and magazines.
 - 34 Remodelled centres – to reconfigure spaces within the libraries to recognise changing

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service and create spaces for different uses / hire (54% respondents to the consultation would welcome more courses and classes; 33% to IT courses). This includes reducing counter size for staff to operate on the “shop floor” to support with self-service and digital interaction. To also create spaces emphasising resources available to support health and well-being.

- 35 In relation to option four (appendix 1) there is an opportunity to further diversify the market town libraries with a broader community remit. This builds on the positive aspects of the well-being hub based at Kington in providing advice, signposting and activities (42% of respondents to the consultation would welcome more information, advice and signposting). The libraries with re-modelled space to provide aspects of children’s centre activities as high loans (c30%) are by children.
- 36 A proposal has also been made to relocate Leominster library to an extended Leisure Centre. This would be subject to a business plan and financial assessment to be brought to cabinet for a decision along with other proposals to relocate the library.
- 37 Across the country, councils are considering the operation of their libraries in light of decreasing use (the proportion of adults who use a public library service has decreased year on year from 2005/06 at 48.2% to 33.4% in 2015/16 - Taking Part 2015/16 Quarter 4 Statistical Release, July 2016, DCMS). Different models are emerging including health organisations taking a role in operating libraries, social enterprise, leisure providers and community libraries. However, it is worth noting that the council will still need to retain its statutory responsibility. It is suggested that in 2017 a library and customer services plan based on agreed objectives (as above) and a soft market test takes place for part or all of the operation of the library service.
- 38 An option appraisal on the potential future use of children’s centres may highlight further opportunities for premises efficiencies and contribute to the MTFS savings target. The recommendations from this option appraisal would be the subject of a future Cabinet report. Indicatively this report would be presented in spring 2017, with a view to implementing recommendations in September 2017. The opportunity to achieve savings through a review of the children’s centre premises costs would avoid the need for further reductions in the provision of libraries and customer services, over and above the recommendations of this current report.

Community impact

- 39 The needs and impact assessment (appendix 2) goes into detail of the impact of service change on customers based on the Government’s definition of protected characteristics.
- 40 In terms of community impact the recommended option is based on retaining the libraries network but the withdrawal of face to face customer services in market towns. The following analysis shows the areas of highest use are benefits advice and payments – in addition 9% of people said in the consultation that “I need help to complete forms” was important.

Site	Total face to face	Payments no.	Payments %	Housing benefits queries no.	Housing benefits queries %.
Ledbury	5,105	2,683	53%	816	16%
Leominster	11,485	4,721	41%	3,330	29%

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Site	Total face to face	Payments no.	Payments %	Housing benefits queries no.	Housing benefits queries %.
Ross	7,907	2,378	30%	2,293	29%
Bromyard	3,197	1,609	50%	351	11%
Kington	2,301	1,823	79%	184	8%

- 41 As regards payment mitigation to include:
- Ability to pay at the post office including cash payments
 - Payments via phone contact
 - Instigation of self-service including on-line payments including via computer and mobile device at centres.
- 42 Benefits advice facilitated by customer services will vary in its nature and for different age groups. With a changing service model in the market towns that can be mitigated by the following:
- Instigate appointment from November 2016 to track level of need for benefit queries and the nature of the support needed
 - Delay staffing reductions until year 2 of the savings to enable transition to on-line and other mitigations to be embedded
 - Continuation of phone support
 - Face to face appointments in Hereford to be based on a case-based approach to address a number of issues faced by the customer
 - Vulnerable clients able to access welfare service with a home visit if needed
 - WISH presence continues with market town surgeries and a permanent base at Hereford Library
 - Promotion of the “Better off model” as a single point of online support and advice regarding benefits and employment, making sure people are aware of what benefits they are entitled to and aid people through any application and appeals process ([decision notice](#)).
- 43 The recommendations of this report support delivery of the councils corporate plan priority to “Secure better services, quality of life and value for money”. Related actions are as follows:
- Work in partnership to make better use of resources, including sharing premise costs through co-location of services and local solutions for community use facilities such as libraries
 - Design services and policies that support positive engagement and interaction with residents, including use of information technology to improve customer experience and ability to access a range of services on-line
 - Combine the use of facilities to create a network of Health and Wellbeing hubs, shaped by serving local communities
 - Improve the provision of good information and signposting to enable people to support themselves and each other, getting the right help at the right time as needs change
 - Reconfigure £3.5m to deliver early years services including children’s centres, health visiting and school nursing to improve the health, well-being, developmental and educational outcomes of children aged 0-5 years

- Promote and enable access to universal opportunities and services for children with disabilities and their families and ensure a range of provisions to meet identified need
 - Have vibrant town centres with shops, restaurants and leisure facilities that keep people spending locally
 - Secure the highest possible level of efficiency savings and value for money to maximise investment in front-line services and minimise council tax increases.
- 44 In terms of national reports the recently published consultation by the [Leadership for Libraries Taskforce](#) (Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2020) outlines 7 priorities:
- Reading and literacy
 - Digital literacy
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Economic growth
 - Culture and creativity
 - Communities
 - Learning
- 45 [Independent Library Report for England](#) by William Sieghart & Panel (2014) included three key recommendations:
- The provision of a national digital resource for libraries, to be delivered in partnership with local authorities
 - The setting up of a task and finish force, led by local government, in partnership with other bodies involved in the library sector, to provide a strategic framework for England, and to help in implementing the following
 - The task force, to work with local authorities, to help them improve, revitalise and if necessary, change their local library service, while encouraging, appropriate to each library, increased community involvement
- 46 The Arts Council England (ACE) report [Envisioning the Library of the Future](#) highlighted three essential ‘ingredients’ which define a public library:
- A safe, free, creative community space that is enjoyable and easy to use, both physically and virtually
 - An excellent range of quality books, digital resources and other content
 - Well-trained, friendly people to help users to find what they want either independently or with support.

Equality duty

- 47 The equality duty is in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to employees. The duty requires that when exercising public functions, public service providers must have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 48 The duty relates to different groups who share any of the “protected characteristics” of age, sex, pregnancy and maternity, disability, race, marriage and civil partnership,

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religion or belief, sexual orientation. A needs and impact assessment is one tool that may assist decision makers to comply with the public sector equality duty.

- 49 A detailed needs and impact assessment has been completed to accompany this report (appendix two). As part of the assessment geography and poverty were considered alongside the Government's protected characteristics due to the rural nature of the county and the low income levels. The needs and impact assessment has been strongly informed by the consultation research (that included users and no-uses responses).
- 50 The assessment has a number of considerations in terms of service changes next to the profile of Herefordshire with the biggest impact on people with a combination of characteristics, specifically linked to low income, aspects of age, rural isolation and aspects of disability. In relation to the recommendations of this report the following mitigation is relevant:
- Retain the network of libraries across the county reflective of the high importance people place on the service – specifically young children and older people's access to reading material, talking books and reference material.
 - Considering that 67% of the population live outside of Hereford City, that 25.6% of households have no car or van (2011 census) and 48% of people who completed the consultation walked to their customer service centre and library, retaining the market town and community libraries is important in terms of being able to reach services.
 - Libraries have a role in supporting the breaking down of barriers of digital exclusion, including providing free public access PCs, free wifi and IT awareness and training.
 - For the library delivered service to continue to be a lifeline for people who are isolated and housebound with the potential of linking to other services that these users of the service would benefit from.
 - Though the number of people who access benefit advice from the market towns is relatively low, the impact could be high. A range of mitigation can be put in place such as supporting the navigation of on-line services, use of the "better off model", home visits if needed, and appointments in Hereford. In addition the impact of these changes are monitored to ensure people are not adversely affected or demand pushed to other services.
 - For appointments for benefits and council tax support be in place for at least 12 months to allow for transition of the service model in market towns.
 - For Hereford Customer Services to have a "case based" approach to support a range of needs to provide early help.

Financial implications

- 51 Option three based on service redesign as outlined above creates a saving of £510k over two years. This is short of the savings target of £760k which will need to be addressed through further innovations in the delivery of libraries, customer services and potentially early years and public health services.
- 52 The schedule of savings are outlined below as a "by to" date which means that actions will be implemented over the next two years as part of the delivery plan with potential movement between budget heads as the delivery plan is implemented.

Item and delivery plan	2017/18 £'000	2018/19 £'000
Book Fund re-negotiations	30	
County library service staff and efficiency savings	80	
Changes to delivered and schools library service	50	
Belmont and Bromyard community library	27	
Reduction of staff at Hereford Customer Services	53	
Council Tax transfer (transfer to take place from November 2016, with budget withdrawn in second year of saving to allow for transformation of service)		50
Charging and income	10	10
Kington re-investment to ensure the library service continues	-30	
Relocation of Hereford Customer Services (based on July 2016 relocation)	60	30
Withdrawal of customer services from market towns in second year of savings to support transition of service model		140
Totals	280	230
Savings target	380	380
Shortfall against savings target	100	150

- 53 The delivery time scale also gives communities (via groups, town councils or parish councils) opportunity to consider re-funding element of service if they wish.
- 54 It should be noted that the £90k savings in respect of Hereford Customer Services are largely savings in centralised premises budgets, and will not directly impact upon the libraries and customer services budgets. The approved MTFs includes separate savings targets for accommodation budgets, and applying the saving to the libraries and customer services target means it cannot also be applied to the accommodation savings target. The accommodation savings target is still considered to be achievable in full.
- 55 Planned investment is in place to upgrade the public access PCs in libraries. One-off investment of £133,000 would support the remodelling service and implementation of the recommendations of the impact and needs assessment – the decision on this allocation will be part of the capital programme:

Item	Cost £'000
Payment kiosk in Hereford	11
Works at Ross, Leominster and Belmont	55
Dedicated PC in Leominster and Ross for payments	14
Additional self-service machines at Ross, Hereford Library, Leominster and Ledbury	28
Upgrade of IT for staff to work flexibly	25
Total	133

- 56 The costs do not include redundancy requirements if that becomes a requirement.

Legal implications

- 57 Under the [1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act](#) (PLMA 1964), local authorities in England have a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service “for all persons desiring to make use thereof”.

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- 58 When fulfilling its duty under section 7, a local authority must have regard to the desirability:
- Of securing that facilities are available for the borrowing of or reference to books and other printed matter, pictures, films and other materials
 - That these facilities are sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general and special requirements of adults and children
 - Of encouraging children and adults to make full use of the library service.
- 59 It is the statutory duty of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to:
- Superintend, and promote the improvement of, the public library service provided by local authorities in England (section 1(1))
 - Secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred on them as library authorities.
- 60 The Secretary of State has the power to make a remedial order against a library authority following a local inquiry. Such an inquiry can be commenced either on receipt of a complaint that a local library authority is failing to carry out its statutory duties or of the Secretary of State's own motion.
- 61 Before deciding whether to order an inquiry the Secretary of State will carefully consider a local authority's compliance with the duties of the 1964 Act. However, the Secretary of State will use the power where, having regard to their duties and the local authority, there is good reason in all the circumstances to direct an inquiry at the present time.
- 62 In determining whether to order an inquiry, the Secretary of State gives consideration to a number of factors, including:
- Whether there is any serious doubt or uncertainty as to whether the local authority is (or may cease to be) complying with its legal obligation to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service
 - Whether the local authority appears to be acting in a careless or unreasonable way
 - Whether the decision is or may be outside the proper bounds of the local authority's discretion, such as a capricious decision to stop serving a particularly vulnerable group in the local community
 - Whether the local authority appears to have failed to consult affected individuals or to carry out significant research into the effects of its proposals
 - Whether the local authority has failed to explain, analyse or properly justify its proposals
 - Whether the local proposals are likely to lead to a breach of national library policy
 - The advantages of local decision making by expert and democratically accountable local representatives
 - Whether there is any further good reason why a local inquiry should be ordered.
- 63 These factors are set out in decision letters in relation to complaints made to the Secretary of State that a local library authority is failing to carry out its statutory duties. The power to order a local inquiry has been utilised on only one occasion since 1964, with a public inquiry in Wirral in 2009.
- 64 In October 2014, the Secretary of State, following receipt of a complaint in regards to Sheffield Library Service, issued a 'minded to' letter, and in March 2015 issued a final decision letter. Quoted in that correspondence was a response relating to the case of *Bailey v London Borough of Brent* [2011] EWHC 2572 (Admin) "A comprehensive service cannot mean that every resident lives close to a library. This has never been

the case. Comprehensive has therefore been taken to mean delivering a service that is accessible to all residents using reasonable means, including digital technologies. An efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on council resources. Decisions about the Service must be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the borough”.

- 65 These legal challenges have tended to focus on whether the authority has complied with its obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 - the public sector equality duty (see above). This duty imposes an obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine protected characteristics. However, the courts also recognise that local authorities have a legal duty to set a balanced budget and that council resources are being reduced by central government.
- 66 Where a decision is likely to result in detrimental impact on any group with a protected characteristic, it must be justified objectively. This means that attempts to mitigate the harm need to be explored. If the harm cannot be avoided, the decision maker must balance this detrimental impact against the strength of legitimate public need to pursue the service remodelling to deliver savings. The more serious the residual detrimental impact, the greater the financial savings must be to justify the decision. The harm can only be justified if it is proportionate to the financial benefit and if there have been reasonable efforts to mitigate the harm.
- 67 The recommendations in this report do not propose the closure of libraries, however if an alternative option of centralised model was to be accepted there would likely be a judicial challenge.

Risk management

- 68 Risks relating to the implementation of the recommendation are as follows.
- 69 The impact of withdrawal of customer services from the market towns will have a high impact on people who need support.
Mitigation: implement a range of measures (outlined above) that enable people in most need to access the support required. Also the bulk of savings on staffing are made by year two to enable a change programme to take place.

Residual risk:	Likely: 2*	Impact: 4*
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*out of five

- 70 Reducing the opportunity to make payments leads to a greater level of debt and reduced income from the authority.
Mitigation: a number of alternative ways of paying are available, including those who want to pay cash and on line.

Residual risk:	Likely: 1	Impact: 3
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- 71 Reduced support for the county library service has an effect on the running of the library operated by the council and support to community libraries.
Mitigation: The savings to the county library service are based on non-replacement of staffing who have left and some efficiencies. Though there will be a need to review the level of support given the alignment of teams should minimise the impact on services.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Natalia Silver, assistant director communities on Tel (01432) 260732

Residual risk:	Likely: 2	Impact: 2
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- 72 The opportunity of any enhanced service delivery model will not materialise due to continued budget pressure.
Mitigation: Work with service and organisations to maximise the opportunities.

Residual risk	Likely: 4	Impact: 3
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Consultees

- 73 The consultation on Herefordshire Council's priorities and budget for 2016-2020 took place between July and October 2015 and was completed by 1,979 people. 52% of respondees indicated that their lowest preference for savings was the reduction of customer services and libraries. The second lowest preference at 21% was the withdrawal of public transport subsidy and the increase of cost for discretionary educational travel. The budget consultation for 2017-2020 will conclude in October 2016.
- 74 The Library and Customer Services Research Consultation took place between 27 June and 5 August 2016. In total there was 2,254 responses comprising of users and non-users, sharing views through on-line and paper surveys, facilitated response and focus group. The final report is published on the council website. Just under 1,500 comments were analysed about how any changes may affect individual respondents and those with particular (protected) characteristics. Frequent comments included:
- The service most frequently mentioned as being affected was library lending - closing, moving or reducing library services with the most common response was simply that any change would have a negative impact:
 - affect education, knowledge and cultural experiences
 - be a loss for the community, as they add character to town and city
 - mean residents would miss out on social interaction.
 - There were a number of respondents, who felt there would be little or no impact on themselves personally, but felt others may be more affected depending on their needs
 - Age was the single most common characteristic that respondents felt would be most affected, cited by nearly a quarter of comments, particularly older people and children/young people
 - Disability was cited in one in every five comments, particularly those with mobility issues, sight and hearing
 - Face to face support and the risk of social isolation - particularly in relation to older people - was the next most frequently mentioned comment
 - Other 'at risk' groups to be considered were those on low income or who do not have access to a car which limits transport options
 - In terms of what should be done to protect these groups, the overwhelming single response from respondents was to "keep the libraries open" particularly about keeping access to libraries local for a rural county. Other suggestions for libraries/customer service centres:
 - making it more of a community resource/hub, offer more services in one place
 - provide more classes/information
 - making/keeping it a free service
 - staff training
 - maintain or extend opening hours

- 75 Of non-users most survey respondents accessed services elsewhere when needed. Just over half of respondents do not need books for children and 44% don't need to apply to the Council for anything. The Council's website was most frequently accessed by respondents to contact the Council for information and advice.
- 76 Also for non-users about one in five comments about what might encourage people to use a library or customer service centre was also 'nothing' as they have no need of the services. However one in five suggested a broader range of services from special services, exhibitions and events to coffee shops and intergenerational activities, longer opening hours or the library actually being open (Broad Street). Views from focus groups also included a cafe/good coffee nearby and awareness of opening hours, more computers and multi-use centres with dedicated space for children's activities so noise doesn't disturb other users.
- 77 General overview and scrutiny committee reviewed the option for the service on the 27 September with the following resolution: "That Cabinet be recommended to support option 3 – retained libraries and central service with an emphasis on making best use of them and community libraries as contact points for council services, extending service options and exploring new ways of working, and the report to cabinet should include a delivery plan". This resolution has been incorporated into the recommendations.
- 78 Separate representations have been made to the council by users of the libraries advocating their retention as a valuable asset to the community. The recommendations recognise this point in retaining the network of libraries including the support given to community libraries.
- 79 Also a motion was passed by Kington Town Council in October 2016 and forwarded to the council. Contained in the motion are the following points:
- Ensure the long term future of Kington Library by committing to continue to fully support, financially, professional staff at the library
 - Ensure that a wide range of services and facilities are provided through the library by enabling funding from various council departments to support these activities, including health and social care, support for children and families, economic and business development
 - In this respect, to commit to Option 4 in the paper produced for the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 27 September 2016.
- 80 In response to this motion the recommendations allow for re-investment in Kington to retain a staffed library presence, and that well being activity has the opportunity to continue where supported. The recommendations also allow for longer term development of the use of the libraries by a wider range of services where need is evident, linked to relevant policies, and are financed.
- 81 All members of the customer services and library teams have had opportunity to make suggestions and comments relating to a remodel of the service through a questionnaire consultation. These contributions were further explored through representative staff meetings, with many of the suggestions for change incorporated into the recommendations.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Profile of service and options

Appendix 2: Customer services and libraries needs and impact assessment

Background papers

None

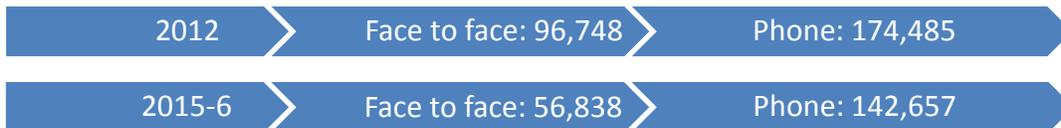
Appendix 1 - Profile of the Service and Options

1. An overview of Customer Services and the Library Service

Customer services and libraries in the market towns is supported by one front-line team, whilst in Hereford there is separate customer service centre and library reflecting the volumes and nature of enquiries. The service also operates the corporate contact centre and the venues will host a number of other services and community initiatives.

The services have seen considerable change in the last three years responding to customer trends, the increased use of digital access, and cost savings. Service remodelling has reduced the requirement for customers to contact the council in the first place and instigated self-serve. Service changes have included:

- Automated calls to manage queries and relevant services taking responsibility for their telephone contact
- Increased on-line payments and services
- Self-serve library kiosk at Hereford Library and each market town site
- Introduction of non-cash payments for the majority of transactions
- Job Centre+ at Ross Library
- Transfer of Leintwardine, Colwall and Weobley as community libraries
- Reduced opening hours at each of the centres
- 50% reduction in staffing
- Opening of combined community and service centre at Masters House in Ledbury
- Improved use of social media and the web to communicate
- Free wifi use at centres
- Kington Centre as a pilot of health and well being hub.



1.1 The Library Service

Despite the central library being closed there were over 500,845 visits to the libraries in the county in 2015-16. In Herefordshire over 23% of local residents are active library members (have had a library transaction within the last two years). In 2015 over 18% of people in the county had at least one item on loan.



The Schools Library Service provides books and project material to over 50 primary schools that purchase the service. The Delivered Library Service is also a targeted service that supplies books and talking books to people who are housebound and unable to access a library. The service delivers to around 160 individuals and 30 residential homes and is often described as a lifeline for people who are at risk of feeling isolated and lonely.

The County Library Service manages all the systems and stock services to support the frontline libraries. The service also operates the Reading Group scheme for nearly 70 groups, library services for children and young people, local studies, digitisation projects, bibliotherapy, work with special groups, refurbishment projects, funding bids, community outreach and partnership schemes, reader development campaigns, support and training for community libraries, and work with library Friends groups. The service also supports the rural book scheme based in community facilities such as community shops and parish halls.

1.2 Customer Services

Customer services provides the corporate phone contact and face to face contact in Hereford and the market towns. The tables below summarise the level of contact for 2015/6. In addition to the figures below there is an additional 10,261 emails the service deals with.

Phone contact is predominately received at Hereford customer service centre. Though switchboard and INFO calls are high volume, they are also quick response. Council Tax is both high volume and lengthy queries, with peak times (March / April) when the bills are sent to every premise in the county and in June when reminders are distributed. The contact centres work best through good interaction between services and compatible technologies. Average waiting time for calls to be answered varies between services and months, but general average of 3 minute for response.

Phone transactions (Hereford)	
Care Act	30
Council Tax	41,454
ECA (exceptional circumstances award)	890
FIS (family information service)	254
INFO	19,518
Planning	8,026
Switchboard	58,987
Waste Bulky	2,829
Waste General	10,610
Market town calls	59
	142,657

Face to Face / payment transactions (Hereford)	
Council Tax	4,247
Council Tax Support	1,759
Business Rates	176
Housing Benefits	9,496
Planning	4,079
Reception	13,017
Homepoint	4,791
Housing Solutions	2,492
Total Face to Face	40,057
Payments	22,842

For face-to-face, reception services are high volume but with low transaction which directs people to web use, services or quick resolution (e.g. issuing a form). Council tax is high volume throughout the year as has an impact on all household, though high level of support at Hereford is for Housing Benefit queries.

For the market towns customer service the volume of queries is significantly less, with high volume of payments, general queries and benefit advice / support.

Customer Service Centres	Face to Face enquiries	Payments	Benefits and council tax queries %
Leominster	6,764	4,721	39
Ross-on-Wye	5,529	2,378	39
Ledbury	2,422	2,683	20
Kington	478	1,823	15
Bromyard	1,588	1,609	15
totals	16,781	13,214	

1.3 Hereford Library

Hereford Library is currently closed due to finding asbestos in the building when preparation for improvement works took place to accommodate WISH (Wellbeing Information and Signposting for Herefordshire). To compensate, additional hours have been allocated to Belmont library and a temporary library provided at Hereford Town Hall. Cabinet in May 2016 agreed to invest in reoccupying the Library at Broad Street with Hereford Library Users Group working on a long term development plan for the site.

Hereford Library is the key centre for reference material, and will in usual circumstances see the highest use, reflective of the higher population in Hereford and that people will come to the library from different parts of the county as part of a wider visit to the city. There are 5.95 FTE Library Assistants and one FTE supervisor who provide the staffing for both Hereford and Belmont. Hereford will have two self-service kiosks when reopened.

Opening hours	Visitors 2012/3	Visitors 2014/5	Visitors 2015/6	Loans 2015/6	PC hours per year	Visits per hour	Cost per year £	Cost per head £
37	227,240	184,434	96,692	101,493	7,824	50	237,725	1.29*

*based on usual year of 2014/15

1.4 Belmont Library

The library at Belmont is based at the community centre owned and operated by the South Wye Community Association, on the southern edge of Hereford City in the Belmont Rural ward. It serves a catchment from the immediate area, as well as people from Hereford City and those coming into Hereford from the Abergavenny Road. The local authority pays a rent to occupy the space and sustaining the service has been supported by grants from Hereford City Council and Belmont Rural Parish Council. The association is keen to provide a range of other services to people using the site. Staffing is provided by the local authority overseen by the supervisor in Hereford. Due to the current closure of Hereford Library, Belmont is offering increased opening hours of 38 per week. The usual number of hours would be 22.5. Belmont has one self-service kiosk that accounts for approximately 20% of stock issues.

Opening hours	Visitors 2012/3	Visitors 2014/5	Visitors 2015/6	Loans 2015/6	PC hours per year	Visits per hour	Cost per year £	Cost per head £
38	50,916	22,527	34,697	45,877	1,031	22	29,239	1.30*

*based on usual year of 2014/15

1.5 Market Town Centres

All of the market town sites are a combined library and customer service centre. The staff are trained in Making Every Contact Count (MECC) and will deal with a range of queries and referrals. Since 2013 the staffing at the centre has reduced and there has been a corresponding reduction in opening hours combined with people being able to access services on-line. WISH have a “pop-up” service and healthy lifestyles will use the centres as key community facilities, considered “safe” and neutral venues.

There are 5 FTE each at Ross and Leominster, 3.5 FTEs in Ledbury, and 1 FTE for Bromyard. There are 2 supervisors – one for the north (Leominster and Bromyard) and one for the south (Ledbury, Ross and supporting the community library in Colwall). There is one self-service kiosk in each of the market town sites.

1.6 Ross Library and Customer Service Centre

A combined customer service and library function at one site along with Job-Centre+ that pays a contribution in rent.

Opening hours	Library visits 2012/3	Library visits 2014/5	Library visits 2015/6	Loans 2015/6	Visits per hour	PC hrs per year	Customer services face to face	Cost per year £	Cost per head £
35.5	115,219	116,789	103,683	97,997	56	6,991	5,529	185,748	1.79

1.7 Leominster Library and Customer Service Centre

A combined customer service and library function at one site.

Opening hours	Library visits 2012/3	Library Visits 2014/5	Library Visits 2015/6	Loans 2015/6	Visits per hour	PC hrs per year	Customer services face to face	Cost per year £	Cost per head £
35.5	105,283	109,082	102,211	109,912	55	8,424	6,764	219,737	2.14

1.8 Ledbury Library and Customer Service Centre

A combined customer service and library function at one site, along with a range of other local authority and community functions. The library was relocated with customer services in 2015 as a major refurbishment and investment in the Masters House. The visitor numbers (which is counted for the library area) has increased considerably since the new building was opened which has won a number of awards with Herefordshire Council as the client (including RIBA best building for the West Midlands). The number of loans has increased but not as significantly as visitors. The staff in Ledbury provide the “front of house” duties for the building with the integrated site designed to create efficiencies reflected in the low cost per head.

Opening hours	Library visits 2012/3	Library visits 2014/5	Library visits 2015/6	Loans 2015/6	Visits per hour	PC hrs per year	Customer Services face to face	Cost per year £	Cost per head £
32.5	72,583	48,308	110,450	57,545	65	3,126	2,422	58,120	0.53

1.9 Bromyard Centre

The library and customer service centre is in a shared facility with Halo who provide a range of leisure activities. The library relocated within the site earlier in the year and this has supported a reduction in facility charges. The number of visitors reflects the proportion of users of the site to the library service.

A reduction in use over the last year.

Opening hours	Library visits 2012/3	Library visits 2014/5	Library visits 2015/6	Loans 2015/6	Visits per hour	PC hrs per year	Customer services face to face	Cost per year £	Cost per head £
24	50,916	18,669	12,448	17,560	9	1,459	1,588	46,854	3.76

1.10 Kington Centre

In March 2014 Cabinet agreed to the pilot of a Well-Being Centre at the Kington Centre, which has been operational since May 2015, and has funding via Public Health until March 2017. Funding is not available beyond that date.

PC use is high in comparison to other centres for its size, though visitor numbers have decreased despite introduction of the well-being centre.

Opening hours	Library visits 2012/3	Library visits 2014/5	Library visits 2015/6	Loans 2015/6	Visits per hour	PC hrs per year	Customer services face to face	Cost per year £	Cost per head £
18	36,227	22,085	20,769	17,037	22	3,302	478	18,569	0.89
With Public Health funding								118,569	5.71

1.11 Community Libraries

A network of community libraries operate across the county. They are all financed and operated differently by the community, with the county library service providing support, advice and training for volunteers; financially supporting the public access PCs; manage the book stock; and run campaigns at the sites such as the summer reading challenge. In Colwall the parish council raised the precept for the cost of a paid member of staff from customer services to cover some of the opening hours working in conjunction with volunteers.

Library	Hours open per week	Visits per year	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Colwall	15.5	11,138	13,241	1,482	5	1,324	1,194
Leintwardine	9.5	2,769	5,183	563	1	77	49
Weobley	6	2,491	4,454	482	3	152	355
Peterchurch	10	1,890	3,108	429	0	n/a	n/a

2. Options for Customer Services and Libraries

There are four options for meeting the savings plan for Customer Services and Libraries:

- Savings programme
- Centralised model
- Retained libraries and central service
- Enhanced service

2.1 Savings Programme (option 1)

This option is based on instigating a savings programme though retaining the current pattern of library and customer services in the different sites and related functions including support for community libraries, schools library service and delivered library service.

		Savings £000
Op1.a	Community libraries at Belmont and Bromyard – for the library to be retained at Belmont to become a community library though the local authority continues to support with book stock, core staffing, training of volunteers, public access PCs and wifi. In Bromyard for the library to be run in partnership with Halo, with a SLA to oversee staffing of the library.	27
Op1.b	Renegotiation of the Book Fund – the book fund supports the quality of stock available impacting on use. £30k has been re-negotiated as a reduction for the same stock level through a regional consortium.	30
Op1.c	Changes to Delivered Library Services / Schools Library Services – this will look at reorganising via staffing and charging care homes for visits.	50
Op1.d	Savings from county library function – reductions including staffing levels and efficiencies in the operation of the services e.g. end of loan payments for vehicles; withdrawal of postal reminders of over-due notice.	80
Op1.e	Council Tax – transfer of service for the back office to take responsibility for their calls, creating flexibility within the team to support peak demand shared across the benefit service.	53
Op1.f	Reduction in staff at Franklin House – equivalent for 2 FTEs to compensate for intended increased use of the internet to access customer services.	50
Op1.g	Kington Library – provide reinvestment to sustain the library service. The space available to hire / use by established well being groups / services that wish to continue.	-30
Op1.h	Charging, income and withdrawals - to increase a range of charging across the service, withdrawal of newspapers, and periodicals. Local fundraising (via town councils or friends groups) would have the option of reinstating some of this expenditure.	20
Op1.i	Relocation of Hereford Customer Services – savings to the service for the relocation to Blueschool House.	90
	Total	370

Risks:

- Reduction in county library service having an impact on the level of support given to community libraries and specific reading campaigns
- Council Tax being able to address the level of demand based on 2 FTE
- Community capacity to take-on operation of Belmont Library.

2.2 Centralised Service (option 2)

This option is based on the proposition outlined in the budget consultation of 2015, with all customer service and library functions operational from Hereford. The phone line would also remain, though most contact would be provided via the web. Organisations would be able to operate the libraries as community facilities covering costs with some support from the county library service.

		Savings £000
Op2.a	Libraries in Ross, Leominster, Kington, Ledbury, Belmont, Bromyard available to become community libraries with all customer services withdrawn from these centres. For those that do become community libraries central support could be provided regarding book stock and PC access.	550
Op2.b	Withdrawal of Delivered Services serving people who are housebound.	110
Op2.c	Reduction of central support – elements retained to support community libraries and schools library service.	60
Op2.d	Retain staffing level of Hereford Customer Services to deal with increase in calls, but transfer responsibility for Council Tax calls to the back office.	50
	Total	770

Risks:

- Negative impact on the health and well-being of people not being able to access service in market towns
- Demand for central customer services increases putting pressure on the call response time and face to face queries
- Risk of further isolation of the people who receive the delivered library service
- Likely judicial review as considered below the service level to be considered “a comprehensive and efficient library service” in accordance with the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act.

2.3 Retained libraries and central service (option 3)

This option would be to retain the library functions in market towns and Hereford, customer services in Hereford and support for community libraries. Customer services to be withdrawn from market towns considering the low level of face to face transactions in comparison. The customer service queries are generally based on housing benefits advice and payments – payments to be supported by a paypoint scheme and opportunity to pay on-line including at each of the centres. Introduction of “Better off Model” as an on-line tool for benefits and employment, support for vulnerable and elderly clients needing help, and appointments for at least the next 12 months to aid changes to the delivery model.

		Savings £000
Op3.a	Libraries in Ross, Leominster, Ledbury maintained with the withdrawal of customer services (2 FTE from both Ross and Leominster; 1 FTE from Bromyard; and 0.5 FTE from Ledbury)	140
Op3.b	Items listed above in option 1.	370
	Total	510

Risks:

- Residents being able to access essential customer services where they are not digitally connected or cannot travel to Hereford if face to face contact is required.
- Risk as outlined in 2.1 paragraph.

2.4 Enhanced Service (option 4)

This option considers different services that could be delivered from customer service centres and libraries. This is happening more at national level within the remaining library infrastructure, and is not an uncommon feature within Herefordshire with the combined library and customer function, existing co-location with Halo, staff already trained in Making Every Contact Count (MECC), and WISH / healthy lifestyles providing services from libraries. This could be based on the early help concept to reduce the need for people to access high cost intervention services.

Libraries in Ross, Leominster, Ledbury and Kington reflective on demographic need include a “well being / early help” element, and customer services by appointment. Staff retrained to give advice and support in the following areas:

- Childcare and free places
- Debt advice and areas of support for finance
- Signposts to community well-being schemes
- Use of the venue for well-being, events and courses and classes
- Quick health checks, including blood pressure, weight and heart checks
- IT training and advocacy, and web navigation
- Volunteering opportunities

		Savings £000
2.4a	Reduction in staffing in market towns by 2FTEs based on customer services element, reduce to appointment only. The saving outline does not indicate the savings that could be achieved by other services as a result of early help.	50
2.4b	Items listed above in option 1.	370
	Total	420

Risks:

- Requirement to meet the medium term financial strategy needing to find savings across the council.
- Risk as outlined in 2.1 paragraph.

3. Longer Term Options

Customer services and libraries are going through considerable changes across the country due to changing trends, technology, needs of communities combined with priority of local government to support the safeguarding of adults and children.

The model for customer services is generally consistent across local government proactive to instigate reduced need to contact the council, a focus on people who need essential contact and all other contact transferred to on-line.

Libraries on the other hand are being delivered under varying models including consideration of who runs them and how they are run, including outsourcing and commissioned services. Very few, if any, countywide libraries operate without subsidy. However, sharing sites and costs reduces the funding required (e.g. the cost per head of running Ross is reduced due to income from DWP).

On the basis of these points there are three key areas of longer term options.

Hereford Library – Hereford Library Users Group and relevant stakeholders to progress long term future for Hereford Library through a fundraising campaign to improve the site.

Leominster Library – a shared staffing and relocation option with Halo as a build-on to the leisure centre. This would have the benefit of an integrated community venue. Or option of sharing the site with another service that would contribute to costs.

Outsourced service – to test market on outsourcing the management of the library service, including any health and leisure partner.

Library and customer services plan - depending on the outcome of the cabinet report produce a library and customer service plan based on agreed objectives.

Needs and Impact Assessment Libraries and Customers Services 2016

1. Reason for Needs and Impact Assessment
2. The Equality Duty
3. Age Protected Characteristic
4. Disability Protected Characteristic
5. Limited impact on characteristics
6. Poverty and Low Income
7. Geography and Travel
8. Profile of Mosaic Public Sector
9. Electronic Delivery of Service/Digital Exclusion
10. Impact on employees
11. Combined Factors and Protected Priorities

1. Reason for Needs and Impact Assessment

A needs and impact assessment is conducted to understand how service changes will impact on users, and specifically people who have protected characteristics (see below for definition). It does not mean that services cannot change, often driven by a reduced budget, but the impact of those changes need to be considered as part of the decision making process. The assessment will also outline any mitigation that could reduce any negative impacts.

The information used in this impact assessment is taken from:

- Library and Customer Services Consultation 2016 ([link](#))
- Herefordshire Facts and Figures ([link](#))
- Herefordshire Libraries Facts and Figures 2016 ([link](#))
- Understanding Herefordshire, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016 ([link](#))
- DCMS Taking Part Survey 2015/16 ([link](#))
- Secondary data via desk research

All these sources are published and available via the web or referenced. Paper copy of the consultation results are available to view at each of the libraries and customer service centres.

2. The Equality Duty

A needs and impact assessment is one tool that may assist decision makers comply with the public sector equality duty (PSED) set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty relates to different groups who share any of the “protected characteristics” of age, sex, pregnancy and maternity, disability, race, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, sexual orientation.

The Equality Act outlines that due regard involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Geography in terms of access to services affected by rural isolation is not a protected characteristic, but is considered in this report due to the sparse spread of the population of Herefordshire. Poverty is also not listed as a protected characteristic but treated as one in this report due to Herefordshire's low wage economy and the multiplier effect poverty has on disadvantage.

Despite the central library in Hereford being closed temporarily, there were 500,845 visits to libraries including community libraries in 2015/16 financial year, with 23% of the Herefordshire population classed active library members; 18% of the population had a book on loan at one time; 56,838 face to face enquiries were made to customer services and 142,657 phone calls to customer services during the same period. Any change to these services needs to be considered next to the impact they will have on the people who use them. The services of libraries and customer services are co-dependent and integrated – the centres are largely staffed by the same teams from the same budget.

Customer services and libraries are a universal service (as in anyone can access them) and therefore people who meet one or more of the protected characteristics will be included within the usage. They also provide targeted services for people with particular needs, e.g. the Delivered Library Service provides housebound people with library books, and customer services provide targeted services to specific groups, including access to benefits. Therefore this assessment will draw on information from service use, consultation and demographics to focus on addressing impact on protected characteristics along with issues of geography and poverty.

The assessment will also need to be mindful of wider pressures on public service that directly meet the needs of safeguarding and care and the statutory duty of the local authorities to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service.

3. Age Protected Characteristic

3.1 Profile of Herefordshire on age

The office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes mid-year population estimates each summer (the 2014 figures released in June 2015). Based on this data the current estimate of the county's resident population is 187,200 – an increase of 1,100 people (0.6%) since mid-2013 figures were published. Around 3,100 students living away from home were not included or several migrants working in the county for only a few months.

As well as current population numbers it is worth considering long term age profile when planning service change. The table shows how numbers of people in three broad age groups are expected to change up to 2031:

Number and percentage of people in particular age groups

	Mid-year estimates		
	2001	2014	2031
0-15	34,000	31,400	32,700
	19.4%	16.9%	16.1%
16-29	23,500	28,200	26,100
	13.4%	15.1%	12.8%
30-44	36,700	31,400	33,600
	21%	16%	16.5%
45-64	47,000	52,700	49,300

	26.9%	28.2%	24.2%
65-84	29,700	37,300	50,300
	17%	19.9%	24.7%
85+	4,000	5,900	11,600
	2.3%	3.2%	5.7%
Total population	174,900	187,200	203,600)

Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates; 2011-based forecasts

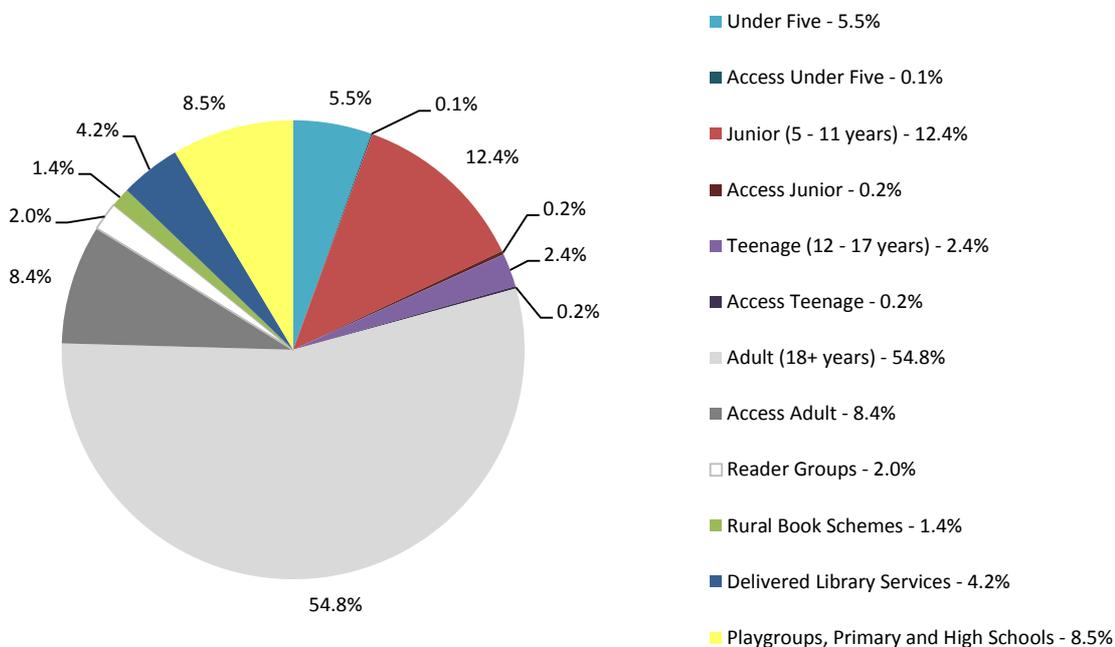
One thousand more people moved to Herefordshire in 2013-14 than left it. Natural change (birth less death) remained at zero with around 1,900 deaths each year. Herefordshire has a slightly lower proportion of younger children than nationally (11% aged under 10 years compared to 12% in England and Wales), although similar proportions to 10-17 year olds.

Hereford City has a much younger profile, with relatively high proportion of young adults. Rural village and dispersed areas have relatively more people of older working and early retirement age. The market towns and other areas (which include larger villages) have a profile more similarly to the county overall but with relatively high proportion of elderly people. 60% of people aged 65+ and 54% of people aged 85+ live in rural areas. Kington is slightly different to the other towns with a lower proportion of 30-44 year olds but slightly higher 16-29 year olds.

3.2 Service Users by Age

The following chart shows the range of use by age of the library service.

Herefordshire Libraries loans by borrower type 2015-16

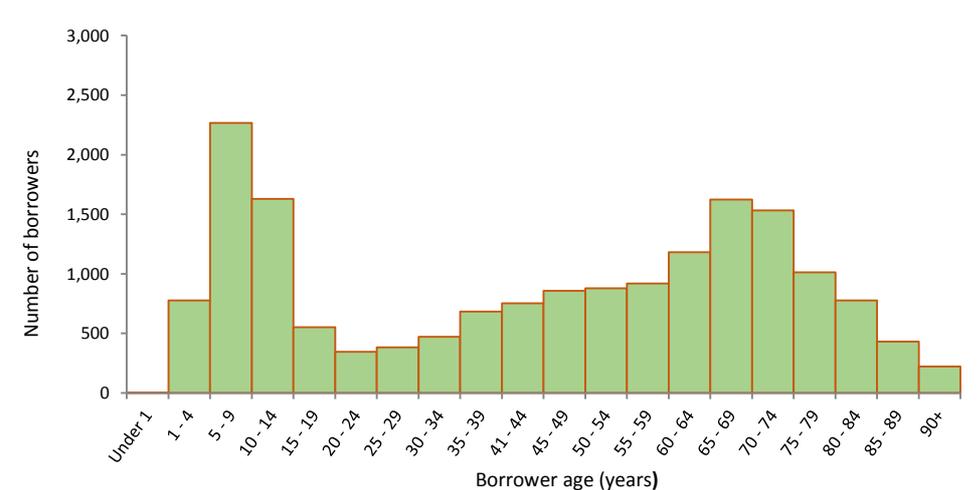


This shows a high percentage of library use by children and young people compared to the number of children in the county population – children 17 years and under accounted for 33% of library loans, whereas 16.9% of the Herefordshire population are aged 15 and under. Children who read for

pleasure made more progress in maths, vocabulary and spelling between the ages of 10-16 than those who rarely read¹.

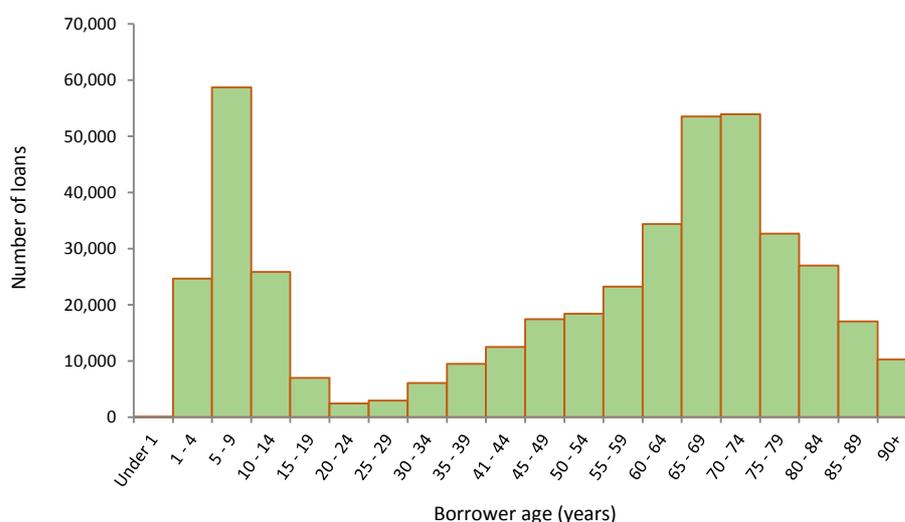
The “active borrowers” data gives a good indication of the age groups who use the library service. This data is based on transactions where individuals have supplied a date of birth. This includes borrowers with active status who have loaned at least one item in 2015/16 – it does not include group members, e.g. playgroups, readers groups, rural book schemes, residential homes, etc.

Herefordshire Libraries age profile of active borrowers 2015-16



Over half a million items were borrowed from libraries in Herefordshire last year. The library loans by borrower age graph below shows how many items each age group borrowed. All age groups borrowed books and other items, but the groups that borrowed multiple items per person were children and over 65s.

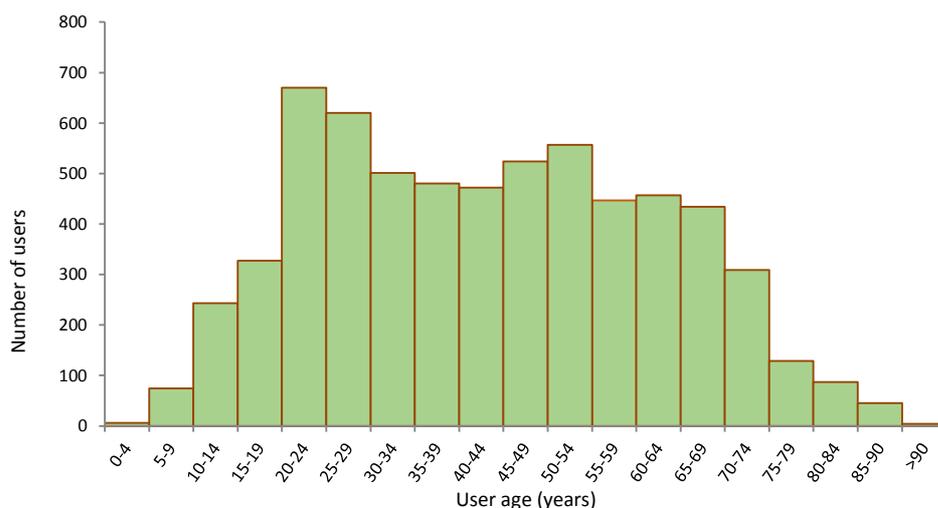
Herefordshire Libraries loans by borrower age 2015-16



The following graph shows the age breakdown of Herefordshire library members who have used a library computer or Wi-Fi in the last two years. This shows that members from all age groups use library ICT, with the highest use by young adults.

¹ British Cohort Study, The Health and Well Being Benefits of Public Libraries, 2015, Simetrica, Arts Council of England

Herefordshire library computer and wifi use by age 2014-6



3.3 Consultation research by age

The table below shows the response to the user survey by age. Aged 34 and under are under-represented and respondents aged 55 to 74 are over represented next to population numbers.

User survey from age (where given)

Age group	User survey	Herefordshire	compared with population
0-15	1%	17%	under-represented
16-24	1%	9%	under-represented
25-34	4%	11%	under-represented
35-44	9%	11%	same
45-54	10%	15%	slightly under-represented
55-64	18%	14%	over-represented
65-74	29%	13%	over-represented
75-80	9%	4%	over-represented
80+	8%	6%	same

This profile is at odds with the actual use where there is high use by children - however 36% of respondents considered facilities are important places to go with children and in relation to the question “what else would you like to be able to use or do at the library / customer service centre”. 27% of respondents stated events for children and a 17% response relating to events for teenagers.

Analysis of what is important to users of libraries and customer service centres by age showed that the range of stock available was the most important aspect for all age groups. There were some noticeable differences in responses by age, notably:

- A good place to go with children is more important to the younger age groups (25-34 and 35-44)
- Speaking to a customer service advisor and needing help to complete forms is more important to younger age groups, particularly those aged 25 to 34
- The proportion of users who felt free Wi-Fi and access to computers is important decreased with age, so less important to the elderly compared to the younger age groups
- Supporting health and well-being is more important to the 25-34 year age group and the 45-64 year olds
- Meeting people is important to the 25-34 years, 45-64 years and 80 years and over age groups.

3.4 Summary of age

- High level of users are children, though not reflective of the consultation survey response
- The consultation survey shows high levels of use by older people 65-74 (29% completed the survey next to 13% of the population)
- Customer services tend to be used by a younger age group who will tend to be digitally active (see digital profile later)
- Libraries have a role in supporting education attainment and learning, especially relevant but not exclusively, for children
- Libraries can have a role in supporting well-being; meeting people (supporting good mental health) is important across adult age range.

4. Disability Protected Characteristic

4.1 Profile of Herefordshire by disability

This characteristic is based on a person if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For the 2011 census 18.7% of people said they had some form of limiting long term health problem or disability - this is similar to the national percentage and the 2001 census.

Limiting long term health problem or disability (2011 census)

Persons	Herefordshire number	Herefordshire %	England and Wales %
All residents	183,477	100	100
People whose day to day activities are limited	34,364	18.7	17.9
People who consider their health to be bad	9,592	5.2	5.6
People who provide unpaid care	20,676	11.3	10.3
People whose day to day activities are:			
limited a lot	15,370	8.4	8.5
limited a little	18,994	10.4	9.4
not limited	149,113	81.3	82.1
People aged 16 to 64 whose day to day activities are:			
limited a lot	5,957	3.2	3.7
limited a little	8,398	4.6	4.7
not limited	98,591	53.7	56.3
Health:			
Very good health	83,874	45.7	47.1
Good health	64,494	35.2	34.1
Fair health	25,517	13.9	13.2
Bad health	7,441	4.1	4.3
Very bad health	2,151	1.2	1.3

It is also worth noting the level of unpaid for care in the county based on:

- 1 to 19 hours of care: 7.6% of the population (slightly higher than the England and Wales percentage)
- 20 to 49 hours of care: 1.3% of the population (in-line with national average)
- 50 hours or more care: 2.4% of the population (in-line with national average)

In March 2016, Herefordshire Carers' Support (HCS) had 4,993 carers registered, made up of 3,708 adult carers, 910 parent carers, 30 young adult carers and 345 young carers.

In the county approximately 2,400 people are in receipt of long term support from adults social care at any one time, 1,600 of who are supported in some way to live in their homes (the remaining 800 in permanent residential placements). Profile of people in receipt of home care (referred to as domiciliary) are most likely to be elderly people reliant on state support, characterised by low income, a reliance on a state pension, living alone, not having a car, being in poor health with a high likelihood of emergency hospital admission².

In terms of mental health based on a report produced by Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG)³, there were 1,403 children and young people presenting with mental health needs (under-18's in January 2013); and around 6,400 adults with long-term mental health problems across Herefordshire in the 2012/13 survey results. HCCG state average prevalence is 4.29%, slightly less than the national figure of 4.5%. Also, to note 12% of all deaths in Herefordshire have a mental health diagnosis.

The HCCG report also outlined that some people are more likely to experience poor mental health if other factors are present – called socio-economic determinants of mental health, the Herefordshire statistics are summarised below:

Socio-economic determinants of mental health

Determinants	Profile for Herefordshire
Employment and income	9,120 people out of work claiming benefits 14,500 households on low incomes
Education	55,050 people with no qualifications 840 people with learning disabilities
Family and caring	27,525 people live alone 900 lone parents claiming benefits 21,000 people provide unpaid care 240 looked after children 400 young carers
Crime and anti-social behaviour	7,800 crimes recorded in 2013/14 15.92 per 1000 population domestic violence incidents 547 per 100,000 population first time entrants to youth justice system
Housing	200 homeless families
Health	6,400 people reporting long-term mental health

Also in terms of Dementia, which is an umbrella term for a number of progressive diseases affecting the structure and chemistry of the brain, in 2014/5 1,428 people in the county had a diagnosis of dementia⁴. By 2030 it is projected that Herefordshire will have around 5,000 people aged 65+ with dementia (based on Projecting Older People Population Information System).

² Mosaic Public Sector customer segmentation tool

³ Herefordshire Mental Health Assessment, 2014

⁴ GP Quality Outcomes Framework data, March 2015

4.2 Service use by disability

Libraries are part of the “safe place” scheme which supports vulnerable people, including those with dementia or a learning disability.

The library service provides books in audio format and printed books in large print format for users who cannot read standard print books. “Access” library membership is available to customers with a disability. This includes visual impairment, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, Alzheimer’s and dementia, as well as any other health issue which prevents someone from being able to hold or read a physical book. Access membership provides free access to audio books and DVDs as well as print items.

The delivered library services team provides library resources to housebound customers, residential homes and sheltered housing complexes - 97% of people recently surveyed said the delivered services was excellent or good.

“Access” library members and delivered library services customers combined, accounted for 15% of public library loans by individuals in 2015-16.

The library service also delivers three books on prescription schemes (a fourth is due next year):

- Reading Well - Books on Prescription: helping people with common mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, phobias and eating disorders
- Reading Well - For Young People: providing 13 to 18 year-olds with support and advice on common mental health issues
- Reading Well – Dementia Books: recommends books helpful if have dementia, are caring for someone with dementia or want to find out more about the condition
- Reading Well – long-term conditions: due for July 2017.

An additional measure of customer service use by disability is the issue of Blue Badges - 8493 badges issued in the period 2013 to 2016.

4.3 Consultation research by disability

20% of the respondents to the user survey said they had a disability, long term illness or health problem, which is a similar profile to the population. For this group it was more important to access a library/customer service centre to support their health and well-being, speak to a customer service advisor and to feel less lonely. Impacts on disability was cited in one in every five comments, particularly those with mobility issues, sight and hearing. Feeling less lonely was more important for respondents who use Bromyard and Weobley libraries.

15% of the respondents to the non-users survey said they have a disability, long-term illness or health problem - a slight under representation compared to 19% of the population (2011 census). In terms of non-user survey to the question “what puts you off using a library or customer service centre?” a handful of comments were about health or disability related constraints to going to the library. 35% of respondents said there would be little impact if library and customer services were reduced and a further 35% said there would be no impact. However more than half of the non-use survey respondents said it would have a great impact on other people - the types of people specified were similar to those identified by users of libraries and customer service centres e.g. families with children, those with no internet access at home, the elderly, vulnerable, isolated, disabled, people on low incomes.

Summary by disability

- The delivered service provides a lifeline for housebound people
- The determinants of mental health can be supported by customer service and library functions
- Withdrawal of service would have an impact on disabled people
- Libraries have the potential to link to volunteering that can help to address problems of mental health, isolation and keeping people active.

5. Limited impact on characteristics

This section lists the protected characteristics within the equality duty with limited, minor or no negative impact relating to library or customer service use.

5.1 Race

The protected characteristic of race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

The information below taken from the 2011 census shows that 93.7% of the Herefordshire population is white English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, and British. However, the county's make up has changed as a result of the expansion of the European Union in 2004. Of the 12,250 residents who were born outside the UK, 53% arrived after the expansion of the EU.

Ethnic group of Herefordshire residents (2011 census)

Ethnic Groups	Number	%	England %
White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British	171,922	93.7%	80.5%
White: Irish	709	0.4%	0.9%
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	363	0.2%	0.1%
White: other	7,175	3.9%	4.4%
Non white: Mixed / multiple ethnic group	1,270	0.7%	2.2%
Non white: Asian/Asian British (inc. Chinese)	1,439	0.8%	7.5%
Non white: Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	331	0.2%	3.4%
Non white: Mixed/multiple ethnic group			
- Other ethnic group	268	0.1%	1.0%
All residents	183,477	100%	100%

2011 census

A 2012 Minister Working Group report on inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers (MWG) noted that these communities 'experience, and are being held back by, some of the worst outcomes of any group, across a wide range of social indicators'. These outcomes include:

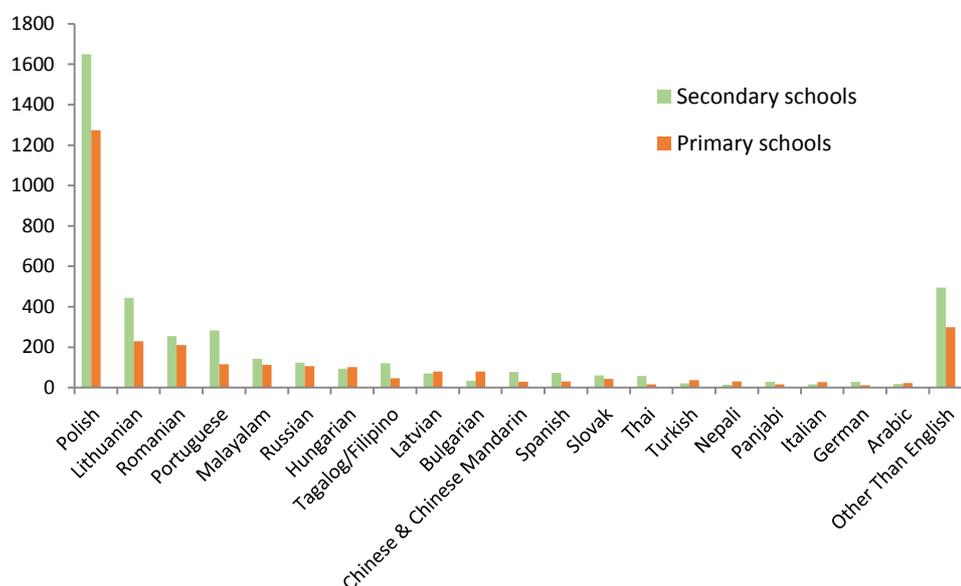
- low educational attainment
- health outcomes that are much poorer than the general population
- high levels of homelessness
- employment disadvantage
- marginalisation and experiences of hostility and discrimination.

54 hate crimes were reported for June 2015 to May 2016 based on race and 1 on faith.

Herefordshire Council has agreed to the Home Office's request to accept the re-settlement of Syrian Refugees and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC). 60 individuals in 15-20 family groups will be resettled in Herefordshire from September 2016.

Herefordshire's EAL (English as an additional language) pupils are culturally diverse, speaking a wide range of first languages. The chart below shows the top twenty languages spoken by children in primary and secondary schools in Herefordshire in academic year 2015-2016.

Top twenty EAL languages spoken in Herefordshire schools academic year 2015-16



In the academic year 2015-2016 the most prevalent EAL language in both primary and secondary schools was Polish, followed by Lithuanian, Romanian, Portuguese, Malayalam, Russian and Hungarian.

Herefordshire public libraries provide books in Polish and other languages where available for adults and children and supplies EAL collections to Herefordshire schools as part of the Schools Library Service.

95% of the respondents to the user survey said they are White British, 3% Other White and 1% any other ethnic group. This is very similar to the overall county population. For non-user respondents 93% of the respondents to the question on ethnicity said they are White British, 4% Other White and 3% any other ethnic group.

5.2 Sex / Gender

There are 51% females to 49% of men in the county and females outnumber males at almost all ages over 40. The difference is more evident as people reach late 70s as a result of the longer life expectancy of women. The latest Taking Part report from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport shows that in England more women visited a library in the past twelve months than men: 38.1% compared to 29.4%.

62% of the user survey respondents are women, which is higher than the overall county population (51%).

5.3 Pregnancy and Maternity

The protected characteristic definition is based on pregnant women or women who are in the first 26 weeks after giving birth.

Births in Herefordshire fell throughout the 1990s, and began rising from 2002. Births rose by 22% from a low of 1,570 in 2002 to 1,900 in 2010 and have plateaued since then to around 1800 to 1900 per year. Births to women from “new Europe” mostly Polish and Lithuanian, accounted for 11% all new births in the county in 2013.

Library services provide support for parents and carers and access to resources through the provision of dedicated parent and carer collections, which include material on pregnancy, early years, parenting, nutrition, disability and learning. Larger libraries provide Bounce and Rhyme sessions for under-fives which support language development and social skills and provide support for new parents. Centres are designated “safe places” for breastfeeding mothers.

5.4 Marriage and Civil Partnership

Marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples.

According to the 2011 census over half (51.8%) of the population were married or in a civil partnership - the overall percentage is slightly higher than the national figure for England and Wales at 47%.

5.5 Gender Reassignment

This characteristic relates to transsexual people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of) for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. There is no official estimate of the number of transsexual people either nationally or locally.

5.6 Religion or Belief

Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. atheism). The 2011 census asked people “what is your religion” and the results for Herefordshire shows that Christianity remains the largest religion. This is reflective of the national picture – although numbers fell from 79% of the population in 2001 to 67.8% to 2011 nationally. The proportion reporting they have no religion increased from 13% to 22.8%, just slightly lower than the proportion nationally (25%).

5.7 Sexual Orientation

This characteristic is based on whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes. From 2011 census 0.2% of the Herefordshire population are in registered same-sex civil partnerships.

For more up to date information the Integrated Household Survey⁵ asks 178,197 people about their sexual identity. 93.5% of people said they were 'heterosexual' or 'straight', 1.1% said they were 'gay' or 'lesbian' and 0.4% said they were bisexual.

6. Poverty and Low Income

6.1 Profile of Poverty in Herefordshire

Poverty is not a defined protected characteristic, but considered as part of this impact study as linked to accessing services and low income.

According to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) in 2015, the median weekly earnings for people who work in Herefordshire were £421.90, lower than those in the West Midlands region of £493.10 and England at £532.40.

At the time of the 2011 census the unemployment rate (as a proportion of those aged 16-64) unemployment in the county was 4% - lower than across England (6%) and the West Midlands (7%). More regular updates are provided by the claimants for Job Seeker's Allowance – for July 2015 0.7% of people were claiming the allowance. This is lower than England (1.2%) and West Midlands (1.5%). The largest proportion of claimants (53%) have been claiming for less than 6 months, whilst a quarter have been claiming for more than 12 months.

Herefordshire gender pay gap was larger compared to most of the West Midlands and neighbouring authorities (women's earnings were 23% lower than men's); the overall gap in the West Midlands was 20% and 17% for England as a whole.

Other related points regarding low income is children living in families in receipt of out of work benefit (May 2014) for Herefordshire was 3,390 children (0-15 years) which equates for 10.7% of that age group⁶.

An estimated 260 Not Employment or Education (NEETs) young people who are not in training or economically active were known to the local authority in 2015. This equates to 4.5% of all 16-18 year olds resident in the county. The 2015 figures has risen slightly in 2016 to 266 young people, but has seen a decrease in previous years.

In Herefordshire 4,300 children (14%) under the age of 16 live in income deprived households. There are ten areas of the county where more than one out of every four children live in income deprivation – six of these areas fall in the most deprived in England, specific areas are in Leominster and South Hereford wards⁷.

Another measure of poverty is the number of free school meals (FSM) awarded – this is based on parents receiving a qualified welfare benefit. For Herefordshire one in ten children and young people have FSM compared to one in four in the UK. Also, Herefordshire has also seen an increase in the percentage of household experiencing fuel poverty (from 14.5% in 2011 to 16.4% in 2012) which is higher than the West Midlands and England⁸.

⁵ Sexual Identity: by Age Group, January to December 2012 Integrated Household Survey

⁶ Proportion of children in out-of-work benefit households measure for 2014, Child Poverty Unit for DWP

⁷ Understanding Herefordshire, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016

⁸ Understanding Herefordshire, 2015

Residents applicable for housing benefit at the current time is 13,000 – though this figure will flex up and down dependent on people’s circumstances.

6.2 Service use by Low Income and survey comments

The concept of a public library service was based on ensuring books were available to the masses to support education and it is part of the 1964 Act that public library membership is free. Legally books cannot be charged for, though costs for supplying other services may be recouped. Free public access computers are available at all Herefordshire libraries except Peterchurch (the smallest site). Free wifi is available at most libraries. This reduces the financial barrier of people going online and enables customers on low income to access information and apply for services.

There are a number of services that can be accessed by people in libraries and customer services sites that may be particularly relevant to people on low income. These include:

- Applying for benefits and services
- Applying for jobs online
- Emergency payments
- Free access to information
- Free access to books to support learning and literacy
- Homepoint services of people in need of affordable housing
- Signposting to relevant department or organisation for further support

The number of people with housing benefit and council tax queries for 2015/6 is outlined below.

Face to Face and telephone benefit and council tax queries

Customer Service Facilities	Benefits and council tax queries
phone contact to customer services	41,454
Hereford	15,502
Leominster	2,638
Ross-on-Wye	2,156
Ledbury	484
Kington	43
Bromyard	413
totals	62,690

As part of the consultation survey results those on a low income were considered also an ‘at risk group’ that would need to be considered. Also a focus group feedback said that the computers are often full so can't use them for job searches or writing CVs.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport has measured the public’s usage of libraries in England since 2005. In the 12 months to March 2016, it reported that 33.4% of adults had used a public library, compared with 48.2% of adults in 2005/2006. However, the report reveals that although declines have been seen across all demographic groups over the last decade, the largest declines are for the “urban prosperity” group, down from 57.3% to 37.8%, and the “wealthy achievers” group, down from 50.9% to 33.5%. By contrast, adult library users in the “hard-pressed” group fell by just seven percentage points over the same period, from 40.9% to 33.5%.

6.3 Summary of poverty and low income

- Though level of employment are high compared to regional and national figures, average income levels are lower
- There are specific areas of support customer services and libraries offer people on low income, ranging from help with claiming benefits to the availability of free books
- There are specific areas of low income in the county where a case for council support for services could be made (see below)
- Poverty and low income often has an impact on access services e.g. non-car ownership (see below).

7. Geography and Travel

7.1 Profile of Herefordshire on Geography and Travel

The following tables shows the population spread across the county and age profile in different areas.

Population spread

Area	Mid-year estimates 2014	% of population 2014
Hereford (urban city and town)	60,000	32.1
Leominster (urban city and town)	11,900	6.4
Ross on Wye (urban city and town)	10,900	5.8
Ledbury (rural town and fringe)	9,800	5.2
Bromyard (rural town and fringe)	4,600	2.5
Kington (rural town and fringe in a sparse setting)	3,400	1.8
Other urban or town and fringe (e.g. Holmer, Credenhill)	7,200	3.8
Rural village and dispersed	79,400	42.4

Population of particular age living in different types of areas, mid -2014

Type of area	All ages %	Ages 65-84 %	Age 85+ %
Urban city and town (Hereford, Leominster and Ross)	47	39	46
Rural – town and fringe (Bromyard, Kington, Ledbury, Credenhill, Clehonger)	11	11	15
Rural – village and dispersed	42	30	39
Herefordshire county	100	100	100

Office of National Statistics. Figures rounded to the nearest 100; change calculated based on rounded figures.

Another factor to consider is the availability of own transport – from the 2011 census 25.6% of households had no car or van. A report from 2015 emphasised the role played by transport in reducing loneliness and social isolation later in life⁹.

⁹ Promising approaches to reducing loneliness and isolation in later life, Age UK and Campaign to End Loneliness, 2015

In terms of geography the index of multiple deprivation¹⁰ is a combined measure of the individual determinants of health and quality of life that can be viewed at a ward level. The county has affluent areas where residents enjoy good health and wellbeing outcomes, alongside areas which rank amongst the most deprived in England where residents have significantly poorer outcomes.

Based on the terminology and definition the most “deprived” areas of the county are in Hereford city and the market towns of Leominster, Ross-on-Wye and for the first time Bromyard. There are currently 12 LSOAs¹¹ in the county that are in the 25% most deprived nationally; four more than there were in 2010 - ‘Leominster - Gateway’, ‘Hereford City centre’, ‘Courtyard’ and ‘Bromyard Central’. ‘Golden Post - Newton Farm’ remains the most deprived area in the county – the only LSOA¹ to be in the 10% most deprived nationally. The least deprived areas are in Hereford city and the surrounding rural area, Ross-on-Wye, and Ledbury.

7.2 Service Use by Geography

The table below shows use of libraries by geography, and the spread of customer service use in the market towns.

Library and customer service use across the county for 2015-16

Library	Hours open per week	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Hereford / Town Hall	37	96,692	50	101,493	8,677	18 / 0	11,594	7,824
<i>Hereford 2014-15</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>184,434</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>175,638</i>	<i>11,840</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>25,359</i>	<i>15,555</i>
Leominster	35.5	102,211	55	109,912	6,984	12	11,775	8,424
Ross-on-Wye	35.5	103,683	56	97,997	7,093	11	10,139	6,991
Ledbury	32.5	110,450	65	57,545	3,870	5	4,311	3,126
Belmont	38	34,697	22	45,877	4,084	2	2,105	1,031
<i>Belmont 2014-15</i>	<i>22.5</i>	<i>22,527</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>26,100</i>	<i>2,390</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1,028</i>	<i>849</i>
Kington	18	20,769	22	17,037	1,880	7	2,265	3,302
Bromyard	24	12,448	9	17,560	1,769	7	2,114	1,459
Colwall	15.5	11,138	15	13,241	1,482	5	1,324	1,194
Leintwardine	9.5	2,769	7	5,183	563	1	77	49
Weobley	6	2,491	8	4,454	482	3	152	355
Peterchurch	10	1,890	4	3,108	429	0	n/a	n/a
Delivered Services	n/a	1,607	n/a	22,218	2,161	0	n/a	n/a
Stock Unit	n/a	n/a	n/a	15,968	315	0	n/a	n/a
Herefordshire	261.5	500,845	314	511,593	39,789	71	45,856	33,755

¹⁰ The Indices of Deprivation 2015 provide a set of relative measures of deprivation across England, based on seven different domains of deprivation - (i) income; (ii) employment; (iii) education, skills & training; (iv) health & disability; (v) crime; (vi) barriers to housing and services and (vii) living environment

¹¹ LSOA refers to Local Super Output Area, representing a geographical area with a minimum size of 5000 residents and 2000 households, or an average population size of around 7,500. LSOAs improve the reporting of small area statistics.

Customer services use in Market Towns for 2015-16

Customer Service Centres	Face to Face enquiries	% of customers from same postcode as centre
Leominster	6,764	74%
Ross-on-Wye	5,529	86%
Ledbury	2,422	50%
Kington	478	61%
Bromyard	1,588	43%
totals	16,781	

(Comparable to Hereford customer service face to face queries at 40,057)

7.3 Consultation research by Geography

The following table of users shows the method of transport customers used to visit a library. People were most likely to drive themselves, or walk.

Q2. How did you get there? (tick all that apply)	Number	2016 %	2013 %
Car (drove myself)	1,131	50	41
Walked	1,072	48	44
Public transport (bus or train)	317	14	10
Car (lift from someone else)	180	8	8
Cycle or motorcycle	115	5	4
Community transport	98	0	1
Taxi	5	0	<1
Total responses	2,211	98	
Not answered	43	2	
Base	2,254		

7.4 Summary of geography

- Providing services to a scattered population across a large geographic area is a challenge and often additional resources are required to provide services to a spread and sparse population
- Consideration needs to be given to areas with high level of “deprivation” when mapping the delivery of service and next to use
- Ability to travel is emerging as an issue in accessing services, specifically for people without their own transport if rurality based combined with not accessing services on-line
- Hereford is the core centre for customer services queries (and via the phone), whilst library use is spread across the county.

8. Profile of Mosaic Public Sector

Mosaic Public Sector is a customer segmentation tool that classifies households and postcodes into one of 15 groups based on the *likelihoods* of the people living in them to have particular characteristics. It is unlikely that a household in a particular group will have every characteristic typical to that group, but it gives additional insight into likely preference and behaviours that are not available elsewhere.

In terms of needs and impact assessment the groups that are most relevant, based on user profile or likely to need support from the council, are as follows:

F: Senior security - The most elderly group (average age of 75); living independently with property equity gives them a reassuring level of financial security. Some are living with their long-time spouse, but a larger number are now living alone, and women outnumber men. C: 6,400 of the population; 7.7%.

L: Transient renters – generally single people, typically in their 20s and 30s, who pay modest private-sector rents for low cost homes. Many work full-time, however their lower skilled jobs mean that incomes are often limited. C: 5,000 of the population; 6.2%.

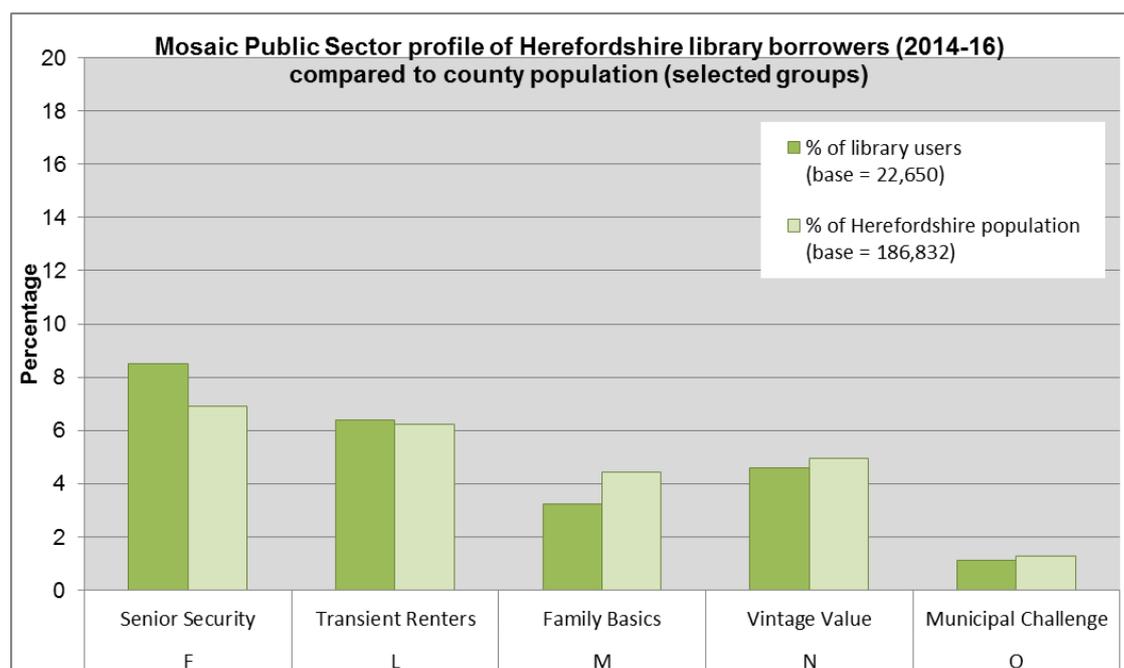
M: Family basics - families with children who have limited budgets and can struggle to make ends meet. Homes are low cost and are often found in suburban areas with fewer employment options. Some own their own homes, but more than half rent from social landlords. Families have the support of tax credits, but significant levels of financial stress still exist. C: 4,000 of the population; 4.8%.

N: Vintage value - elderly people (particularly women) who mostly live alone, either in social or private housing, often built with the elderly in mind. Levels of independence vary, but with health needs growing and incomes declining, many require an increasing amount of support. C: 4,300 of the population; 5.2%.

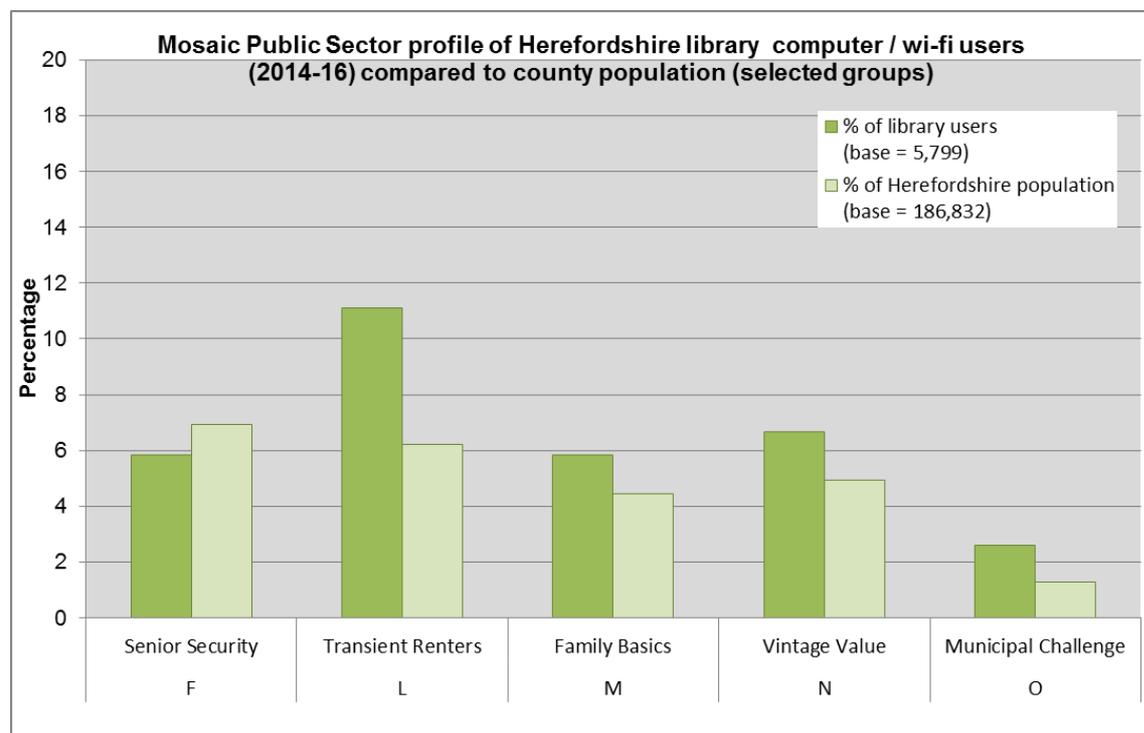
O: Municipal challenge - long-term social renters living in low-value flats in urban locations, or small terraces on outlying estates - limited employment options and correspondingly low household incomes. C: 1,500 of the population; 1.8%.

The chart below shows the profile of people (residents) who borrowed from Herefordshire libraries in 2014-16 compared to the profile of the county's population. Borrowers have a broadly similar profile to the population as a whole.

Groups less likely to be borrowers than would be expected given their proportion in the population include some of those who are most likely not to have a car and more likely to use the internet to self-serve, although the percentage differences are very small.



Users of the library computers and wifi facilities have quite a different profile to the population where more people with lower incomes make use of these services.



The mosaic profiling also illustrates the demographic groups considered less likely to use the internet in the county. This is illustrated below:

	Herefordshire Households no.	Herefordshire %	UK households %
N: Vintage value	4,300	5.2%	6.8%
M: Family basics	4,000	4.8%	7.2%
O: Municipal challenge	1,500	1.8%	6.5%
F: Senior security	6,400	7.7%	8.5%
<i>Total</i>	16,200	19.4%	29.0%

In total, these groups comprise 16,200 Herefordshire households – a fifth of all households in the county (19.3%). This is relatively low by national comparison: 29% of UK households are in one of these four groups. With the exception of “senior security” the groups represent those expected to be on lower income equating to 9,800 households.

9. Electronic Delivery of Service/Digital Exclusion

This needs and impact assessment considers digital exclusion because of the increased reliance of services being accessed on-line. This data assesses who currently use and don't use the internet, the barriers for being on-line, and any mitigation that can be put in place.

9.1 Use and non-use of the internet

In 2015 87.9% of adults have used the internet in the last 3 months, over three quarters of adults in Great Britain used the internet every day, or almost every day (78%, 23.1 million); and 66% of adults had accessed the internet using a mobile phone¹².

Herefordshire's use levels are slightly below the overall UK percentage as the below table shows and compares to other areas in the West Midlands.

Percentage of recent and lapsed internet users/internet non-users, by geographical location

	Ever used %	Never used %
	2016	2016
UK (persons aged 16 years and over)	87.9	12.0
West Midlands	85.7	14.1
County of Herefordshire	82.2	17.8
Worcestershire	87.3	12.4
Warwickshire	90.8	9.0
Telford and Wrekin	93.6	6.4
Shropshire CC	82.7	17.3
Stoke-on-Trent	87.7	12.3
Staffordshire CC	83.1	16.8
Birmingham	87.3	12.3
Solihull	82.2	17.8
Coventry	89.5	10.5
Dudley and Sandwell	82.5	17.3
Walsall and Wolverhampton	82.1	17.8

Internet Users 2016, Office for National Statistics, 20 May 2016

Information from the Office for National Statistics shows that certain protected characteristics are less likely to use the internet. This is particularly based on age – whilst almost all adults 16-44 years have used the internet recently (in the last three months), older aged people have consistently shown the lowest rates of use with only 4 in 10 adults over the age of 75 using the internet regularly¹³ (this corresponds with the Mosaic Public Sector findings).

“While we have seen a notable increase in internet usage across all groups in recent years, many older and disabled people are still not online, with two-thirds of women over 75 having never used the internet.”
Pete Lee, Surveys and Economic Indicators Division, Office for National Statistics

Also difference in use between genders is higher in older age. Though there is little difference in the rates of internet use between men and women in all age groups under 65 years of age - though the largest rise in recent internet use are women aged 75 and over.

Recent and lapsed internet users and internet non-users, by age group and sex

Age	2016	Used in the last 3 months %	Not-used over 3 months %	Never used
All*	Men	89.4	1.7	8.7
	Women	86.4	1.9	11.6
16-24	Men	99.0	0.2	0.4

¹² Internet Access – Households and Individuals 2015, Office for National Statistics, 6 August 2015

¹³ Source: Internet Users in the UK 2016, Office for National Statistics, 20 May 2016

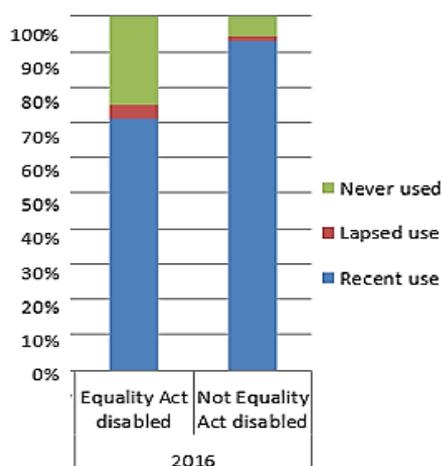
	Women	99.4	0.2	0.2
25-34	Men	98.8	0.5	0.4
	Women	99.1	0.4	0.4
35-44	Men	98.1	0.6	1.1
	Women	98.3	0.4	1.2
45-54	Men	95.0	1.5	3.3
	Women	94.9	1.2	3.7
55-64	Men	88.2	2.6	9.1
	Women	88.3	2.7	8.8
65-74	Men	75.8	4.1	20.0
	Women	72.5	4.6	22.8
75+	Men	46.7	4.5	48.8
	Women	32.6	5.0	62.2

*Internet Users 2016, Office for National Statistics, 20 May 2016 - Persons aged 16 years and over

Recent internet use increased for economic inactive and retired adults - retired category of economic activity has increased by 19.1% since 2011, followed by the economically inactive category increasing by 13.5%.

Disabled people are less likely to use the internet with a quarter of disabled adults had never used the internet (2016). There were 0.5 million disabled adults who had last used the internet over 3 months ago. In 2016, 97.3% of disabled adults aged 16 to 24 years were recent internet users, compared with 99.4% who were not disabled. Of disabled adults aged 75 years and over, 30.8% were recent internet users, compared with 48.1% who were not disabled.

Recent and lapsed internet users and internet non-users, and disability UK



Internet Users 2016, Office for National Statistics, Persons aged 16 years and over, May 2016¹⁴

The most common reason for using the internet to interact with public authorities or services was to obtain information from websites (33% of adults), followed by submitting completed forms (30%) and downloading official forms (24%).

¹⁴ Equality Act disabled' refers to those who self-assess that they have a disability in line with the Equality Act definition of disability. A number of respondents who chose not to declare whether they had a disability have been included within the category 'Not Equality Act disabled'.

9.2 Trends and barriers to Use

There is significant evidence to indicate that more people are using the internet:

- Since 2015, the number of disabled adults who had used the internet in the last 3 months has increased by 6.8% to 8.6 million in 2016
- 89.4% of men (22.8 million) and 86.4% of women (23.1 million) were recent internet users, up from 87.9% and 84.6% in 2015
- Women aged 75 and over, had seen the largest rise in recent internet use in 2016, up 169% from 2011
- 25.0% of disabled adults had never used the internet in 2016, down from 27.4% in 2015
- Economically inactive adults who had never used the internet or who used the internet more than 3 months ago has decreased by 13.3% since 2011.

However, there is evidence of barriers to use. In 2015, 86% of households (22.5 million) had an internet connection. This was up from 84% in 2014 and 57% in 2006. Of the 3.7 million households with no internet access, 53% of households reported that they didn't need it. 31% said they did not have the internet in their household due to a lack of computer skills.

Reasons for households not having internet access, 2015

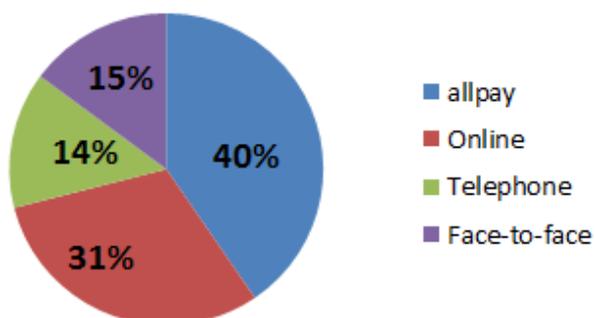
	%
Don't need internet (not useful, not interesting, etc.)	53
Lack of skills	31
Equipment costs too high	14
Access costs too high (telephone, broadband subscription)	12
Have access to the internet elsewhere	7
Privacy or security concerns	5
Physical or sensorial disability	5
Other reason	14

Internet Access - Households and Individuals 2015, Office for National Statistics, 6 August 2015

Fastershire is the broadband delivery programme for Herefordshire established to reach premises with fibre that the commercial providers had no plans to deliver to due to a low return of investment in deployment in rural areas. National and local governments have therefore jointly invested in the delivery of the fibre broadband networks to address this issue. By December 2016 over 35k premises in the Fastershire eligible areas of Herefordshire will be able to access connections of over 30Mbps and combined with the BT commercial programme 80-90% of the premises in the county will have access to a fibre connection. With additional funding already committed a second stage of the programme will aim to reach all premises that need a fibre connection by the end of December 2018.

9.3 IT use by Service

Of payments to the council the following chart shows 31% payments are made on-line:



The Chartered Institute of Chartered Accountants (CIPFA) recorded the number of web visits to the Herefordshire library service website and online catalogue (Prism). As the table shows there has been a steady increase over the past four years. In 2014-15 virtual visits increased sharply, coinciding with improvements to the Prism website.

Web visits and on-line catalogue for Herefordshire library site

Web Visits	Number
2012-13	24,468
2013-14	40,109
2014-15	65,693
2015-16	46,114

CIPFA, 2013 – 2016

The table below shows the number of sessions at each of the sites. The usage varies and has reduced in some instances which are against the trend of increased IT use generally. This could be due to more people purchasing their own equipment to access the internet (including mobile devices) and using the centre's wifi access.

Number of public access PC sessions per sites

Library sites	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015/6
Hereford P.C. Sessions	38,166	37,355	35,868	32,264	25,359	12,297*
Leominster P.C. Sessions	17,957	17,455	16,604	14,655	11,890	11,774
Ross P.C. Sessions	14,655	16,393	18,888	14,195	10,269	10,225
Ledbury P.C. Sessions	8,014	6,415	7,313	5,969	3,074	4,311
Bromyard P.C. Sessions	11,076	12,201	11,333	5,802	3,855	2,766
Kington P.C. Sessions	5,381	5,619	5,472	4,765	2,518	2,271
Belmont P.C. Sessions	1,133	1,084	1,027	1,092	1,028	2,126
Colwall P.C. Sessions	3,824	3,526	3,362	2,842	1,498	1,368
Weobley P.C. Sessions	223	128	113	147	123	152
Leintwardine P.C. Sessions	52	81	101	151	86	77

Herefordshire Council

Herefordshire library members can now borrow a range of e-books and e-audio free of charge via the Herefordshire Libraries OneClickDigital site. In 2015-16 Herefordshire library members

borrowed 547 e-books and 426 e-audio items. In November 2014 the service also launched an online local history website called www.herefordshirehistory.org.uk to house photographs, maps, newspapers and other material on the history of Herefordshire. There are currently 40,570 items on the Herefordshire History website, in 1,766 separate collections.

9.4 Survey results

Respondents who attend a library or customer service centre very regularly are more likely to do the following tasks compared to those using it less frequently:

- Use the public access computers
- Use the Wi-Fi
- Pay a bill or access a council service
- Research

Users when asked what is important in terms of use of customer services and library – 37% said free wifi and public access to PCs. Users when asked what else would you like to be able to use or do 33% of respondents stated IT courses including internet training (third most important behind courses and classes and information advice and signposting).

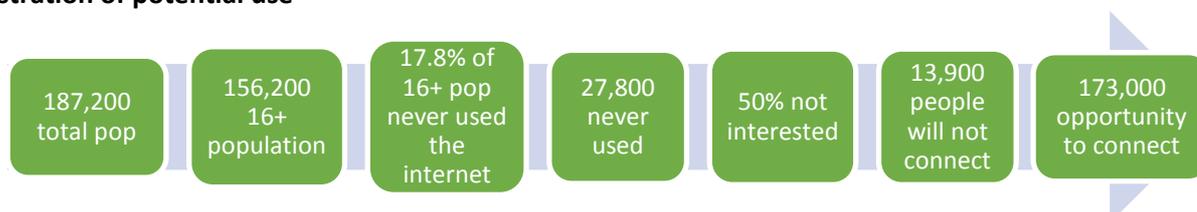
If the service was withdrawn over half respondents said they would find information on-line – indicating that half could. Though 39% respondents felt they needed to speak to someone in person and 29% felt their information will not be safe on-line.

As regards non-users 74% knew about computers at the libraries but didn't need them, with 62% knowing about the wifi but again did not need to use it. Focus group feedback suggests people would use the PCs for job seeking if available.

9.5 Summary on digital use

Once good speeds are implemented across Herefordshire a significant number of people will be able to use the internet. Based on current data 17.8% of the adult population have never used the internet, and research shows that 50% of these non-users (13,900 of the population) are not interested in going on line. This leaves the potential for 173,000 of the Herefordshire population to be internet users once current network and other barriers are overcome. This calculation is illustrated below.

Illustration of potential use



Other summary points to consider:

- Older people are less likely to use the internet, however there is significant rise in use – specifically in traditional non-users
- 30% of those who do not have an internet connection say they do not because they do not have the skills
- Public access PCs available at libraries reduces the cost barrier to internet use, as does availability of free wifi

- A Cross-European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries¹⁵ illustrates that access to public access PCs are important as a first step into internet use and important for certain groups
- There is opportunity for more online payment transactions and Job Seeking.

10. Impact on employees

The impact assessment focuses on the effects of change of service on users and customers. However, consideration needs to be given to staffing who will be affected by any alternative delivery model. The impact of the change to staff will be considered in any service redesign, though on initial assessment risk of impact could be specifically linked to disability based on changes to work practices, location, office layout changes, and use of IT / software. Any impact on disability will be mitigated through reasonable adjustments in discussion with the individual staff affected.

11. Combined Factors and Protected Priorities

This needs and impact assessment evaluates the potential effects of service change on the protected characteristics – which include geography and poverty for this report. Also to be considered is that a person could face a combination of characteristics which would have an escalating effect, as well as characteristics affecting people at different stages of their lives. A brief literature review conducted for the consultation found common trigger points for starting or renewing library use was based on taking up study, becoming unemployed, having children or retiring¹⁶.

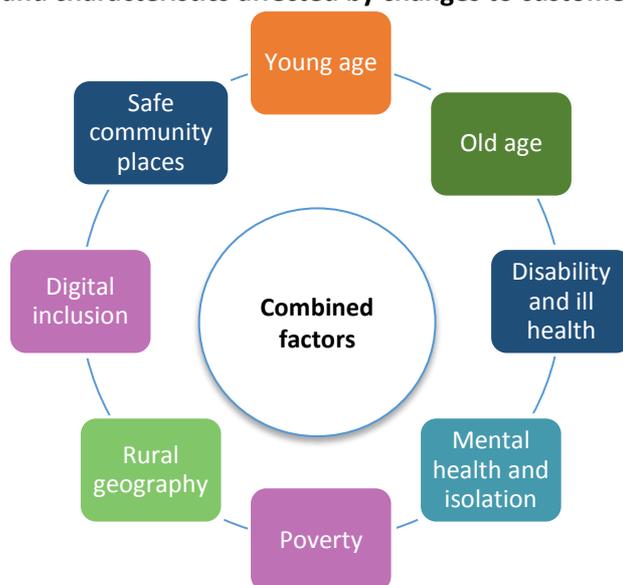
The consultation research found age was the single most common characteristic that respondents felt needed support, cited by nearly a quarter of the comments; particularly older people (15% of all comments) and children/young people (9% of all comments). Disability was cited in nearly a fifth of comments, particularly those with mobility issues, sight and hearing. Following that was the importance of having face to face support and the risk of social isolation if that service and support was not there, this was particularly in relation to elderly people. Those who are disadvantaged or on a low income were considered also an 'at risk group' that would need to be considered.

A key aspect is to ensure change does not impact on people at highest risk. Mosaic data shows that the lowest income groups account for c9,800 households, which corresponds to 13,000 people are currently claiming housing benefit. Some of these residents will also be supported by the council by different departments and others will be able to access services electronically, leaving a residual of citizens who will continue to need customer services and library support.

¹⁵ Cross-European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries, March 2013, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

¹⁶ What do the public want from libraries, a practitioner's guide, Museums, Libraries and Archive Service, 2010.

Prevailing factors and characteristics affected by changes to customer services and libraries



From the survey consultation in terms of what should be done to protect these groups, the overwhelming single response from respondents specifically asking to “keep the libraries open”. Easy access was identified as a key aspect to support those with protected characteristics, this was largely about keeping libraries local for a rural county; as well as easy to park, enter the building.

The other suggestions were around the following topics:

- provide more classes/information
- making facilities community resource/hub
- offer more services in one place
- making it a free service
- staff training
- maintain or extend opening hours

The below table outlined the key factors and characteristics to be impacted on changes to customer services and libraries, and mitigation suggestions.

Factors and characteristic	Mitigation suggestions
Age: Older – there are a number of factors affecting older people as high number of users of the library service, are less likely to use digital services and mobility and accessing services generally can be difficult with high percentage of older people living outside of the urban areas.	To continue with the Delivered Library Service to support housebound older people; training programmes for on-line use; library presence across the county where possible and continued support for community libraries. Provision of large print resources in all libraries. Provide access to Books on Prescription resources to support people with dementia and their families/carers.
Age: Young - children are high users of the library service and participation is supportive of education attainment and a resource for learning. Libraries are also “safe” places free to use.	Support continuation of the Schools Library Service, and access to book stock for children at libraries with special campaigns such as the summer reading challenge. Review spaces in each of the centres to accommodate other services for children.

<p>Disability and ill health - disabled people could have a range of complex needs that customer services can support with; disabled people are less likely to use the internet to access goods and services; a great deal of carer support takes place in the county.</p>	<p>For customer services to focus on a range of needs affecting the individual. Continue where possible a network of libraries, well-being support and activities for disabled people and their carers. Provision of large print resources in all libraries. Provide access to audio books and online resources.</p>
<p>Mental health and isolation - mental health issue and isolation can affect any age.</p>	<p>Early help through library activities and customer services to address mental health e.g. books on prescription; support for local community libraries with volunteering opportunities; continuation with Delivered Library Service for people who are isolated through being housebound. Provide access to Books on Prescription resources to support people with mental health issues.</p>
<p>Rural geography - the sparse nature of the county makes it difficult to physically access services; however phone and face to face contact is required due to the nature of the query or the requirements of the service. Access to travel is also a factor for rural areas.</p>	<p>Continue to offer a phone service and face to face to those who need it. Community libraries and the network of market town libraries can address elements of rural isolation. Continue to develop access to digital library resources, e.g. eBooks and local history.</p>
<p>Poverty – a strong combined factor that impacts on people’s quality of life and life chances. Libraries and general customer services is free to use.</p>	<p>Continue a level of support and advice on council tax and housing benefits via appointments for people who need advice. Wifi and public access PCs retained as free to use, with enhanced computer use to support job seekers.</p>
<p>Digital inclusion – there will be residents who will never use the internet (generally older people); however for many on-line is a way of accessing services in a way convenient to them once barriers such as training, cost and connectivity are reduced.</p>	<p>Improvements in council web transactions; continue with free wifi at libraries; free to use public access computers; course and classes on use; roll-out of broadband across the county.</p>
<p>Safe, community places – though race and religious beliefs not emerging as a key issue for customer services and libraries there is a link to libraries creating “safe” and neutral spaces. The same principle applies to other characteristics.</p>	<p>Libraries and customer service centres as universal, safe, community spaces; provide shared services with information and guidance; continue with support for community libraries.</p>
<p>Language – support the learning and development needs for people who have English as a second language.</p>	<p>Books in different languages at schools library service and as part of the reading stock. To also provide the centres as a welcoming place, computer and wifi access and a place to access information.</p>



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	13 October 2016
Title of report:	Smallholdings disposal plan
Report by:	Cabinet member contracts and assets

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To approve a detailed smallholdings disposals programme.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the disposals programme as set out in appendix 1 be approved and specifically:**
- 1) the smallholdings estate be offered to the market by way of informal tender;**
 - 2) marketing of the portfolio commences in spring 2017;**
 - 3) the smallholdings estate be offered for sale as a whole, as sub estates and as individual farms;**
 - 4) smaller parcels of land or groups of buildings should be divided as sub-lots where premium prices are achievable to increase total sale**

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Tony Featherstone, head of corporate asset management on Tel (01432) 383368

receipts.

- 5) an overage clause be applied to all sales in relation to permitted development rights and otherwise on a case by case basis as indicated by development potential;
- 6) all farm business tenancies with a termination date in advance of 30 September 2017 be extended to that date; with the exception of a dairy tenancy which will be extended to 1 December 2017;
- 7) the contract for the legal services required to support the sales preparation and sales execution be awarded to Lidders LLP; at a target cost of no greater than £50K;
- 8) authority be given to the director for economy communities and corporate to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the above recommendations and, following consultation with the relevant cabinet member and section 151 officer, to conclude sales.

Alternative options

- 1 Do nothing; this is not recommended as the policy decision to undertake a structured disposal of the smallholdings estate has already been taken and disposal receipts are essential to the delivery of the medium term financial strategy.
- 2 An alternative programme and strategy be undertaken. The council has appointed Fisher German as its professional agent to give advice and undertake the disposal to meet the requirements of cabinet's brief to achieve the approved objectives of the sale.

Reasons for recommendations

- 3 To implement the policy approved by cabinet on 3 December 2015 and the disposals plan approved by cabinet on the 14 April 2016.

Key considerations

- 4 On 3 December 2015 cabinet approved a new smallholdings policy which included the decision to undertake a structured disposal of the entire smallholding estate (with the exception of four specified sites which were retained for future development potential). The policy requires that the disposal involved, on a case by case basis, the consideration of all options and the commissioning of expert independent professional advice to ensure that best value is obtained for the tax payer.
- 5 On 14 April 2016, cabinet approved the process to appoint an agent from the ESPO 2700 framework to develop for cabinet consideration recommendations about the structure and timing of the disposals and that on a case by case basis, all options are considered and ensure that best value is obtained for the tax-payer.
- 6 Following a procurement process, Fisher German were appointed by the council in July 2016 as its professional agent.

- 7 It was agreed that the following criteria, be used by cabinet to decide between disposal options to be brought forward by the agent:
- Maximise financial return
 - Support the local economy (including the agricultural sector)
 - Supports the welfare of the council's tenants
 - Minimise timescale
 - Community benefits
- 8 Meetings have taken place with all 14 farm business tenants during January and February 2016. All tenants were offered the opportunity to meet with a cabinet member and senior manager, 12 tenants took up the offer and these meetings took place during May and June. A tenants meeting took place in August to enable the council to introduce Fisher German to the tenants; this meeting was well attended by all tenants and helped facilitate some early engagement between the parties.
- 9 A tenant support package was approved in early March, specifically to assist farm business tenants. In June it was agreed that the support package be made available to all the smallholding tenants regardless of tenure. All tenants have been asked to put in writing any expression of interest to purchase all or part of their farm. All tenants on farm business tenancies, especially those due to terminate in 2017, have also put in writing any requests for extensions of their existing tenancies.
- 10 It is important when selling land and farms to present the holdings as properly farmed units which are managed and cultivated in accordance with the season of the year. This goes a long way towards optimising value, and can also add to the value with the opportunity to sell growing crops and harvested crops. Where farms are neglected or unkempt the downside can be that buyers discount bids to offset the cost of bringing land back into a proper state of cultivation. Having farmhouses and buildings occupied will also ensure they are maintained in a serviceable condition, which will add to the appeal from a buyers' perspective.
- 11 The council's agents advise that those tenancies due to terminate in 2017, should be extended to run to September 2017 which will coincide with the farming season and allow tenants farming arable land to harvest crops prior to any sale. There is one tenant on a dairy farm, who has requested an extension to December 2017 to allow for the maize harvest. On that basis it is anticipated to target the completion of sales following harvest, and this is unlikely to have any detrimental effect on the sale price achieved. Where there is any opportunity to complete sales earlier this can either be subject to a right of holdover for the tenant to complete the harvest after completion of the sale, or on the basis of the buyer purchasing the growing crop at the date of completion. Again this is unlikely to adversely affect the sale price, whichever option is followed.
- 12 The method of offering the estate to the market is recommended to be by way of informal tender. The informal tender process will allow the council to follow a selection process for purchasers based on optimum price bid for individual lots or combination of lots or the entire portfolio. This route gives tenant farmers the best opportunity to bid. Informal tender guidance notes to prospective purchasers will clearly set out the procedure for interested parties in submitting offers. By setting

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Tony Featherstone, head of corporate asset management on Tel (01432) 383368

these “rules of engagement” at the outset and encouraging all potential buyers to carefully comply with them, the council will be able to assess all offers on a fair and even basis and give due consideration to the best strategy for concluding the portfolio sale based on the agents recommendations on the projects objectives.

- 13 The council is in the process of appointing an independent agent to negotiate and value tenant’s right compensation for end of tenancy, in line with nationally agreed guidelines, this appointment will have been made by the end of October 2016. It is essential that these figures are available at the launch of the sale.
- 14 All tenants will be given the opportunity to bid for individual lots, be it all or part of their current holding or another opportunity on remainder of the identified estate for disposal.
- 15 The council has undertaken a procurement exercise to secure additional legal specialist support to undertake the investigation of titles, preparation of sale packs and exchange and completion of sales to ensure that sales are able to be completed in a timely manner. The sale packs, searches and contracts will be available on an online data room at the launch of the sale to prevent delays in completion.
- 16 The work has been split into three stages: stage 1 is a rapid review of title information to identify any major issues; stage 2 is the development of the information packs to support the sales; and stage 3 is legal support for the transactions. Given the range of options available for the sales structure, it is difficult to precisely specify the amount of legal support that will be required at stage 2 and 3. The work was, therefore, tendered in the following way and the cost of the winning bid is:
 - a. Stage 1 - £5K (Fixed Fee)
 - b. Stage 2 - £10.5K (Fixed Fee – with provision within the contract for the legal firm to revise their pricing 14 days prior to the start of stage 2; the council has the option to cancel the contract and retender at that point)
 - c. Stage 3 – a blended hourly rate of £145 has been agreed and will be used to calculate the price when the exact scope of works can be determined. However, based on Fisher German advice regarding hours/scope for stage 3, it is expected that the majority of the work for the legal firm sits within Stage 2.
- 17 The overall cost of legal support for the sale is, therefore, estimated to be no greater than £50K.
- 18 The MTFS includes gross forecast receipts for all asset disposals, of which these are a part, of £60m over the four year strategy period. The smallholding disposals receipts (whether from this programme or from those sites reserved for development) will contribute to that overall total. Agricultural land values appear to have reduced following the EU referendum, and as a consequence the agents advise that the estimated sale value to be achieved through the proposed programme of disposals is lower than originally anticipated however is not sufficiently different to materially affect the business case. The MTFS will be updated to reflect the new assumptions.

- 19 To ensure that sales complete in a timely manner following submission and assessment of informal tenders, delegated authority is sought to enable the director for economy, communities and corporate to take such decisions as are necessary in order to achieve a prompt sale.

Community impact

- 20 The report and its recommendations support the following priorities as identified in the Councils corporate plan:

- support the growth of our economy, and
- secure better services, quality of life and value for money

- 21 More specifically, the actions supported include:

- supporting economic growth and connectivity (including broadband, local infrastructure and economic development)
- making the best use of existing land and identifying new opportunities to enable existing businesses to stay and expand and for new businesses to locate to the area.
- securing the highest possible levels of efficiency savings and value for money to maximise investment in front line services and minimise council tax increases.
- reviewing the management of our assets in order to generate ongoing revenue savings, focusing on reducing the cost of ownership of our operational property by rationalising the estate and by improving the quality of the buildings that are retained.

Equality duty

- 22 The proposed sale of the estate is not expected to generate any negative impacts as identified under the council's public sector equality duty.

- 23 In general the rights of individual tenants will not be affected other than those which hold retirement tenancies which will revert to lifetime tenancies (and potential succession tenancies subject to a legal test). This will provide greater security to any affected tenants and therefore impact in a positive way.

Financial implications

- 24 The council's MTFS was approved in February 2016. Whilst the MTFS essentially sets out the future revenue plans for the council, it is also predicated upon the revenue implications of reducing historic debt and generating sufficient capital receipts to support the council's future capital investment priorities. Disposal of the smallholdings estate is anticipated to make a significant financial contribution.

- 25 The capital value of the estate would provide revenue savings through reduced debt payments. These savings are built into the approved savings plan for the MTFS period.

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- 26 The agent fees, legal fees and other associated fees will be deducted from the gross value received, up to a maximum of 4%. Fees and services above 4% will need to be addressed from property services revenue budgets.
- 27 The agents fees established through a competitive exercise are based upon 0.88% of gross sales value.

Legal implications

- 28 Marketing the smallholdings estate in differing size parcels will introduce flexibility on the Council's part as vendor and should have the effect of increasing capital receipts as the potential market will be greater. This will also be the case where parcels of land or groups of buildings are divided into sub-lots where the Council's agents identify those sub-lots which should attract a premium for disposal.
- 29 Capital receipts can potentially increase further in the future by the imposition of overage.
- 30 Extending farm business tenancies will constitute a deemed surrender of the existing lease and the grant of a new one. If the original leases were excluded from sections 24 to 28 of the LTA 1954, the court order, or statutory notice procedure (depending on when the lease was entered into), will not apply to the regranted lease. It may be just easier to grant a new tenancy on the same terms, but for the longer period. Accordingly Legal recommend, upon expiry, converting these tenancies into periodic FBTs which run for periods of less than a year. FBTs of such short duration can be terminated in accordance with common law. At common law, notice to quit must be at least equal to the period of the tenancy (for example, a month's notice to end a monthly tenancy) and end at the end of the relevant period. However, it is possible for the parties to agree that a different notice period will apply. Such replacements will provide the Council with maximum flexibility as Landlord going forward.
- 31 All the legal work pertaining to this disposal has been outsourced to Lidders LLP and in doing so procurement has been complied with.

Risk management

- 32 Risk: The timetable for capital receipts assumed in the MTFs is not met. Response: a robust plan and timetable for delivery of the sales will be developed and validated with our professional advisors in order to minimise this risk.
- 33 Risk: If some of the sites with development potential are not able to be brought forward, then the ability to support infrastructure schemes and derive enhanced value from the holdings will be lost. Response: the council is procuring a development partnership that aims to maximise the returns from the development of sites with potential. The management of the portfolio of related major projects, including infrastructure and development projects will be done in a coordinated way.
- 34 Risk: If the recommendations are not implemented in a visible and transparent manner and communications are not handled sensitively, then there is a risk of significant reputational loss to the council. Response: communications, any further consultation, and stakeholder management will be a key part of the project and will need to be appropriately resourced. This aspect of the project will be managed by the

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council's corporate communications team. A tenant support package has been developed, and tenants are being offered the opportunity for further meetings.

- 35 Risk: Land values may decrease; Response: the appointment of an agent to advise on the structure and timing of disposals will ensure the programme mitigates the risk.

Consultees

- 36 Ongoing dialogue with tenants will be afforded throughout the process and regular communications updating tenants on the progress of the disposal process have been promised.

- 37 The recommendations of GOSC task and finish group of October 2015 were only partially accepted:

2 were accepted in full.

3 were partially accepted with qualification

1 was rejected.

Appendices

Appendix 1 HC phase 1

Background papers

- None identified.

REPORT

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL SMALLHOLDINGS ESTATE

PHASE 1

Prepared for

Herefordshire Council

Report Date: 9 September 2016

Prepared by

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APPENDICES

- 1 Portfolio Summary
- 2 Estate Plans
- 3 Report Recommendations

1.0 PROJECT SUMMARY & KEY OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Herefordshire Council owns and manages a substantial smallholding estate across the county. On 3rd December 2015 Cabinet approved a new smallholdings policy which included the decision to undertake a structured disposal of the entire smallholding estate. The policy requires that the disposal, on a case by case basis, should consider all options and commission independent professional advice to ensure that best value is obtained for the tax payer.
- 1.2 Due to the size and complexity of the sale and the need to ensure that it is exposed to the widest possible market the Council has appointed Fisher German to undertake the project and this report comprises the first phase.
- 1.3 This report is required to set out options for the structure and timing of the disposals in order to achieve the stated objectives of the project which are to:
1. Maximise financial return;
 2. Support the welfare of the Council's tenants;
 3. Support the local economy (including the agricultural sector);
 4. Minimise timescales (within the timeframe of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020); and
 5. Secure Community benefits where practical.

2.0 THE PORTFOLIO

- 2.1 The extent of the smallholdings portfolio to be offered to the market is detailed in the spreadsheet included at **Appendix 1**. Whilst believed to be accurate, various details included on the spreadsheet are subject to final verification during the sale preparation process.
- 2.2 In summary, the portfolio extends to 4,180 acres (1,691 hectares) subdivided in 12 sub-estates stretching from Glewstone (south) to Leintwardine (north), to Woodcroft Farm(east) to Westbrook (west), and for ease of reference presently defined as follows:
- 40 Equipped farms (land equipped with a farmhouse and buildings)
 - 13 Land parcels (bare agricultural land)
 - 6 Potential farm building development opportunities (see paragraph 7.3)
- 2.3 The Estate plans in **Appendix 2** distinguish between farms and land let under life/retirement tenancies, and those let under short term Farm Business Tenancies or currently vacant. For ease of reference the holdings are presently defined as follows:
1. Farms –
 - 22 vacant or due to fall vacant within 12 months
 - 10 Lifetime tenancies, and
 - 8 retirement tenancies which convert to lifetime tenancies if sold into the private sector.

2. Land –

- 10 let under Farm Business Tenancies expiring from 2019 to 2026
- 3 FBTs expiring 2017 to 2018.

3. Development (see analysis in Paragraph 7) –

- 1 vacant site with planning permission granted
- 3 vacant sites with planning pending
- 2 sites with planning potential.

2.4 If we are instructed to proceed with the sale as recommended we will engage with tenants, working alongside the County Land Agent's department, with the intention of agreeing terms for the surrender of outstanding tenancies focusing on retirement and lifetime tenancies, with the prime objective to be adding value to the estate.

2.5 It is important when selling land and farms to present the holdings as properly farmed units which are managed and cultivated in accordance with the season of the year, as this goes a long way towards optimising value. Where farms are neglected or unkempt the downside can be that buyers discount bids to offset the cost of bringing land back into a proper state of cultivation. Having farmhouses and buildings occupied will also ensure they are maintained in a serviceable condition, which will add to the appeal from a buyers' perspective. We therefore advise in favour of the Council negotiating and agreeing extensions to existing tenancies, with those extensions running to September 2017. This will coincide with the farming season and allow tenants farming arable land to harvest crops prior to any sale. If sale completions follow harvest, we would not expect this to have any detrimental effect on the sale price achieved.

2.6 Any decision taken in accordance with the advice in paragraph 2.5 above should be communicated to tenants as soon as possible so they can plan cropping for the coming 2016/17 season. Delaying this decision could prevent tenants from establishing winter crops if adverse weather conditions prevail, and remove some of the strategic advantage the Council is seeking to achieve.

2.7 We also recommend a programme of garden upkeep and hedge trimming for vacant property and sub-estates using estate tenants as contractors where available. The hedge trimming work should be completed during the autumn of 2016 and spring of 2017.

3.0 TARGET MARKETS

3.1 Our marketing strategy will be designed to present the portfolio to the widest possible target audience including the estate tenants, to ensure that we fulfil the Council's instructions and the project objectives. The target markets will be assessed by reference to the portfolio as a whole but also having close regard to the lotting structure and potential for multiple sales producing the best overall outcome.

3.2 The specific markets and purchaser groups we will target include institutions and funds, private and corporate investors, major UK landowners, international purchasers, UK farmers, current tenants, adjoining/close landowners, tax motivated purchasers and lifestyle buyers.

4.0 DISPOSAL OPTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 For rural and residential property there are various methods of sale which may be implemented which we have given careful consideration to:

- 4.1.1 **Public auction** – the benefit of a public auction is that it is generally regarded as the method of sale most likely to determine market value and it does set clear timescales for the sale process. However, a number of prospective purchasers may be put off by the rigid nature of the process and the enhanced pre-acquisition due diligence required in anticipation of an auction. The principal reason for us advising against sale by public auction is the diversity and complexity of the Smallholdings Estate which makes it impossible to predict the likely balance of demand between purchasers for individual farms and those looking to acquire larger sub-estates or indeed the whole portfolio. An auction process is inflexible, would not allow consideration of offers for groups of properties, and would only be appropriate where a decision had been made to break up the estate into relatively small component parts, a strategy which may not deliver optimum financial return.
- 4.1.2 **Formal tender** – for the reasons stated above a formal tender process would also restrict the flexibility of the sale process and the Council's primary objective of achieving best value.
- 4.1.3 **Private treaty** – a large proportion of rural property sold in the UK is offered to the market by way of a traditional private treaty sale, and this can offer considerable flexibility in searching the market for purchasers. However, for the Herefordshire Smallholdings Estate this is likely to lead to a very protracted process and due to possible procrastination by prospective purchasers, unexpected renegotiations and the 'fall-through' of agreed sales the length of the project is likely to be significantly extended. Overall this will undoubtedly produce a negative effect on financial return.
- 4.1.4 **Informal tender** – offering the Smallholdings Estate to the market by way of informal tender is our recommended method of sale. This approach ensures the market is comprehensively canvassed for the best buyers to generate the highest selling price(s) within a fixed timeframe. Importantly the informal tender process will allow the Council to follow a selection process for purchasers, based on the optimum price bid for individual lots or combinations of lots or the entire portfolio. Of key importance is that offers can be assessed taking into account the ability to complete the purchase within the prescribed timescale. Importantly this route gives tenant farmers the best opportunity to bid.
- 4.2 Informal tender guidance notes to prospective purchasers will clearly set out the procedure for interested parties in submitting offers. By setting these 'rules of engagement' at the outset and encouraging all potential buyers to carefully comply with them the Council will be able to assess all offers on a fair and even basis and give due consideration to the best strategy for concluding the portfolio sale based on our recommendations and the project objectives.
- 4.3 Selling by informal tender allows for a short period following the tender date for offer consideration, enhanced due-diligence and information gathering plus the ability to enter into private negotiations with parties who have offered if potential reconfiguration of bids is deemed beneficial to the Council in meeting its prime objectives.

5.0 TIMING

- 5.1 Given the time of year for the Phase 1 Report and the sales preparations required to place the Smallholdings Estate effectively on the market we recommend that the marketing of the portfolio commences in spring 2017, as the spring and early summer seasons are traditionally the strongest periods of the year for rural property markets. The completion of sales can then be managed to coincide with tenancy end dates and the farming season, so a marketing campaign any earlier would not make financial sense.

- 5.2 The precise dates cannot be finalised yet but we anticipate a public launch date in late March to mid-April 2017. The exact timetable should be kept flexible until the new year when a thorough examination of sale preparatory work and legal preparations can be undertaken coupled with a review of rural property markets in the region. External factors should also be taken into account when fine tuning the timetable such as extreme economic or political events and even the weather pattern at the start of 2017. The programme for marketing will have the flexibility to accommodate adjustments to the timetable up to approximately 4 weeks prior to the target launch date.
- 5.3 The key events of the disposal programme are as follows:
- 5.3.1 **Information collation** – much of our efforts during the remainder of 2016 will be focused on collating sales information and property data, with a variety of due diligence work ahead of the 2017 marketing campaign. We will work closely with the property and legal teams within the Council to ensure that this stage is completed comprehensively within the required timescale. We will be setting up a dedicated online Data Room which will be at the hub of the marketing process and will serve as a comprehensive document library populated from November 2016.
- 5.3.2 **Marketing preparation** – commencing before the end of 2016, but the principal period for preparing the portfolio for open market sale will be January and February 2017.
- 5.3.3 **Launch date** – the official public launch date is likely to be between late March and mid-April 2017 when the portfolio is exposed to the market via the internet and the start of other supporting marketing initiatives. With the setting of the launch date we will also agree an advance notice period for informing key prospective purchasers for the entire portfolio, and buying agents who are likely to be acting for such prospective buyers.
- 5.3.4 **Tender process** – we recommend a marketing period following public launch date of 8-10 weeks leading up to the tender date. This is the date which we will set at the outset as the deadline and date for the submission of offers under the informal tender process. We will agree with you a post tender consultation period. During this period, which should ideally be no longer than seven to ten days, we will be seeking additional information on your behalf from prospective purchasers on any aspect of offers where there may be some ambiguity or clarification required. Essentially we will be entering into post-tender date negotiations with key prospective buyers where we advise that more advantageous terms may be potentially forthcoming. We propose setting an exchange of contracts target date of 7 days following the acceptance of individual offers or the conclusion of agreed heads of terms.
- 5.3.5 **Sale progression** – provided the Data Room is adequately populated with property information and comprehensive legal documentation to include draft contracts, replies to standard commercial and agricultural pre-contract enquiries, searches etc. there should not be a great deal of work to undertake as part of the sale progression phase. Nevertheless, some proposed transactions will require unexpected sale progression work and this stage will be handled with sufficient resource and urgency in close consultation with the Council's legal department.
- 5.3.6 **Completions** – we will need to agree with you target completion dates for the transactions. As a general guide one month following exchange of contracts would be a relatively normal completion timetable under an informal tender sale process

but this will need to be assessed on an individual property basis taking account of tenancies, requirements for vacant possession, need for holdover, etc.

6.0 LOTTING

6.1 We recommend that the Smallholdings Estate is offered for sale as a whole and in lots to widen market coverage, stimulate competitive interest and ensure best value is obtained.

6.2 By splitting the portfolio for marketing purposes a wider audience will be targeted and this will also identify to prospective purchasers the inherent value of individual properties. Even if the estate is eventually sold as a whole or in substantial portions, offers received for individual lots or a combination of lots will help significantly with negotiations and the maximising of bids.

6.3 Our proposed lotting strategy will be based on offering the Smallholdings Estate to the market on three levels:

- The entire portfolio
- A number of sub-estates - identified to offer a representative mix of tenancy types, of an appropriate critical mass, with a spread of geographical locations focused on groupings within the regions of the county, and targeted to appeal to the various classes of potential buyers.
- Individual farms / smallholdings – the sub-estates will in turn be divided into sub-lots so that individual farms and smallholdings can be offered independently to give maximum flexibility to the sale process;
- Smaller parcels of land or groups of buildings should be divided as sub-lots where premium prices are achievable to increase total sale receipts.

6.4 This sale strategy also addresses the concerns expressed by Tenants and Stakeholders and allows flexibility for inviting formal expressions of interest from sitting tenants, without prejudicing the primary objective of achieving best value from sitting tenants bidding in an open market campaign against the widest possible target audience.

6.5 A completed agency proposal would detail all the individual lots to be offered to the market and the associated guide price recommendations. Whilst our work to date allows us to confirm the proposed marketing divisions for over 50% of the portfolio, a significant number of lotting decisions remain to be made over the coming months. These cannot be finalised for a number of reasons including information provision, planning and development option considerations and particularly the unknown status of numerous tenancies and potential surrenders. Not only does the extent and positioning of vacant possession land have a material effect on capital value and pricing recommendations but it is a critical factor in finalising the optimum lotting strategy for the Estate and needs to be carefully considered in relation to the identified target markets. Over the coming weeks we will be able to gradually gain the information required to conclude our lotting advice and we envisage being able to present a comprehensive lotting plan, schedule and breakdown of recommended guide prices for the whole estate prior to Christmas 2016.

7.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 We will be liaising closely with the Herefordshire Council Estates Department to look at any parts of the portfolio where consideration needs to be given to planning matters and development potential or where such matters have been previously identified. The portfolio sale excludes sites which may offer new build opportunities such as, but not exclusively, land on the edge of Hereford city which potentially may

be affected by new road schemes. Hereford Council are taking other steps to realise the development potential of those sites.

- 7.2 The farms and land to be included in the sale portfolio lie beyond settlement development boundaries, and unless there is short term development potential our advice is that blanket overage/development clawback provisions designed to share in any future uplift in value are a strong disincentive to buyers and are not therefore recommended. We will however consider each individual property within the portfolio on its own merits and advise where appropriate if we consider that individual overage clauses should be included in contracts for sale. Such overage proposals will need to be highlighted in the marketing material and we will need to agree the main provisions of the clauses at an early stage, including the area, overage period, and share in uplift value.
- 7.3 We have identified six barn development sites, one with planning consent for residential conversion granted, three where a planning determination is awaited, and two with planning potential where no application has yet been submitted. We recommend offering these sites outside of the portfolio, on a site by site basis as planning consent is granted, targeting the development market to capture the full uplift in development value.
- 7.4 There is one exception to the use of overage and this applies to the opportunities that now exist to develop modern farm buildings under Permitted Development. We therefore recommend a blanket provision across the whole estate reserving a right for Hereford Council to receive a 30% share in any uplift in value arising from the granting of planning permission under Permitted Development for a period of 15 years from the date of sale.

8.0 PRICING STRATEGY

- 8.1 In due course we will provide recommended guide prices for individual farms/smallholdings, sub-estates and the portfolio as a whole. Provisional indications are that we would be recommending a total guide figure of around £35,000,000. Following our recent site inspections we do not envisage much deviation from this total but the breakdown of figures will show some significant price apportionment differences across sub-estates as lotting recommendations are concluded to present the optimum chance of maximising best value. This full schedule of guide prices will accompany our final lotting advice as detailed above.
- 8.2 Guide price levels will be set with the objective of assisting to generate competitive interest with a view to achieving the highest possible offers through the informal tender process. The guide prices will be formulated to take account of current market conditions, the different target audiences and the many individual factors which affect individual lots and their relationship to other properties within the portfolio and the likelihood of marriage value being generated. Guide prices should be set high enough to ensure best value is obtained but not set at levels which could potentially deter prospective purchasers from developing their interest. We will review the guide price recommendations taking market conditions and other relevant factors into account immediately prior to the agreed launch date.

9.0 BPS ENTITLEMENTS, FIXTURES & FITTINGS

- 9.1 Unless stated otherwise in the tenancy agreement we will assume the Basic Payment Scheme entitlements are the property of the Tenants and will be expressly excluded from the sale of the freehold property.
- 9.2 A Schedule of Tenants fixtures and fittings to be excluded from the sale should be agreed and made available in the Data Room for each individual property.

- 9.3 A Schedule of agreed Tenants' Improvements which will be included in the freehold sales but subject to compensation payable by the Council (Landlord) to the outgoing Tenant of each holding, will be drawn up and held confidentially. That schedule will not be available as part of the marketing material but will be prepared in sufficient detail to ensure that improvements remain at the date of completion of any sale in the same condition as at the time of marketing.

10.0 SALE PREPARATIONS

- 10.1 In preparing for the submission of the tender document and this Phase I report we have already undertaken significant background work. The next phase of the project will be preliminary sale preparations alongside the information gathering process.

- 10.2 We intend to set up an online Data Room which will serve two functions -

(1) as the hub for marketing activities so that prospective purchasers can be directed there for a detailed range of sales information about the portfolio. This will include maps, plans, particulars and photographs as part of a comprehensive suite of online promotional material, and

(2) as a document library and the source of legal information that prospective purchasers will require for offer considerations and the informal tender process. Whilst the marketing function of the Data Room will have general public access the document library is a secure, password protected database. A vetting procedure will be undertaken to ascertain the suitability of access to the document area but all genuinely interested parties and their professional advisors will be granted individual password entry. This is carefully controlled to ensure that all individual parties have unique access based on their identity which aids security but importantly allows us to monitor Data Room traffic flows invariably offering important intelligence in determining the level of interest of a potential buyer and the extent of their pre-offer investigations.

- 10.3 For the preparation of this report we have completed updated inspections of all properties to bring our assessments of value and advice on guide price levels into line with the current market. More detailed inspections of each property will take place over the coming months so that we can verify property information and have a thorough knowledge and close understanding of each component part of the portfolio which will be vital to the marketing process.

- 10.4 Liaising with the Council's appointed legal team will be an absolute priority to ensure that all the legal preparations are in place, and to allow the informal tender process to be successfully completed within the required timescales.

11.0 MARKETING

- 11.1 The marketing campaign for the portfolio needs to ensure that it reaches all of our target markets and the following are relevant to achieving this goal:

- 11.2 **Online strategy** – the focus of the marketing campaign will use online resources with the Data Room as the hub of information provision. The marketing side of the Data Room will be broken down into several easily identifiable areas providing a user friendly guide to the portfolio for interested parties.

- 11.3 The introduction to the sale will include an overview of the portfolio setting the background of the estate within the county, accompanied by location maps, summary schedules, etc. The individual farms and smallholdings will then be grouped into sub-estates under individual tabs within the Data Room to allow interested parties

to drill down to more detailed information on sub-estates and individual lots as they require.

- 11.4 **Brochures** – whilst most prospective purchasers will be content to gain all the information they need online, we will be providing hard copy brochures and other marketing materials to applicants on request. The hard copy brochures will mirror the online versions and suitable batches will be printed on demand. Copies of all draft brochures and other marketing material will be submitted to the Council for comment and approval before being finalised for printing and hosting online.
- 11.5 **Photography** – Good quality professional photographs showing each individual lot will be vital to the success of the marketing campaign. We propose to undertake the photographic project this season as we will get significantly better photographs now than those achievable in the early part of 2017 when everywhere will be looking wintery. In addition to ground based photography we intend to use drone cameras to show the extent of properties to better effect and their landscape settings.
- 11.6 **Floorplans** – our normal practice is to produce detailed floorplans of every residential property on the estate for inclusion within the brochures. The floorplans will include residential accommodation and domestic outbuildings. Where appropriate block plans will be produced showing agricultural buildings.
- 11.7 **Farm plans** – for each individual lot we will produce colour-coded OS Plans showing the property to be sold individually or in groupings to show each sub-estate. We understand that Herefordshire Council will provide the base mapping data to verify boundaries against Title documents. It is intended that these plans will be used for contract purposes and be Land Registry compliant.
- 11.8 **Location Maps** – the brochures and online presentations for each individual lot will include location maps. We will also provide an online location map for the entire portfolio showing the location of sub-estates.
- 11.9 **Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)** – we would be grateful for a Council schedule of all Energy Performance Certificates for estate residential properties which are not Listed Buildings. We will then commission EPCs for all outstanding properties. Asbestos Management Surveys may also be required.
- 11.10 **Database contacts** – the starting point for our marketing efforts will be the selective targeting of prospective purchasers already known to us. We have received a significant number of enquiries and expressions of interest from prospective purchasers for farms and smallholdings, sub-estates and the portfolio as a whole, and we have an extensive database of rural property purchasers which is shared between all our offices on a national basis, linked by collaborative software. Each target prospective purchaser and all of the estate tenants will be written to or emailed with preliminary information regarding the portfolio sale at predetermined dates to provide them with information of the sale timetable and short advance notice before the public launch date. This is an important part of the process of developing key interest. During the marketing process every enquiry received for the estate will be carefully logged on our centralised database with as much information as we can obtain regarding the identity of the prospective purchaser, their contact details, their likely acquisition interest and the source of their enquiry.

- 11.11 **Internet promotion** – in addition to the online Data Room there will be significant website promotion through a number of portals. Our proposal is to list the entire portfolio, the sub-estates and each individual lot as separate entities on the internet. This may produce over 70 online listings which will maximise the e-marketing activity. Prospective purchasers will be directed to the online Data Room for the estate but in addition to this public accessed website the portfolio will be promoted through the Fisher German website and a number of the prime property portals including Rightmove, OnTheMarket, Country Life and UKLand&Farms.
- 11.12 **Sale Boards** – with your approval we intend to erect numerous for sale boards across the estate immediately prior to the public launch date. These are likely to be a combination of agency flag boards and larger V-boards promoting both individual lots, sub-estates and possibly the entire portfolio. We intend to produce a schedule of proposed boards with their strategic locations shown on a series of plans for your approval.
- 11.13 **Advertising** – the portfolio will be advertised in a wide variety of media. In early 2017 a proposed advertising programme will be drawn up to cover three categories of potential publications:
- Local and regional newspapers: publications may include Hereford Times, Worcester News, Malvern Gazette/Ledbury Reporter, Gloucestershire Echo and Birmingham Post.
 - National newspapers: publications may include Financial Times, The Times, The Telegraph and The Sunday Times.
 - Sector magazines: publications may include Farmers Weekly, Estates Gazette, Country Life and Farmers Guardian.
- 11.14 **Editorial coverage** – we will seek to achieve maximum press coverage which will target local, regional, national and international publications. Our marketing department will liaise with the communications team for the Council and we employ a third party PR Agency – Advent Communications – who have worked with us for a number of years and have a strong and proven track record in generating positive press coverage.

12.0 VIEWING ARRANGEMENTS

- 12.1 All viewings to inspect any property within the portfolio will be by appointment through Fisher German, following strict protocols and in accordance with Health and Safety regulations. For each individual property within the portfolio we will undertake a risk assessment for viewings and take any actions as necessary.
- 12.2 Accompanied viewings will be arranged for all internal inspections, for properties where tenants are in residence, and for visits where prospective purchasers are in an advanced stage of deliberation and we believe that face to face contact would aid interest development and negotiations.
- 12.3 Unaccompanied viewings may be appropriate for certain external inspections by known prospective purchasers following standard vetting procedures for designated properties.
- 12.4 We anticipate that open days for some properties or sub-estates will be beneficial to the marketing process, and open days / half days will be well publicised and fully staffed by Fisher German personnel.

13.0 REPORTING STRUCTURE

13.1 From the date of Cabinet approval, the reporting structure will be as follows-

- Weekly liaison regarding sale preparations and Data Room creation;
- Monthly round-ups with action points to provide basis of Agenda for monthly Project Board meetings;

13.2 From Sale launch date -

- Weekly sale updates in a standard template on a property-by-property basis, to include:
 - number of enquiries and viewing numbers
 - internet activity reports
 - analysis of Data Room activity
 - details of applicant feedback
 - notification of offers received

14.0 MEETINGS WITH PROJECT BOARD

14.1 Project Board meetings will be held monthly from the date of Cabinet approval, and fortnightly during the marketing campaign, convened at the Council's Plough Lane offices and Fisher German representatives managing each phase of the sale campaign will attend as appropriate.

15.0 PUBLIC RELATIONS (P.R.)

15.1 We intend to work closely with the Council's Communications Team through the entire sale process. At the commencement of the Phase 2 disposal we will meet with the Communications Team to agree protocols for handling press interest, to manage day to day publicity, and to review the Communications Strategy that has already been prepared by the Council.

15.2 Principally the role of Fisher German will be in promoting the marketing of the estate, using PR to best effect. At the outset of the marketing campaign we will issue an agreed press release to a wide variety of regional, national and international newspapers, magazines and media organisations designed to create valuable editorial coverage for the portfolio disposal.

15.3 All press enquiries will be passed to the Council's Communications Team for a response to be agreed.

16.0 SALE CONCLUSION PHASE

16.1 The informal tender process will include the following stages:

1. Advanced notification to key prospective purchasers;
2. Public launch date;
3. 8-10 weeks marketing period;
4. Development of key interest;
5. Tender date;
6. Submission of offers to Council;
7. Post-tender date meeting to consider offers;
8. Offer qualification stage and post-tender negotiations;
9. Final report on offers to Council;
10. Council instructions to Fisher German;
11. Draft Sale Memoranda circulation;

12. Despatch of contract documentation;
13. Exchange of contracts;
14. Completion of transactions;
15. Post sales client liaison.

17.0 TENANTS WELFARE & LIAISON

- 17.1 The key stakeholders include the Estate tenants, tenants' representatives including the Tenant Farmers Association (TFA) and the National Farmers Union (NFU), Council officers and elected Councillors.
- 17.2 As part of our objective to build on the constructive relationship already established with tenants and stakeholders, Fisher German attended and contributed to a Council Tenants open meeting in August 2016. At that meeting we received enquiries and expressions of interest from tenants wishing to enter into negotiations for the surrender of tenancies, and the purchase of farms and land in whole or in part.
- 17.3 We will continue to maintain regular contact, and consult with, Estate tenants adopting an empathetic but commercial approach to tenancy surrender negotiations. Fisher German representatives will meet all tenants requesting meetings to consider tenancy surrender proposals following Cabinet approval in October 2016 and prior to the sale launch date in 2017.
- 17.4 We will encourage tenants to bid for their holdings and other holdings to promote their farming businesses, whilst emphasising that all bidders will be required to compete in the market in the informal tender process. We also plan to circulate email alerts to tenants and other prospective purchasers from time to time with updates on the sale timetable as the sale preparations progress towards an official launch date.

18.0 MARKET CONDITIONS RISK ASSESSMENT

- 18.1 We are well informed through in-house research capability of key economic and market indices in order to identify risks at the earliest opportunity and to advise our clients on any strategic decisions that should be affected by such risks.
- 18.2 We will manage risk profiling as follows:

Bidders will be risked and scored based on:
 - Bank reference
 - Accountant's reference
 - Company check (if appropriate)
 - Background research
 - The extent of due diligence investigations undertaken
- 18.3 Property markets will be risked by tracking changes and trends in:

Monetary Policy

- Bank Base rate
- Money Market rates
- Sterling Exchange rates
- Impact on Basic Payment Scheme (BPS)

Fiscal Policy

- Budget announcements
- Tax changes

Economic Indicators

- Economic Growth (monthly)
- Stock market fluctuations
- Inflation under Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Retail Price Index (RPI)
- Futures Prices – e.g. Wheat spot price
- The impact of the vote to leave the EU, hung Parliament and/or general election.

18.4 Whilst general land price movements cannot be influenced, having key market information and well-collated comparable evidence to defend pricing positions can significantly improve the financial outcomes of sales.

19.0 FISHER GERMAN TEAM & RESOURCES

19.1 We have assembled an experienced project team from within Fisher German drawing on our market intelligence and knowledge of rural agency and portfolio disposals to focus on the best delivery and to maximise the sale results. We have already formulated internal plans to ensure that we have more than adequate resources to accomplish all phases of the project with capacity to increase those resources if workloads increase unexpectedly.

19.2 The project coordination team will comprise:

Anthony Mayell FRICS FAAV – Project Leader

Stuart Flint MRICS – Marketing Coordinator

Matthew Barker MRICS – Technical Coordinator

Nicola Hamer MRICS FAAV – Data and Reporting Coordinator

Lettie Moore MRICS – Surveyor

Matthew Handford – Professional Support (graduate)

The coordination team will be aided by Project Assistants and an Administrator dedicated solely to the portfolio disposal. Two Worcestershire based Fisher German Partners, Christian Sanders and Tom Dennes both currently heading village/rural agency teams from our two Worcestershire offices will play key roles in the marketing process. Stuart Flint is also Partner in charge of our National Country Agency Team who will be tasked with targeting many of the prospective purchasers from national and international market places.

Signed:

.....
Anthony Mayell FRICS FAAV

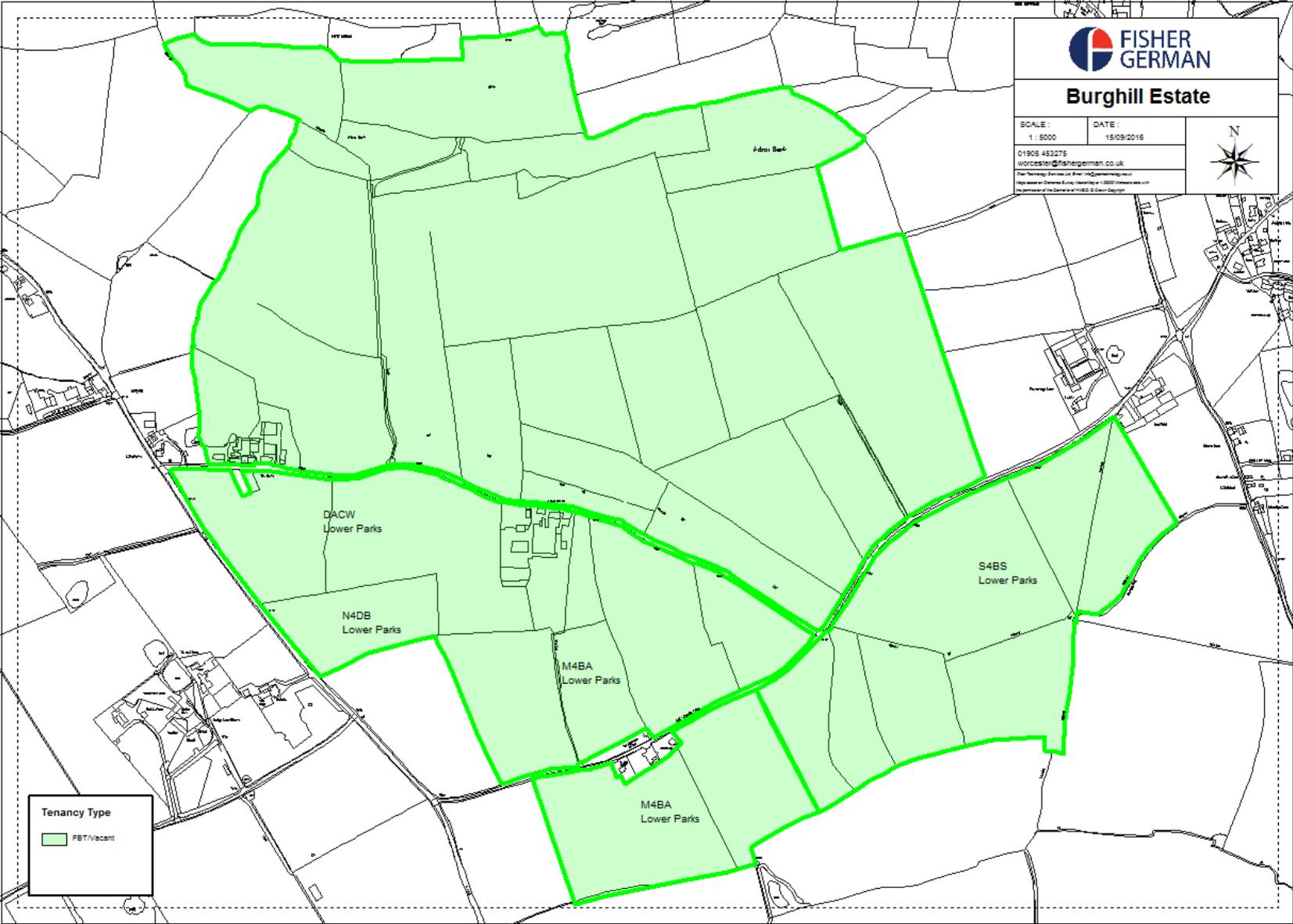
For and on behalf of Fisher German LLP

APPENDIX ONE – PORTFOLIO SUMMARY

<u>Plan Ref:</u>	<u>Property</u>	<u>Approx. Acreage</u>	<u>Type</u>
Burghill			
T4BV	Lion Farm Buildings		
L4B7	Grove Farm	120.60	FBT
N4BD	Parks Farm		Vacant
	Parks Farm grazing	0.49	Grazing
DACW	Parks Farm A		Vacant
M4BA	Lower Parks	333.65	FBT
		454.74	
Canonbridge			
C5BI	Swinmore Cottage Farm	57.33	Life
D5BL	Birches Farm	69.98	Life
A5BC	Upper Hall	76.79	Retirement
B5BF	Magnolia Farm	74.40	Life
74B1	Hollyfield	77.12	Vacant
	Buildings, The Farm	0.98	Vacant
94B7	The Elms	75.69	Life
		432.29	
Eye			
QAC2	Park Lodge	96.50	FBT
RAC2	Crossbrook Farm	84.00	FBT
PACW	Field Farm	76.00	Retirement
		256.50	
Glewstone			
S7BY	Land at Little Whitfield	54.31	FBT
S7BY	Little Whitfield	67.95	Life
Y7BG	Thorn House Farm	53.24	Vacant
R7BV	Lower Thorn Farm	60.61	Life
	Land at Porch Farm	31.54	FBT
T7B1	The Yeld	77.63	Retirement
	Land at Newhouse Farm	32.10	FBT
		377.38	
Leintwardine			
HAC8	Land at Leintwardine	25.00	FBT
	Whitton	70.70	Retirement
		95.70	
Monkton			
YBCP	Highway Farm	67.81	FBT
WBCJ	Lodge Farm	98.43	Vacant
VYCQ	Old Monkton	108.42	Vacant
3ZPL	Old Monkton - Development		Vacant
OBCV	Haycroft Farm	76.48	Retirement
	Land at Upper Monkton	21.58	FBT
		372.72	
Nieuport			
UDCH	Bollingham Farm	92.19	FBT
XDCQ	Prospect Farm	82.60	Life
DDC2	Bank Farm	112.31	FBT
RDC8	Upper Spond	118.77	FBT
SDCB	Upper Spond A	76.79	Retirement
YDCT	Land at Hillend	29.00	FBT
PDC2	Upper Wootton	97.64	Vacant

QDC5	Spring Grove	90.32	Vacant
TDCE	Wood Farm	94.28	FBT
VDCK	Lower Wootton	91.12	Retirement
IDCH	Newhouse Farm A	111.65	FBT
	Newhouse Farm Buildings		Vacant
WDCN	Cokesyeld Farm	107.55	FBT
EDC5	Questmore Farm	100.55	Retirement
NDCW	Station Farm	58.02	FBT
Nordan			
JACE	Nordan Farm (Homelands Farm)	160.48	FBT
LACK	Quarry Farm	53.18	Retirement
	Spring fields Farm land	27.14	FBT
		240.80	
Pembridge			
2BC1	Clearbrook	34.00	Life
	Land at Clearbrook	14.63	FBT
	Land at Middlebrook	47.08	FBT
		95.71	
Rowlestone			
QEC7	Newhouse Farm	145.31	FBT
Westbrook			
ZCCU	Bricklands	57.68	Life
	Land at Westbrook Manor	27.47	FBT
	Land at Westbrook Manor	31.48	FBT
UCCF	Fairview	66.56	Retirement
YCCR	Eastview	21.88	FBT
4BB6	Newton Farm	35.90	Life
	Land at Newton Farm	29.68	FBT
		270.65	
Woodcroft			
EACZ	Woodcroft	179.39	FBT
	Woodcroft -Development		
Total		4183.98	

APPENDIX TWO – SUB-ESTATE TENANCY PLANS



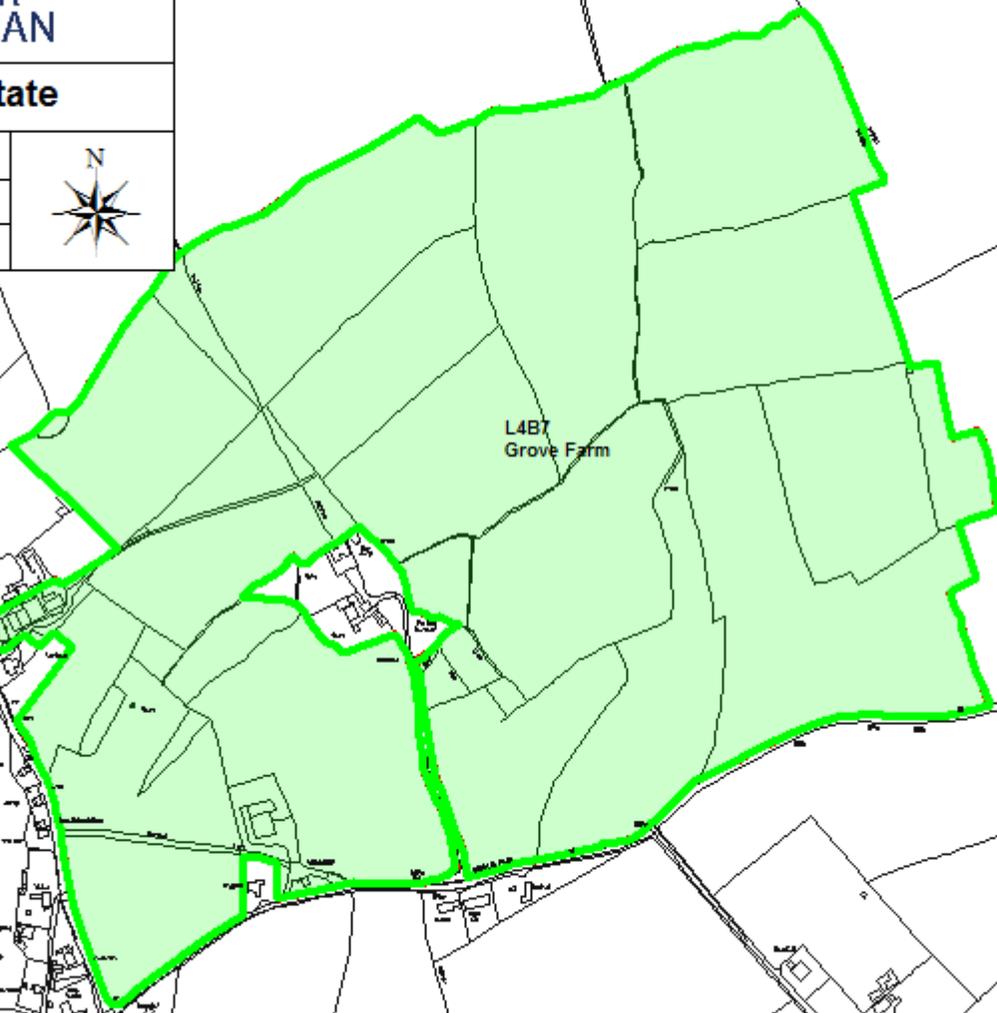


Burghill Estate

SCALE: 1 : 3500 DATE: 13/09/2016

01905 453275
worcester@fishergerman.co.uk

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Tenancy Type

- Part/acre

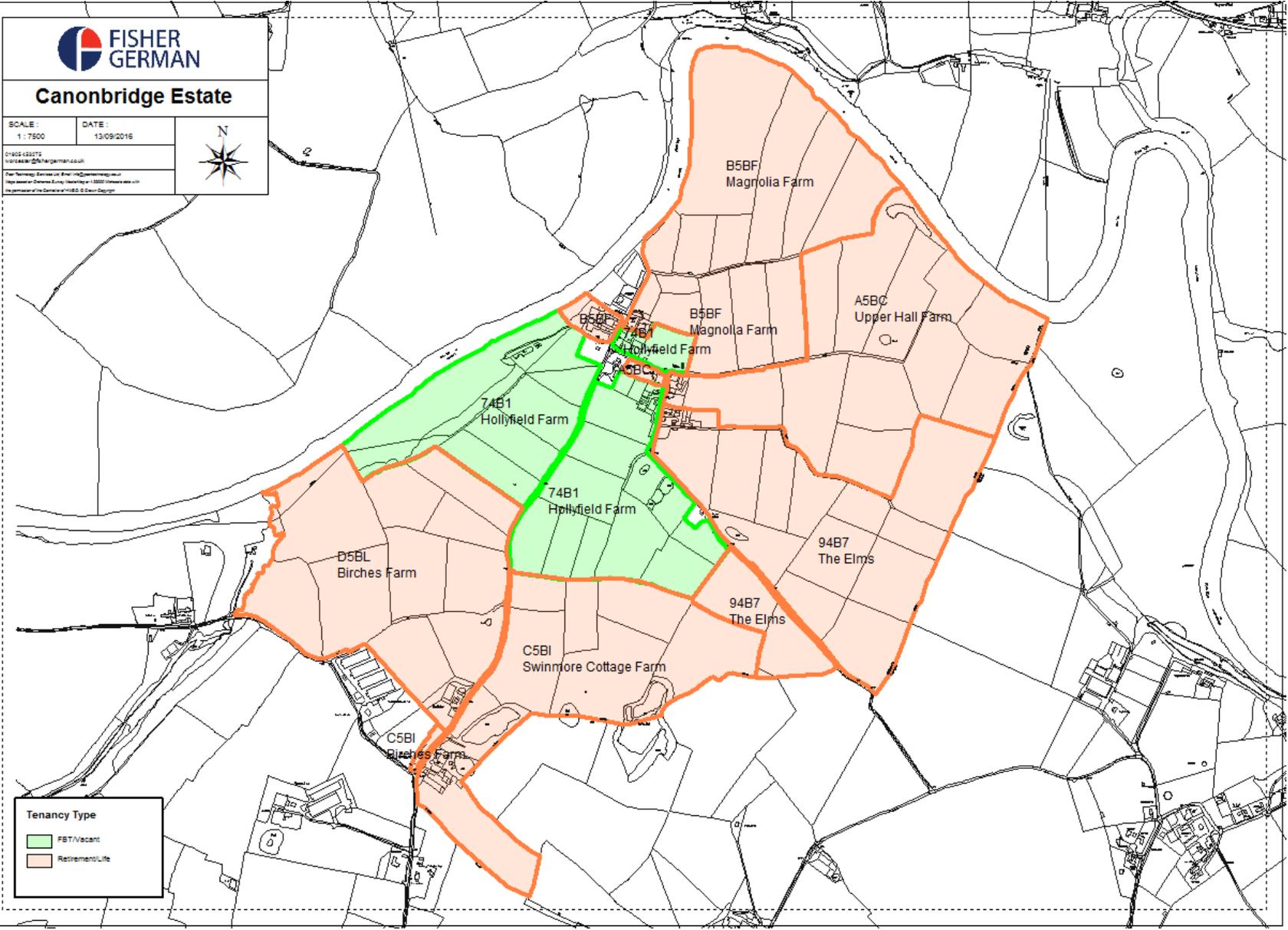


Canonbridge Estate

SCALE: 1:7500
DATE: 13/09/2016

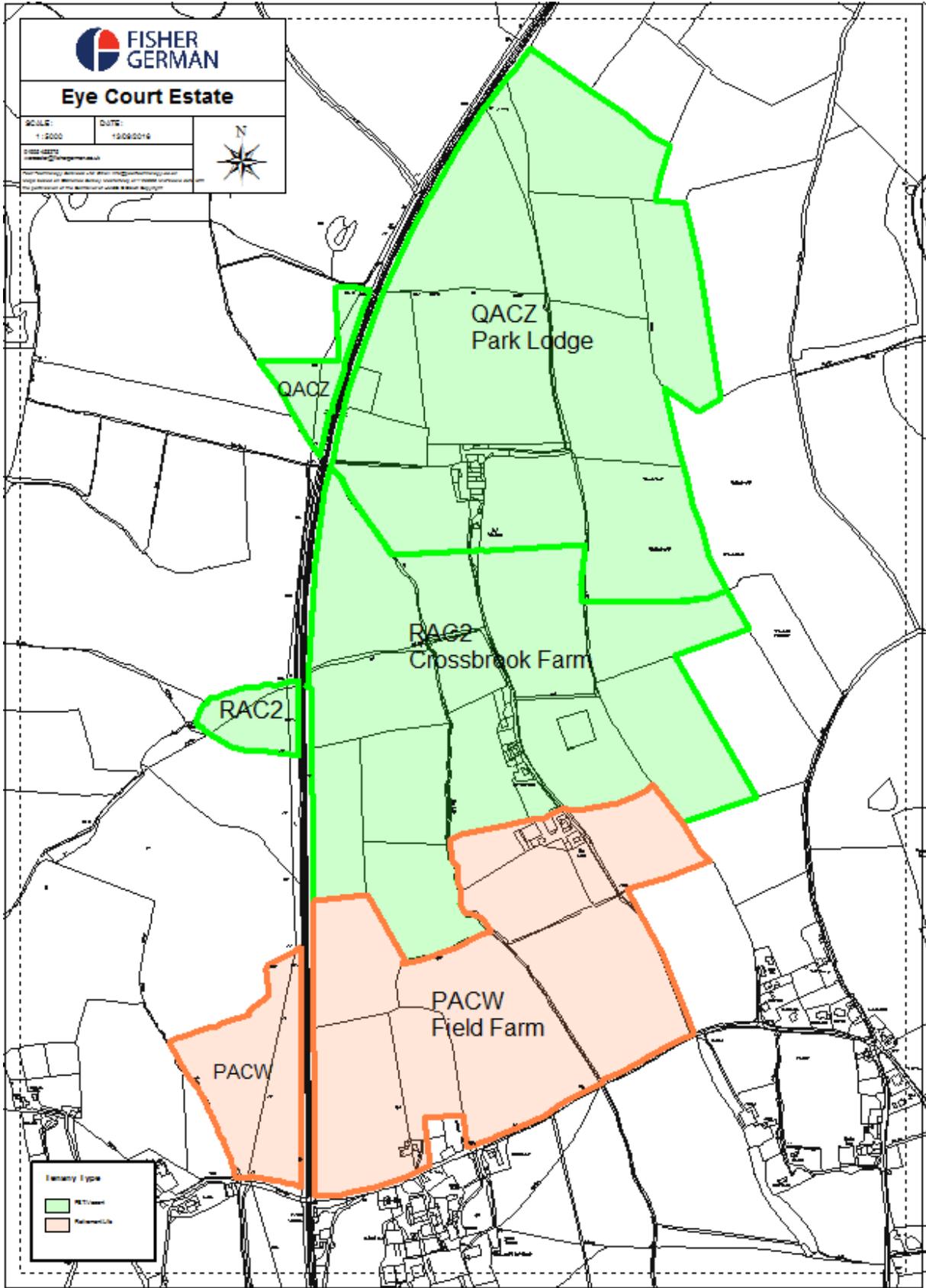


01465 450275
info@fishergerman.co.uk
The Tenancy Register is a requirement of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended) and the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act 1988 (as amended) and is a requirement of the General Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended).



Tenancy Type

- FBT/Vacant
- Retirement/Life



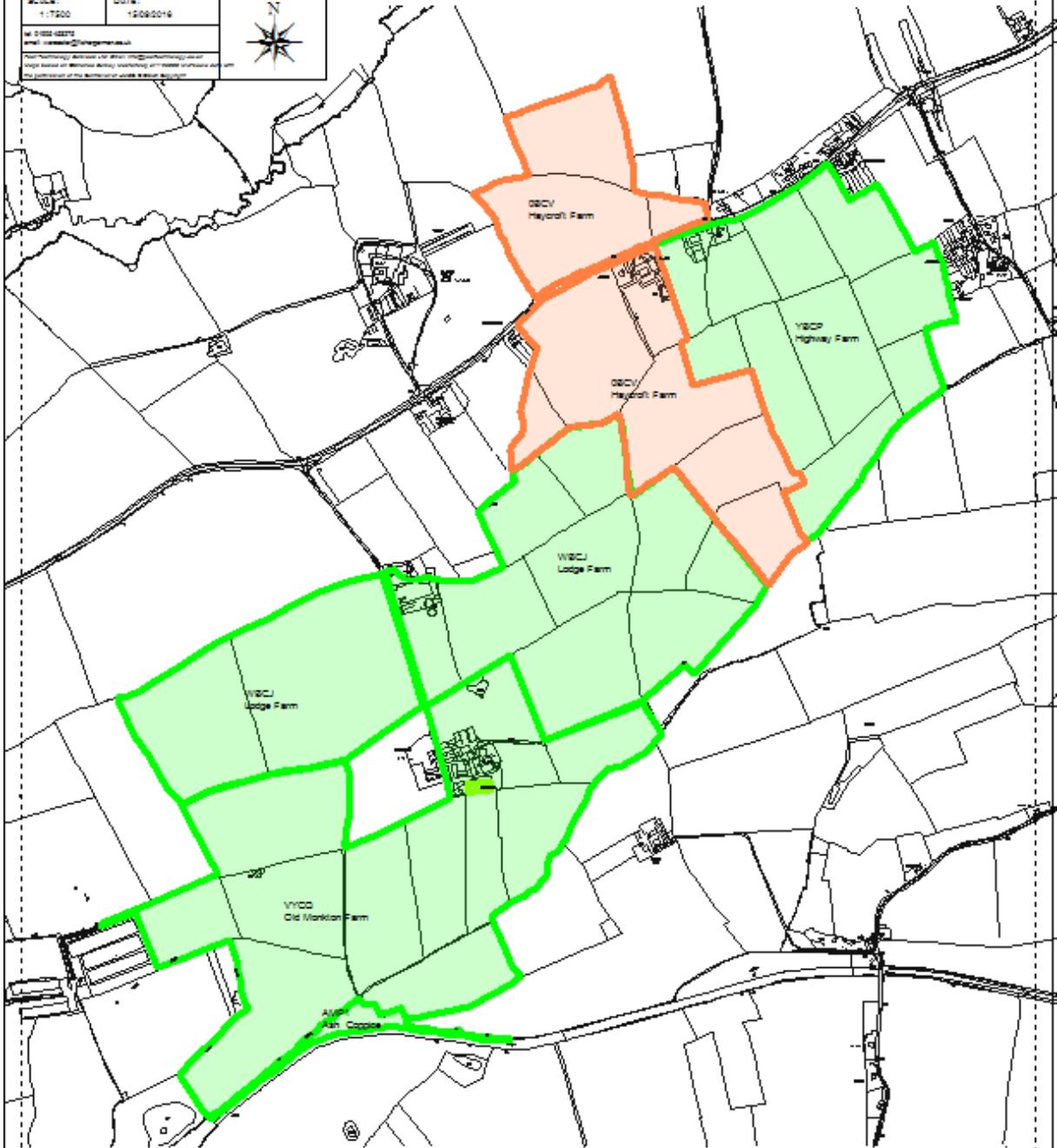


Monkton Estate

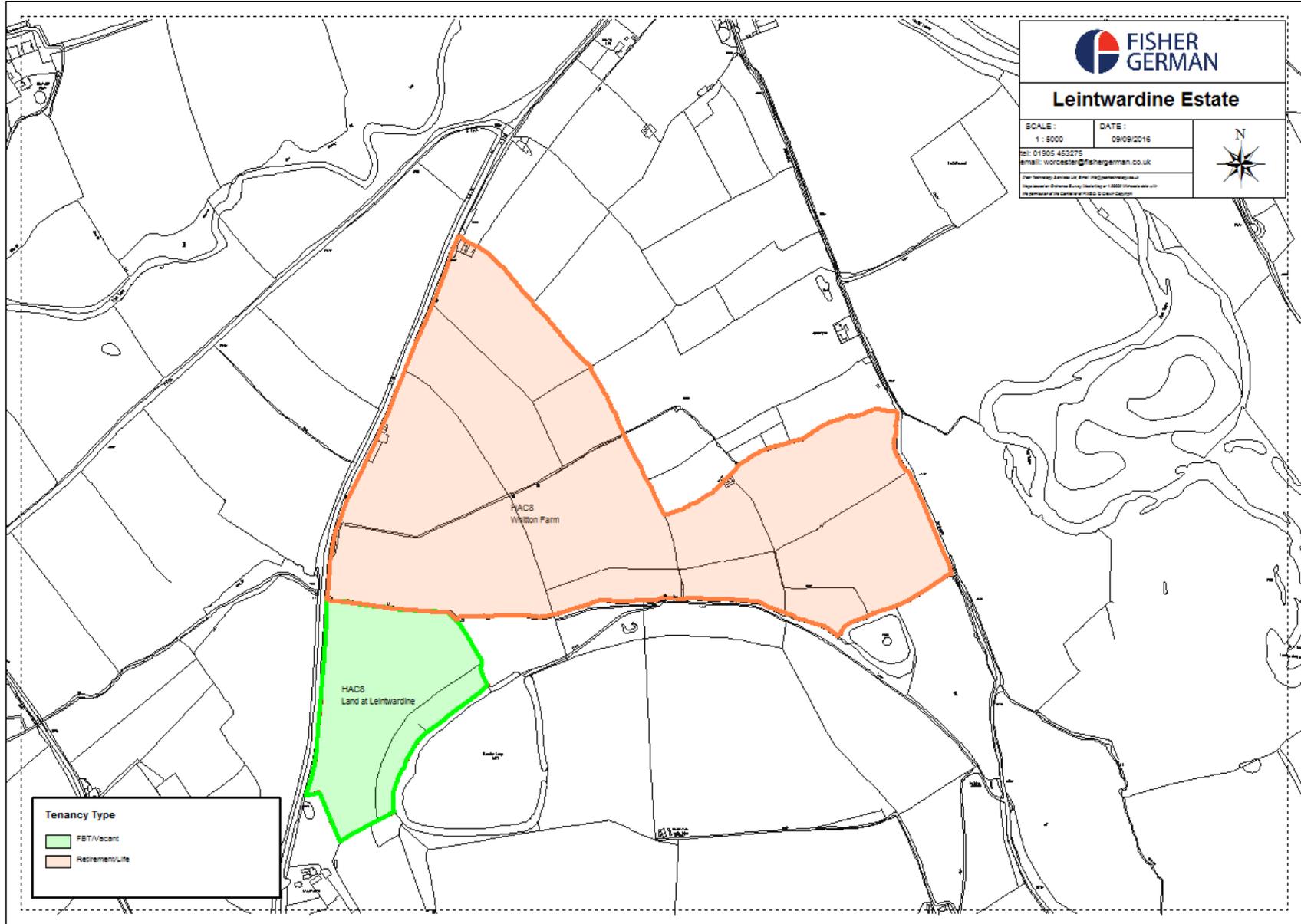
SCALE: 1:17500 DATE: 12/08/2016



W 0103 0270
email: enquiries@fishergerman.co.uk
www: www.fishergerman.co.uk
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Tenancy Type	
	Agriculture
	Residential





Nieuport Estate

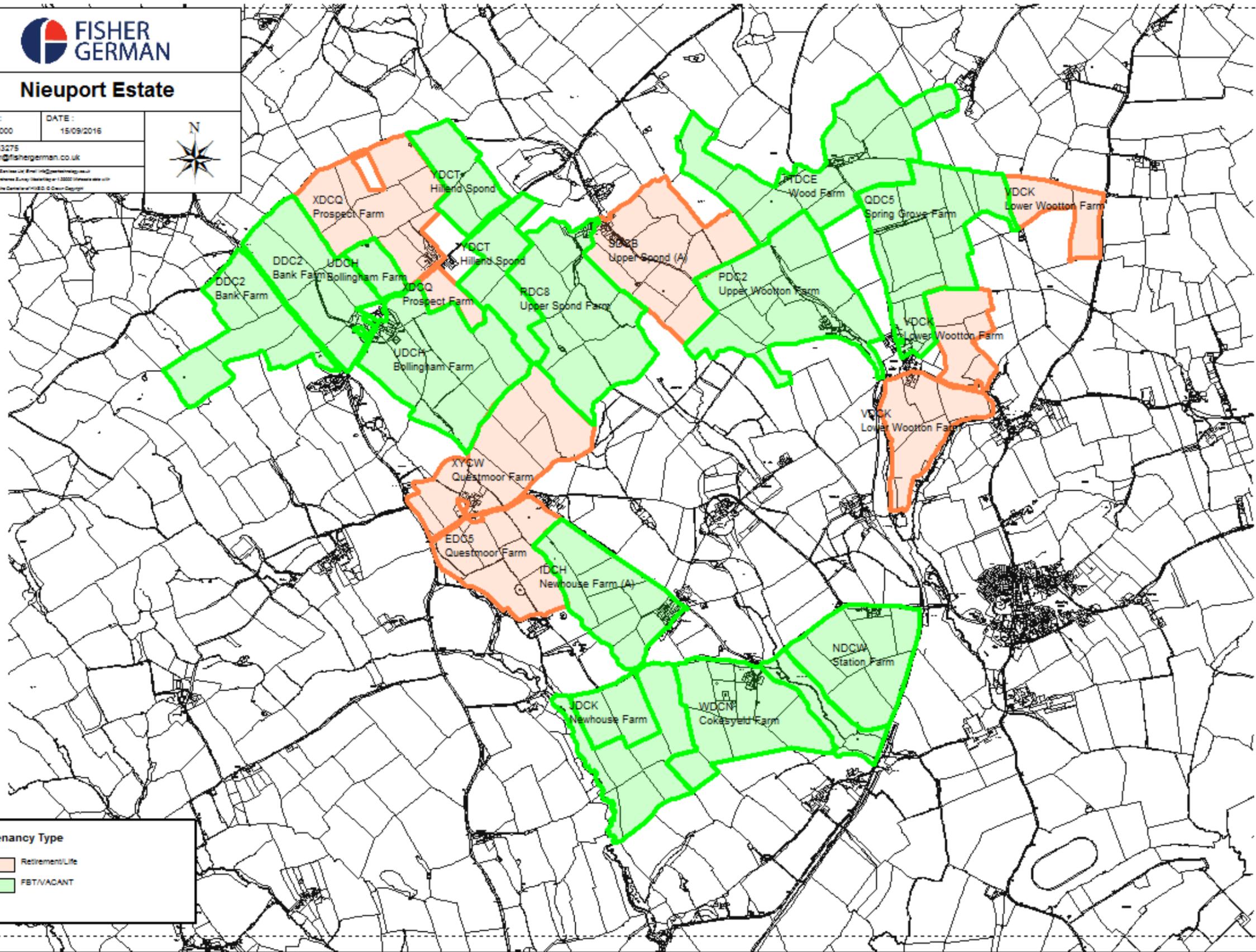
SCALE:
1 : 15000

DATE:
15/09/2016



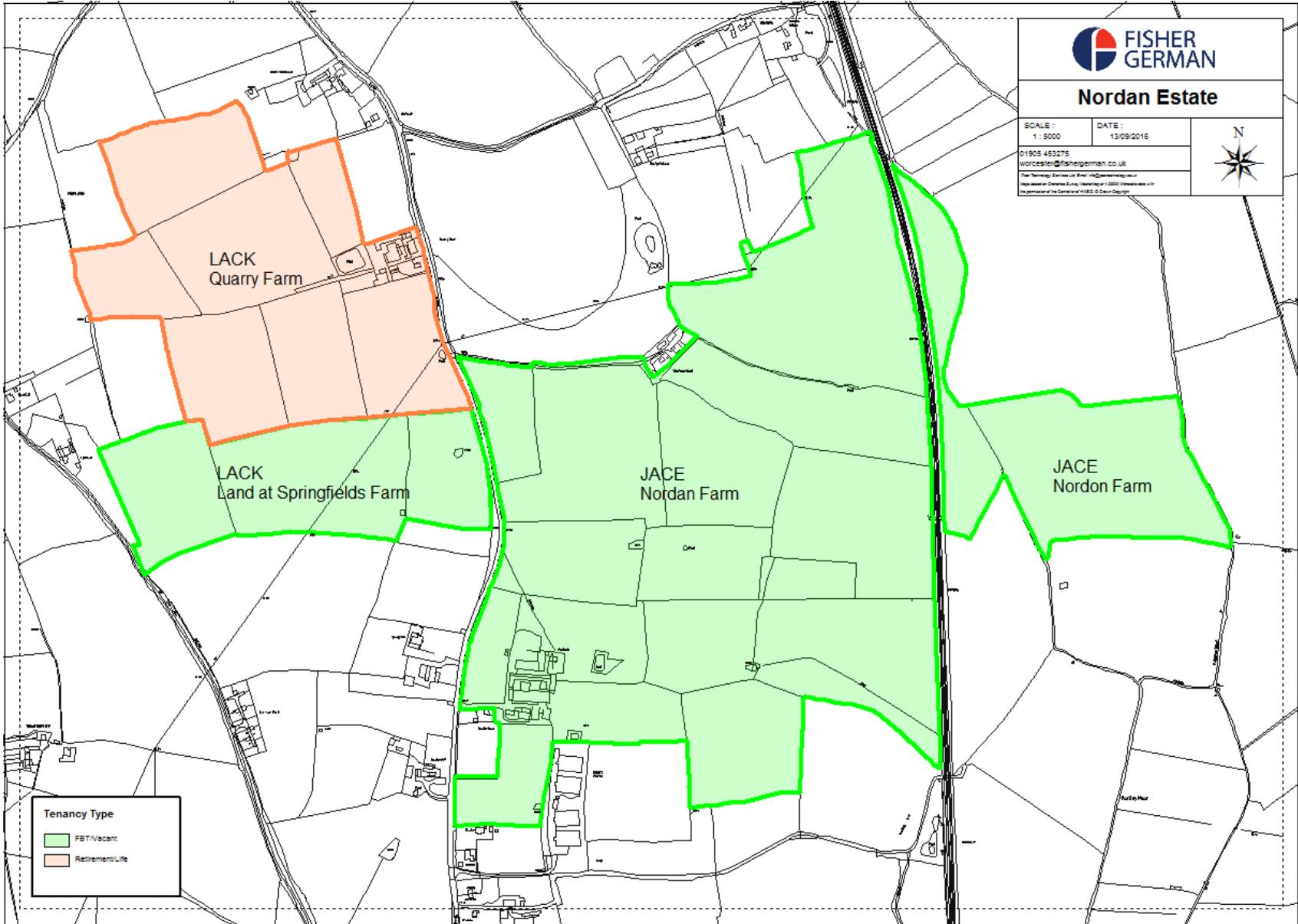
01905 453275
worcester@fishergerman.co.uk

Our Tenancy Services are a part of our wider business
operating in various sectors including residential, commercial and
the management of the development of the estate. © Fisher German



Tenancy Type

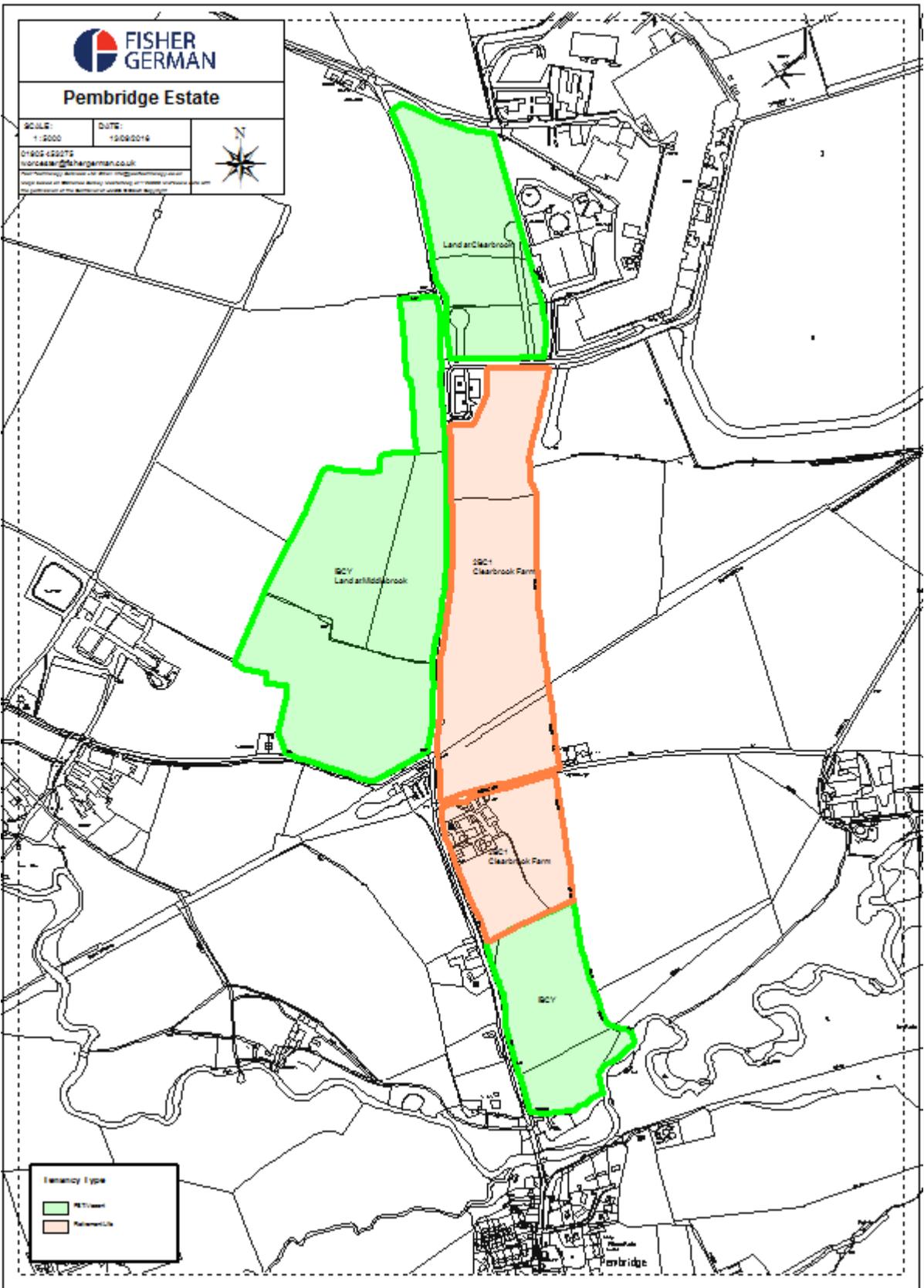
- Retirement/Life
- FBT/VACANT



Nordan Estate

SCALE: 1:5000 DATE: 13/09/2016
01905 453275
worchester@fishergerman.co.uk
The Tenancy Review Ltd. FmL 14226766/0001
Registration of Companies (England) 1000171000
Registration of the Director of NORD. © Crown Copyright







Rowlestone Estate

SCALE: 1:5000 DATE: 13/09/2016

01905 453275
worcester@fishergerman.co.uk

The Tenancy Register UK Email: tenancy@fishergerman.co.uk

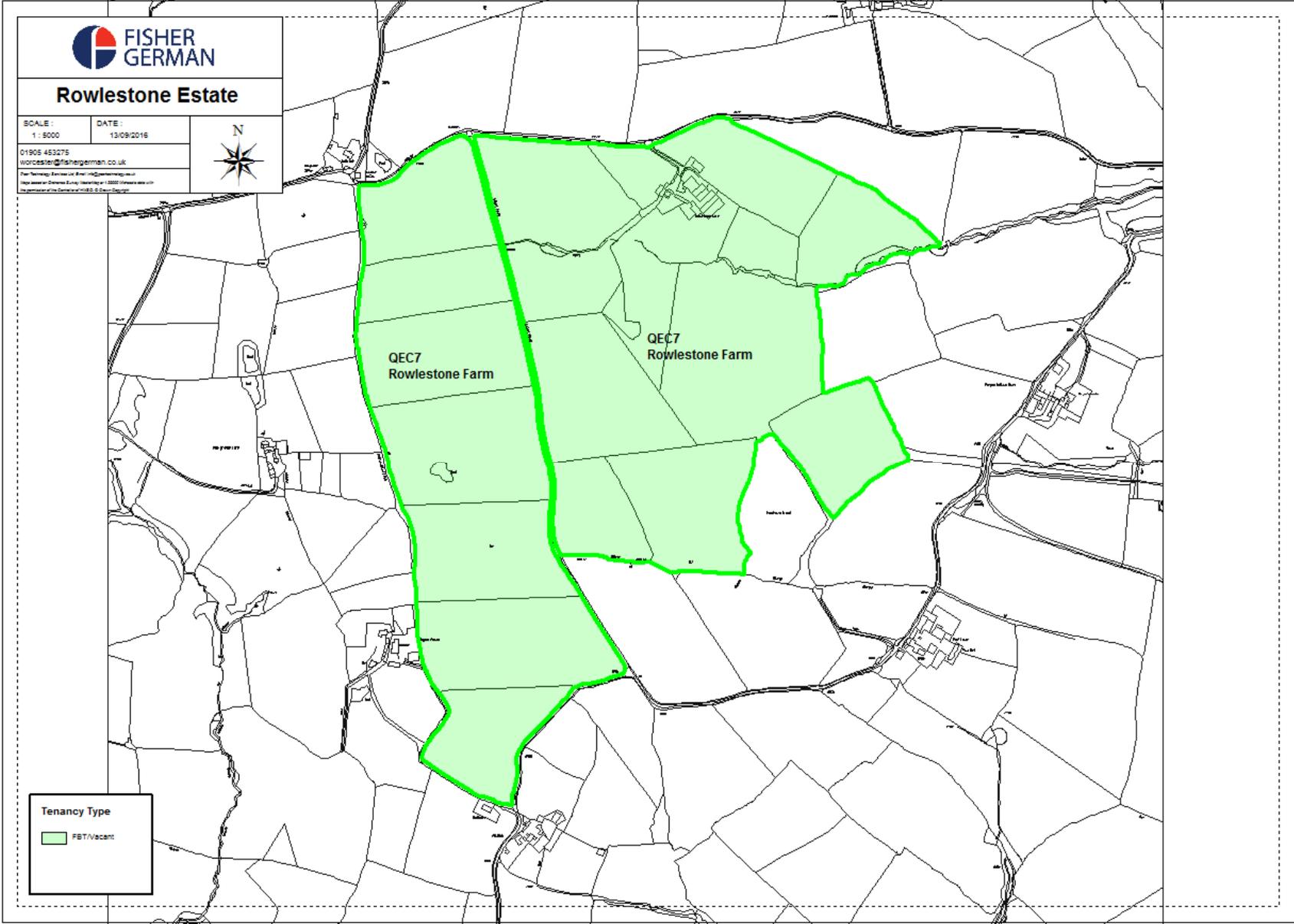
Registration Services Email: registration@fishergerman.co.uk

Registration Services Phone: 01905 453275



Tenancy Type

 FBT/Vacant



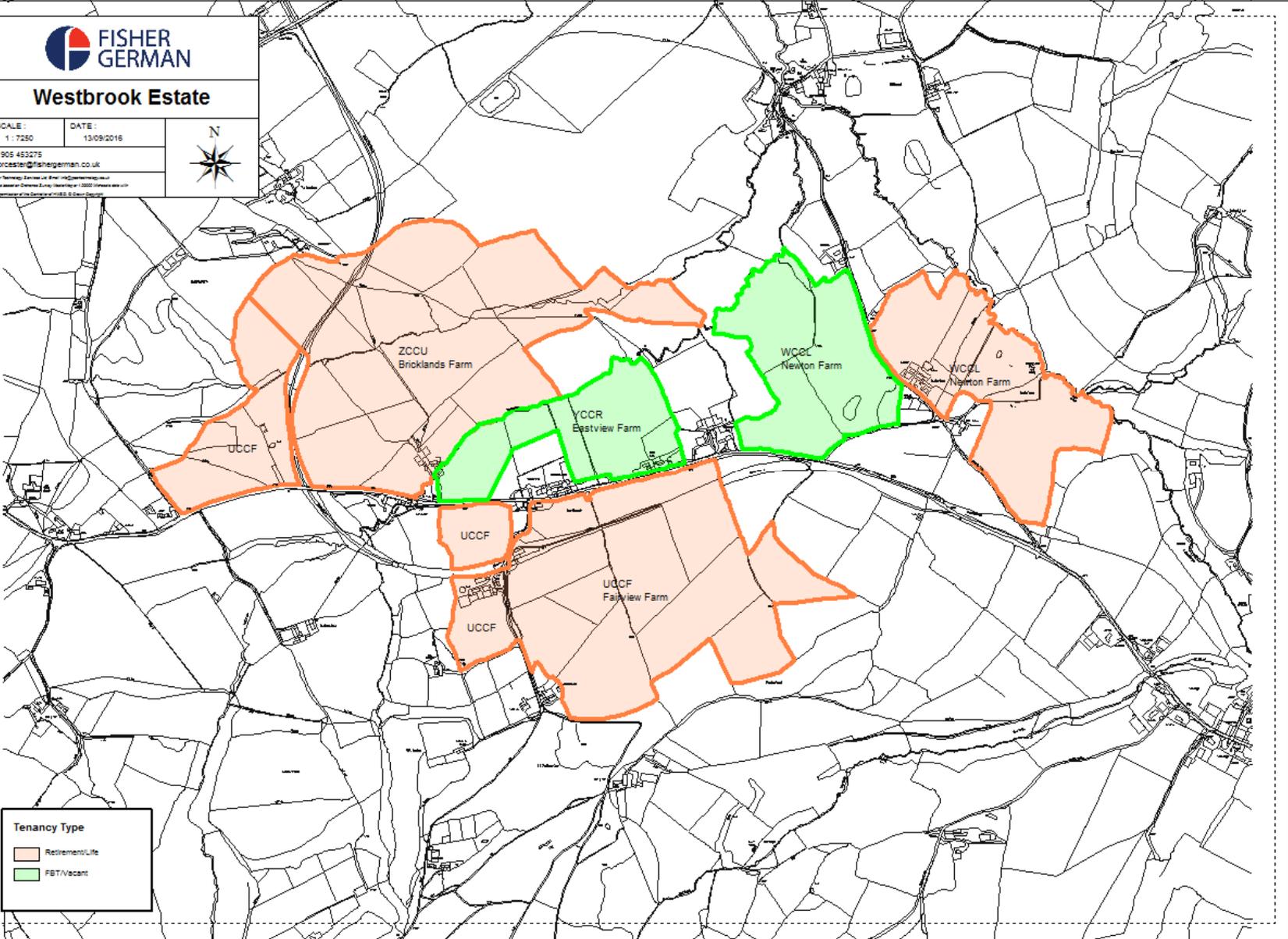


Westbrook Estate

SCALE: 1: 7250 DATE: 13/09/2016

01905 463275
worcest@fishergerman.co.uk

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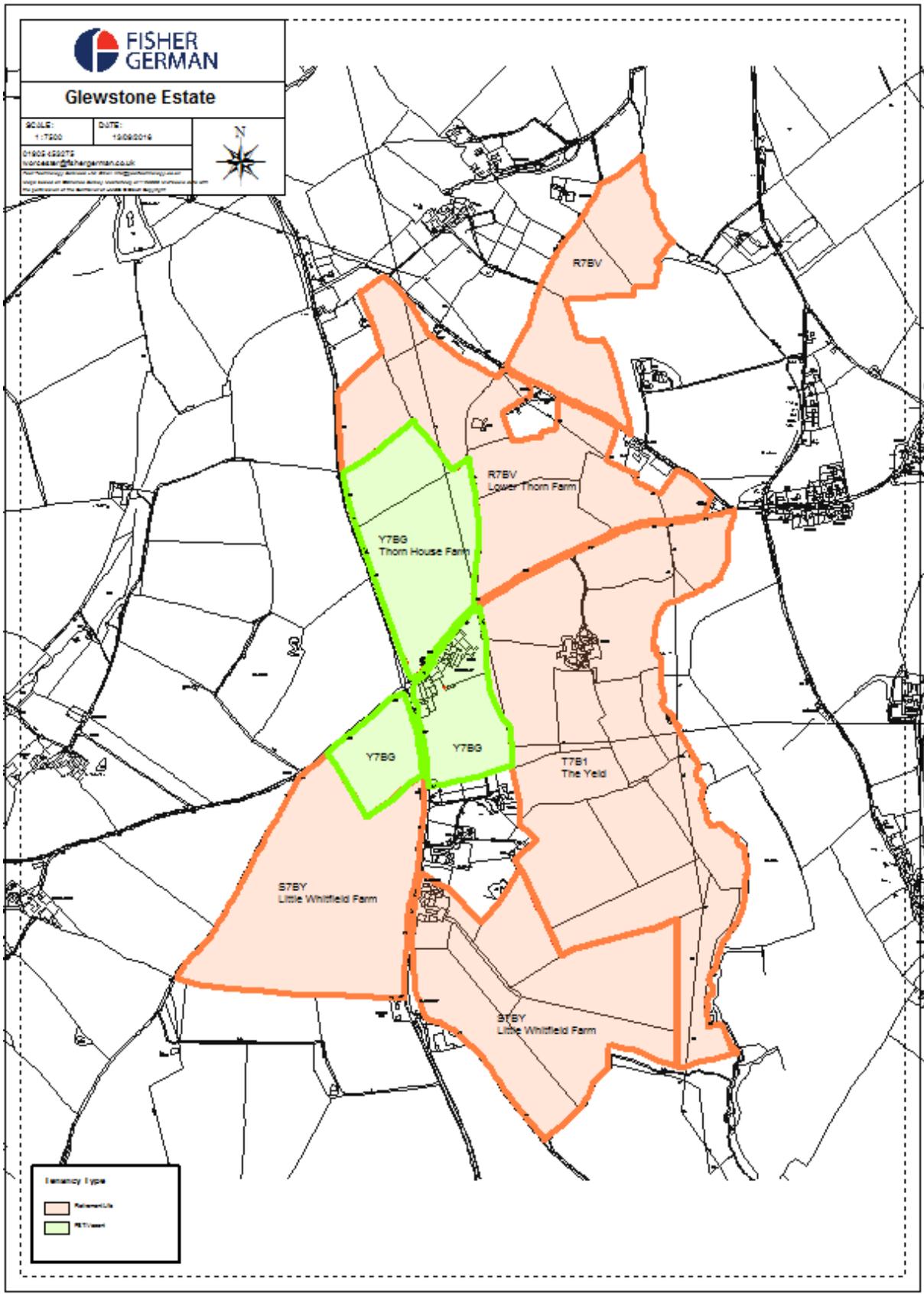
Tenancy Type	
	Retirement/Life
	FBT/Vacant



Glewstone Estate

SCALE: 1:7500 DATE: 19/08/2016

01905 622075
info@fishergerman.co.uk
Fishermere, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX26 2EJ
This plan is an aerial photograph with overlaid information
for purposes of the National Land Information Agency



Tenancy type	
	Residential
	Agriculture

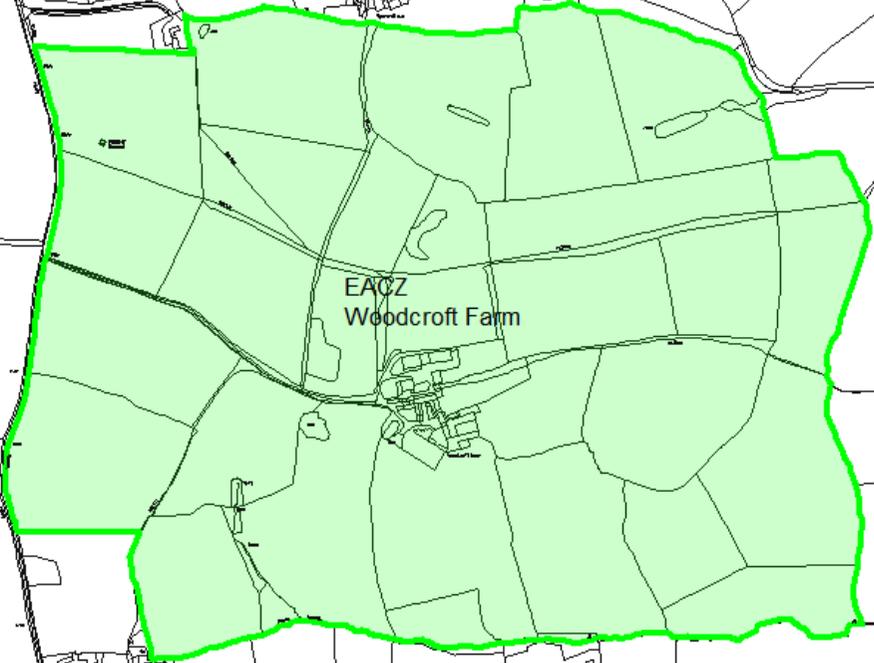


Woodcroft Estate

SCALE: 1 : 5000
DATE: 15/09/2016

01905 453275
worcest@fishergerman.co.uk

Fisher German is a member of the FIDEX Group of Companies
Fisher German is a member of the FIDEX Group of Companies
Fisher German is a member of the FIDEX Group of Companies



Tenancy Type

-  FBT/Vacant

APPENDIX THREE - SUMMARY OF REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Objectives

On 3rd December 2015 Cabinet approved a new smallholdings policy which included the decision to undertake a structured disposal of the entire smallholding estate.

This report is required to set out options for the structure and timing of the disposals in order to achieve the stated objectives of the project.

Target Markets

Our marketing strategy will be designed to present the portfolio to the widest possible target audience to ensure that we fulfil the Council's instructions and the project objectives.

Disposal Options & Recommendations

Offering the Smallholdings Estate to the market by way of informal tender is our recommended method of sale. This approach ensures the market is comprehensively canvassed for the best buyers to generate the highest selling price(s) within a fixed timeframe.

Timing

We recommend that the marketing of the portfolio commences in spring 2017. The completion of sales can then be managed to coincide with tenancy end dates and the farming season, so a marketing campaign any earlier would not make financial sense.

Information collation – much of our efforts during the remainder of 2016 will be focused on collating sales information and property data

Marketing preparation – commencing before the end of 2016, but the principal period for preparing the portfolio for open market sale will be January and February 2017

Launch date – the official public launch date is likely to be between late March and mid-April 2017

Tender process – we recommend a marketing period following public launch date of 8-10 weeks leading up to the tender date.

Lotting

We recommend that the Smallholdings Estate is offered for sale as a whole, as sub-estates and as individual farms to widen market coverage, stimulate competitive interest and ensure best value is obtained.

Planning Considerations

We will be liaising closely with the Herefordshire Council Estates Department to look at any parts of the portfolio where consideration needs to be given to planning matters and development potential or where such matters have been previously identified. We do not recommend any blanket overage/development clawback clauses as we believe this would have a detrimental effect on the likely realisation prices.

Pricing Strategy

In due course we will provide recommended guide prices for individual farms/smallholdings, sub-estates and the portfolio as a whole. Provisional indications are that we would be recommending a total guide figure of around £35,000,000

Marketing

To ensure the portfolio reaches all target markets, the marketing campaign will include the following:

- Internet Promotion
- Brochures
- Floor Plans
- Farm Plans
- Location maps
- Sale boards
- Local, Regional and National advertising

Reporting Structure

From the date of Cabinet approval, the reporting structure will be as follows-

- Weekly liaison regarding sale preparations and Data Room creation;
- Monthly round-ups with action points to provide basis of Agenda for monthly Project Board meetings;

From Sale launch date –

- Weekly sale updates in a standard template on a property-by-property basis

Meetings with Project Board

Project Board meetings will be held monthly from the date of Cabinet approval, and fortnightly during the marketing campaign.

Public Relations

We intend to work closely with the Council's Communications Team through the entire sale process. Principally the role of Fisher German will be in promoting the marketing of the estate, using PR to best effect. All potentially negative press enquiries will be passed to the Council's Communications Team for a response to be agreed.

Sale Conclusion Phase

The informal tender process will include the following stages:

1. Advanced notification to key prospective purchasers;
2. Public launch date;
3. 8-10 weeks marketing period;
4. Development of key interest;
5. Tender date;
6. Submission of offers to Council;
7. Post-tender date meeting to consider offers;
8. Offer qualification stage and post-tender negotiations;
9. Final report on offers to Council;
10. Council instructions to Fisher German;
11. Draft Sale Memoranda circulation;
12. Despatch of contract documentation;
13. Exchange of contracts;
14. Completion of transactions;
15. Post sales client liaison

Tenants Welfare & Liaison

We will continue to maintain regular contact, and consult, with Estate tenants adopting an empathetic but commercial approach to tenancy surrender negotiations. We advise in favour of the Council extending existing tenancies, with those extensions running to September 2017.

Market Conditions Risk Assessment

We are well informed through in-house research capability of key economic and market indices in order to identify risks at the earliest opportunity and to advise our clients on any strategic decisions that should be affected by such risks.



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	13 October 2016
Title of report:	Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) decision and report
Report by:	Monitoring officer

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is not a key decision.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To inform cabinet of a decision by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) of maladministration and injustice, and confirm actions being taken in response.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the report and recommendations of the Local Government Ombudsman, at appendix 1, be considered;**
- (b) the findings be accepted and the recommended actions agreed; and**
- (c) in implementing the recommendations:**
 - (i) the director for adults and wellbeing undertake to apologise to the parties and ensure training is provided to social workers; and**
 - (ii) the monitoring officer makes the recommended payments.**

Alternative options

- 1 Not to accept the findings of the LGO. Although the ombudsman cannot compel the council to implement its recommendations, in practice councils almost always do act on them. There is no right of appeal against a decision by the LGO, but it is possible to seek judicial review where it is believed that the legal basis of a decision is flawed. This is not recommended as the LGO findings are based on evidence that is not disputed.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 The Local Government Ombudsman has decided that there was maladministration (fault) causing injustice to Mr B and Mrs D. The Local Government Act 1974 requires that where such a decision is issued, that the report is publicised and considered.

Key considerations

- 3 Mrs D, on behalf of Mr B (not real names), complained that the council failed to move Mr B to a suitable care home following assessment and that he did not receive the required speech and language therapy, as assessed and detailed in his care plan.
- 4 The ombudsman found fault on behalf of the council which caused injustice to the parties and made recommendations. The council is therefore required to consider the report and confirm what action we have or propose to take.
- 5 Mr B's assessed care needs are that he needs full time residential care. In April 2015, as a result of Mr B's behaviour, a best interests assessment concluded that his existing care home was not able to meet his needs and that in the medium term he should move to a home which would be more able to support him.
- 6 It was also agreed that a new assessment from a speech and language therapist was required. This was undertaken and confirmed that the existing strategies from 2013 should remain in place. However, only four out of the five strategies were being implemented by the home.
- 7 Mr B moved to a new care home on 27 June 2016.
- 8 The ombudsman concludes, as the adults and wellbeing directorate acknowledges, that Mr B's case was not adequately progressed following the assessments in early 2015, with no evidence of any action taking place to secure alternative accommodation between July and October 2015. Mr B should have been referred to the "move on service" in June 2015 rather than April 2016, which would have facilitated the alternative placement. This lack of activity and delay the ombudsman finds as fault.
- 9 Further fault is found when another care home is considered in the interim period and not proceeded with or secured for Mr B. This care home could have met Mr B's needs and was not adequately progressed.
- 10 Additionally Mrs D had a preference that the eventual care home where Mr B is now resident was considered. The failure to consider this choice was a failure to follow the care and support statutory guidance and is a finding of fault.

- 11 The faults set out above caused injustice to Mr B because they resulted in him remaining in an unsuitable care home that was unable to meet his assessed needs, resulting in increased levels of anxiety, for longer than was necessary.
- 12 Mrs D spent 11 months chasing the department for progress on an alternative placement and experienced anxiety during such time.
- 13 To remedy the injustice caused, the council has agreed to;
- a) apologise to Mr B and Mrs D for the fault identified in the report;
 - b) make £2,000 available for Mr B to spend on activities he would enjoy or possessions he would like;
 - c) pay Mrs D £500 in recognition of the time and trouble she has experienced;
 - d) provide training for social workers on the importance of ensuring they keep accurate case notes and in clarifying the differing roles and responsibilities of the allocated social worker, the vacancy management group and the “move on” support service.

Community impact

- 14 The council’s corporate plan includes priorities to enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives and to secure better services, quality of life and value for money. Whilst the council aims to get things right first time, it also is a learning organisation and the recommendations demonstrate how the council will address the identified shortcomings and take action to secure improvement in order to be able to deliver the priorities of its corporate plan.

Equality duty

- 15 None arising from the recommendations.

Financial implications

- 16 The recommended action includes the making of compensatory savings of £2,500 which will be managed within existing adult social care budgets.

Legal implications

- 17 There is a statutory duty under the Local Government Act 1974 requiring Cabinet to consider this report as detailed above. There are procedural requirements ensuring transparency, which include notices in newspapers, the LGO report available for inspection and information circulated to all members. These have all been complied with. Cabinet must prepare a report set out in recommendation (d) above and a copy sent to every member. The LGO must be notified by 14 November 2016 of the action which the council has taken or propose to take.

Risk management

- 18 If the council does not take action to address identified weaknesses, there is a risk that similar shortcomings in service delivery may re-occur. The actions proposed in response to the LGO findings, and in particular the improved training of adult social

care staff mitigate this risk.

Consultees

19 Not applicable.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Local Government Ombudsman report (Reference number: 15 019 902)

Background papers

- None

Report by the Local Government Ombudsman

Investigation into a complaint against Herefordshire Council (reference number: 15 019 902)

15 August 2016

The Ombudsman's role

For 40 years the Ombudsman has independently and impartially investigated complaints. We effectively resolve disputes about councils and other bodies in our jurisdiction by recommending redress which is proportionate, appropriate and reasonable based on all the facts of the complaint. Our service is free of charge.

Each case which comes to the Ombudsman is different and we take the individual needs and circumstances of the person complaining to us into account when we make recommendations to remedy injustice caused by fault.

We have no legal power to force councils to follow our recommendations, but they almost always do. Some of the things we might ask a council to do are:

- > apologise
- > pay a financial remedy
- > improve its procedures so similar problems don't happen again.

Investigation into complaint number 15 019 902 against Herefordshire Council

Contents

Report summary.....	1
Introduction	2
Legal and administrative background	2
How we considered this complaint.....	3
Investigation	3
Conclusions.....	6
Decision	7
Recommendations	7

Section 30 of the 1974 Local Government Act says that a report should not normally name or identify any person. The people involved in this complaint are referred to by a letter or job role.

Key to names used

Mr B	The complainant
Mrs D	The representative and complainant's mother
Social worker X	The allocated social worker

Report summary

Adult social care

Mrs D, on behalf of Mr B, complains the Council has failed to move Mr B to a suitable care home even though it assessed he needed to move 11 months ago. She also complains he has not received his speech and language therapy as detailed in his care plan.

Finding

Fault found causing injustice and recommendations made.

Recommendations

To remedy the injustice caused the Council has agreed, within three months to:

- apologise to Mrs D and Mr B for the fault causing injustice identified in this report;
- make £2000 available for Mr B to spend on activities he would enjoy or possessions he would like. What this should be spent on should be decided at a best interests decision meeting;
- pay Mrs D £500 in recognition of the time and trouble she has experienced as a result of the faults identified; and
- provide training for social workers on the importance of ensuring they keep accurate case notes, and in using the vacancy management group and the 'move on' support service.

Introduction

1. Mrs D complains the Council has failed to move Mr B to a suitable care home even though it assessed he needed to move 11 months previously. She also complains he has not received his speech and language therapy as detailed in his care plan.
2. Mrs D believes this has resulted in Mr B spending large amounts of time in his room and refusing to see any visitors. She thinks this has impacted on his progress and he did not get the services and care he was entitled to.

Legal and administrative background

3. The Ombudsman investigates complaints about 'maladministration' and 'service failure'. In this report, we have used the word fault to refer to these. We must also consider whether any fault has had an adverse impact on the person making the complaint. We refer to this as 'injustice'. If there has been fault which has caused an injustice, we may suggest a remedy. (*Local Government Act 1974, sections 26(1) and 26A(1)*)
4. The Ombudsman may investigate complaints from a person affected by the matter in the complaint, or from someone the person has authorised in writing to act for him or her. (*Local Government Act 1974, sections 26A or 34C*).

Adult social care law and guidance

5. The Care Act 2014 gives local authorities a legal responsibility to provide a care and support plan for adults who are eligible for support. The care and support plan should consider what the person has, what they want to achieve, what they can do by themselves with existing support and what care and support may be available in the local area.
6. Section 27 of the Care Act 2014 gives an expectation that local authorities should conduct a review of a care and support plan at least every 12 months. The authority should consider a light touch review six to eight weeks after agreement and signing off the plan and personal budget. It should carry out the review as quickly as reasonably practicable in a timely manner and proportionate to the needs to be met. As well as the duty to keep plans under review generally, the Act also puts a duty on the local authority to consider a plan if the adult or person acting on the adult's behalf asks for one.
7. The Care and Support Statutory Guidance, brought in to support the Care Act, states that a person must have a right to choose between different providers. This choice must not be limited to those settings or individual providers with which the local authority already has contracts with or within the local authority's geographical boundary.
8. Local authorities have specific duties to shape and facilitate the market of care and support services locally, including ensuring sufficient supply. As a result, a person should not have to wait for their assessed needs to be met. However, in some cases, a short wait may be unavoidable, particularly when a person has chosen a particular setting that is not immediately available.

9. In such cases, the local authority must ensure that in the interim adequate alternative services are provided and set out how long the interim arrangement may last for. In establishing any temporary arrangements, the local authority must provide the person with clear written detail of the arrangements as part of their care and support plan. As a minimum this should include the likely duration of the arrangement, information on the operation of the waiting list for their preferred setting alongside any other information that may be relevant.
10. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 is the framework for acting and deciding for people who lack the mental capacity to make particular decisions for themselves. The Act (and the Code of Practice 2007) describes the steps a person should take when dealing with someone who may lack capacity to make decisions for themselves.
11. A key principle of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 is that any act done, or any decision made on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done in that person's best interests.

How we considered this complaint

12. This report has been produced following examination of the documents the Council provided in response to our enquiries.
13. The complainant and the Council were given a confidential draft of this report and invited to comment. The comments received were taken into account before the report was finalised.

Investigation

Residential care

14. Mr B has a number of medical conditions, including autism, resulting in him needing full time residential care. This is fully funded by the Council. The Council has assessed Mr B's mental capacity and decided he does not have capacity to make decisions about his care. Mr B's mother, Mrs D, is involved in making best interest decisions about Mr B's care alongside the Council.
15. In April 2015, staff at Mr B's care home (care home 1) became increasingly concerned about his behaviour. This included incidents such as him walking outside of the care home without supervision. In response, the Council applied for emergency funding to increase his one to one support on a temporary basis.
16. The Council also called a best interests decision meeting to decide whether Mr B should remain at care home 1. Mrs D, social worker X and the care home manager attended this meeting in June 2015. At the meeting, all parties agreed that care home 1 was not the best placement for Mr B. The meeting recommended Mr B should move to another care home with less people, more autistic friendly stimuli and one that is more able to support his autism. The meeting decided this move should take place over the medium term,

rather than an urgent move which could result in a temporary placement, because it was the least restrictive and most appropriate way to meet Mr B's needs.

17. Following this meeting the Council said it regularly monitored potential vacancies at other care homes and was in contact with the vacancy management group. The Council runs the vacancy management group and it maintains a list of all the care homes in the local area and whether they have any vacancies. This information is held on a vacancy sheet. The Council can also refer a service user to the 'move on' team which supports social workers in identifying vacancies and making referrals. We have not seen any evidence to support the Council's assertion it was pro-actively seeking vacancies in this initial period following the decision to move Mr B.
18. Between July and October Mrs D contacted the Council on several occasions asking if there was any progress on Mr B's case. The Council informed Mrs D it had not made any progress because of workload difficulties. She was becoming increasingly concerned about the amount of time Mr B was spending in his room because care home 1 was not meeting his needs. During this period Mrs D completed her own research into potential placements and identified a new home (care home 3) which had just opened. On 17 July 2015 she told the Council this would be her preferred choice because it was nearer to her home and specialised in caring for autistic adults. The Council did not acknowledge this email but recorded it on its system in September 2015 as "previous family views".
19. In October the Council identified a possible suitable placement (care home 2) in its area and contacted Mrs D to ask if she would like to visit the home. Mrs D raised concerns about the location explaining it was in close proximity to Mr B's birth father who had previously abused Mr B and Mrs D. The Council also responded to Mrs D's concerns about Mr B spending large periods of time in his room. It told Mrs D it had spoken to care home 1 who explained Mr B does spend time in his room but he also engages in activities when he wants to.
20. Mrs D and the Council visited care home 2 in December 2015 and decided it was suitable for Mr B's needs. It also had a room available. However, this room was filled by another service user on a temporary placement. There is no evidence the Council took any action after visiting care home 2 to secure the available room. After finding out the room was no longer available, the Council added Mr B to the waiting list.
21. In January 2016 Mrs D phoned the Council asking for an update. It explained it had placed Mr B on the waiting list and had a hold on the next available place. It said it was in contact with care home 2 to find out when the temporary resident was likely to be moving out. Four weeks later the temporary resident left care home 2 but the room was not offered to Mr B. In this period there is no evidence that the Council contacted care home 2 or pro-actively monitored the vacancy.
22. Following the loss of this potential placement, the Council told Mrs D it did not have the capacity to search for an alternative care home because of workload pressures. There is no evidence the Council took any action to pursue other residential care placements until April 2016 when it referred Mr B to a couple of care homes, including care home 3.

23. Mrs D complained to the Council in March 2016 because she was unhappy Mr B still resided at care home 1, nine months after the best interests decision. In response, the Council admitted it had not progressed Mr B's case as it should have because of staffing and workload difficulties. It said it had made changes to the social worker X's workload to allow him to focus on his caseload rather than duty responsibilities. Mrs D remained dissatisfied with the Council's response and complained to us.
24. In May 2016 the Council's funding panel considered the suitability of care home 3 for Mr B. It found that care home 3 did meet his needs and agreed to start Mr B's gradual transition to his new placement within four weeks. Mr B moved into care home 3 on a permanent basis on 27 June 2016.

Speech and language therapy

25. In response to Mr B's deterioration in behaviour in April 2015 the Council reviewed the speech and language techniques care home 1 was using. It found that the home was not following the speech and language recommendations previously made by the NHS in 2013. The Council said the "period of increasing displays of troubled / challenging behaviours is likely to be attributed to confusion and lack of trust...the staff team appear to want this to work for Mr B and need the tools to enable them to do this".
26. The Council asked for a speech and language therapist to complete a new assessment in June 2015. The therapist said that the existing strategies should remain in place. She confirmed staff at care home 1 should:
 - use short simple sentences simultaneously with sign and natural gesture;
 - use a slow and relaxed pace with pauses;
 - spend two 20 minute sessions per day interacting with Mr B on a one to one basis; and
 - use symbols to aid communication three times per week.
27. Following this assessment the Council reviewed Mr B's support plan. This confirmed that care home 1 should develop its own communication and support plan which incorporates these strategies. It said these recommendations should be followed at all times otherwise Mr B's "choice and control will be significantly compromised". In the care and support plan the Council also recognised that there were limitations on what staff could realistically achieve at care home 1 and it would be important to review the plan when Mr B moved to a more suitable care home.
28. The Council's records show that the speech and language therapist had an active involvement in identifying a suitable care home for Mr B. For example, a therapist visited care home 2 to see whether it would meet Mr B's needs from a speech and language perspective.

29. In response to Mrs D's complaint and our investigation, the speech and language therapist reviewed Mr B's file at care home 1. She found that staff were implementing four out of the five recommendations. They were not using symbols as detailed in the plan because they said Mr B resisted them. The therapist recommended that symbols are used in line with the recommendations. She also identified that although Mr B's file contained the relevant speech and language documents and letters, there was no clear communication support plan which she would expect to find.

Conclusions

30. In the course of its own investigation, the Council has already acknowledged it has not been pro-active in progressing Mr B's case because of workload pressures. Between July 2015 and October 2015 there is no evidence that the Council took any action to find a suitable alternative placement. The Council told us it was making phone calls and checking the vacancy sheet but there is no evidence to support this. The lack of activity during this period was fault.
31. It then took a further two months to arrange a visit to care home 2. But case notes show the Council was working closely with Mrs D during this period, who was unfortunately experiencing health difficulties. This contributed to the delay.
32. Mr B then lost out on two vacancies at care home 2. One in December 2015 and again in January 2016. Records show that the Council was surprised that Mr B had missed out on these opportunities and said this was the fault of care home 2. While it is correct that it is a care home's final decision who they choose to accept, there is no evidence that the Council was liaising with care home 2 to monitor these vacancies and promote Mr B's case.
33. The Council is at fault for failing to keep in touch with care home 2 after referring Mr B. It was aware of previous delays and that Mr B remained in a placement that was not meeting his assessed needs. It should have been pro-actively trying to progress Mr B's case. After reviewing the Council's files there is enough evidence to determine, on the balance of probabilities, that Mr B could have moved to care home 2 if the Council had taken more action. Although Mrs D had some concerns about the location of care home 2 she accepted it was suitable for Mr B's needs, unlike care home 1.
34. Following the loss of this possible placement, once again there is no evidence that the Council actively sought alternative residential options. It said it was in regular contact with providers and checking the vacancy sheet but this is not supported by evidence. Substantive action was not taken on the case until April 2016 when the Council visited care home 3.
35. In response to our enquiries the Council said Mrs D did not inform the Council about care home 3 until March 2016. However, records show that she expressed it as her preferred choice in July 2015. Although she did not know the name of the care home, she told the Council its location and specialism.

36. The Council said it acknowledged Mrs D's preference but was trying to balance her preference with those of other family members. It also wanted to pursue a placement in its area where it said there would be greater protective factors and when in-area options became unavailable out of area options were then explored. But, this is in contrast to statutory guidance which states that choice should not be limited to geographical boundaries. We appreciate the Council wanted to balance preferences of family members but this consideration was not communicated to Mrs D nor was this thinking evidenced in case notes. There was no reason why the Council could not have explored and arranged a possible placement with care home 3 at the same time as referring Mr B to care home 2. The Council failed to follow the Care and Support Statutory Guidance about a person's choice of accommodation. This was fault.
37. Social worker X said he was also experiencing difficulties with the vacancy management group. He said the group was aware of Mr B's need to move in October 2015, but it failed to progress his case. The vacancy management group explained it did not progress the case because social worker X was the lead worker and he did not make a referral for the 'move on' support service. Social worker X said he did not know he could use the 'move on' service for Mr B's case because he thought he could not refer complex cases.
38. Social workers are usually the lead workers for developing care plans and managing movement between care homes. If they want to have additional support, social workers can refer their case to the 'move on' service who will then become the lead for finding a suitable care home and making referrals. Mr B was eligible for support from the 'move on' service. Therefore he should have been referred in June 2015 instead of April 2016. The confusion and lack of clarity about who was responsible for making referrals to the support service and leading on identifying a placement was fault.
39. It can take some time to find an alternative placement, particularly when there is a need for a specialist setting. But, the Council took no action to identify a suitable alternative for four months between July and October 2015 and three months between February and April 2016. The delay in finding Mr B a new care home is fault.
40. The Council did take appropriate action to review Mr B's speech and language plan in April 2015 and provided care home 1 with fresh guidance on working with Mr B. All relevant information was contained within Mr B's file but the Council failed to ensure care home 1 developed a specific communication plan; which the speech and language therapist said she would expect to find. The Council also failed to ensure that care home 1 was implementing all of the speech and language recommendations.

Injustice

41. The faults set out above have caused injustice to Mr B. He has remained in an unsuitable care home which was unable to meet his assessed needs for longer than necessary.
42. Mrs D complains Mr B's wellbeing has been negatively impacted by remaining at this placement because he stays alone in his room for large periods of time. She argues that the home does not have sufficiently trained staff or the capacity to supervise him in his

room which means he is only able to have limited possessions there. The care home's records indicate that Mr B did spend large periods of time in his room, but not all of his time. It confirmed he often went into his room to manage his emotional wellbeing. The Council has accepted that at times Mr B struggled with the environment at care home 1. It is therefore likely that had Mr B moved to a more suitable care home sooner, he would have spent less time isolated in his room.

43. Due to Mr B's medical condition it is difficult to assess exactly what impact remaining at care home 1 has had on his wellbeing. However, it is recognised that care home 1 was not a suitable placement and it is likely that this has resulted in increased stress and anxiety for Mr B. This conclusion is supported by the Council's own records which indicate that workers raised concerns with their managers that the "placement was not meeting Mr B's needs resulting in increased anxiety levels and behavioural problems".
44. It is recognised that care home 1 tried to implement the speech and language recommendations but struggled with the use of symbols; the therapist encouraged it to start trying this again. In addition, whilst care home 1 did have all relevant information on file it failed to develop a specific communication plan. But, because of Mr B's learning needs, it is difficult to determine whether these two faults had any impact on his development. It is likely that remaining in care home 1, which didn't have the capacity to deliver advanced techniques, negatively impacted on Mr B's speech and language development rather than the specific speech and language faults identified above.
45. Mrs D has spent time chasing the Council for progress on her son's move which has taken 11 months because of the Council's delay. Throughout this period she has also experienced anxiety about her son remaining in a care home which was unsuitable for his needs.

Decision

46. There was fault by the Council causing injustice to Mr B and Mrs D. The Council has confirmed that it will fully comply with our recommendations to remedy the injustice. We welcome the Council's willingness to accept our findings and implement our recommendations.

Recommendations

47. To remedy the injustice caused the Council has agreed, within three months of the final report, to:
 - apologise to Mrs D and Mr B for the fault causing injustice identified in this report;
 - make £2000 available for Mr B to spend on activities he would enjoy or possessions he would like. What this should be spent on should be decided at a best interests decision meeting because Mr B lacks capacity to make financial decisions;

- pay Mrs D £500 in recognition of the time and trouble she has experienced as a result of the faults identified; and
- provide training for social workers on the importance of ensuring they keep accurate case notes and in clarifying the differing roles and responsibilities of the allocated social worker, the vacancy management group and the 'move on' support service.



Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	13 October 2016
Title of report:	Executive response to the review of early years provision and children's centres
Report by:	Cabinet member young people and children's wellbeing

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is not a key decision.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To agree the executive response to the recommendations from the task and finish group review of early years and children's centres.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) **the responses to the health and social care overview and scrutiny committee's recommendations regarding the early years and children's centres report, as attached at appendix 1 be considered and approved.**

Alternative options

1. None proposed; it is a statutory requirement to provide a response to the recommendations.

Reasons for recommendations

2. To provide a response to the recommendations from the health and social care overview and scrutiny committee.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Andy Hough, head of educational development on Tel (01432) 260920

Key considerations

3. The health and social care overview and scrutiny committee met on 6 July 2016 and reviewed the report from the task and finish group on the early years and children's centres as attached at appendix 2.
4. The committee made a number of recommendations; these are contained within appendix 1 along with the proposed responses.
5. Work is already underway and taking place, covering a number of the recommendations and an update on these is included within appendix 1.

Community impact

6. Early years provision and children's centre services are an important and integral part of Herefordshire's communities and having provision within the county supports the growth and development of an area. Many different settings see themselves as an integral part of the community and provide their services through the shared use of facilities and accommodation of nursery provision.

Equality duty

7. The proposed responses ensure that the council pay due regard to its public sector equality in the exercise of its functions, having due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the act.
8. We do this by ensuring that we advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and ensure that we foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Financial implications

9. There are no cost implications to these recommendations.

Legal implications

10. There is a statutory duty to ensure that the recommendations of the task and finish group are responded to and agreed.

Risk management

11. There are no risks associated with agreeing the content of this report as the recommendations provide information and indicate how the work is being taken forward. Risks associated with the actual activity are managed through the children's wellbeing directorate risk register and where necessary are escalated to the council's corporate risk register.

Consultees

12. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of recommendations and executive responses to the review of early years provision and children's centres

Appendix 2 – Early years and children's centres task and finish group report

Background papers

- None identified

Summary of recommendations and executive responses - Review of Early Years Provision and Children's Centres

On 6 July 2016, the health and social care overview and scrutiny committee considered the item: Review of early years' provision and children's centres.

The following were recommended to the executive in relation to the findings of the task and finish group:

Recommendation No. 1	Early years' provision is considered and a strategy is written that outlines how this is going to be developed over the course of the current administration to meet the needs of the children and families of Herefordshire.			
Executive Response	Accepted - Improving outcomes for children 0-5 is a priority in Herefordshire's children and young people plan (CYPP), agreed by cabinet on the 25 th September 2015. Detailed strategy and action plan work is underway through the early year's strategy group and these will be updated in light of the work of the task and finish group.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Early year's strategy group to ensure the findings of this review inform the early year's strategy plan.	Chair of Early Year's Strategy Group Assistant Director, Education and Commissioning.	November 2016	The early year's strategy reflects the findings of the review and the strategy is agreed by the Children and Young People's Partnership, with appropriate Cabinet decisions being taken following that.	

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Recommendation No. 2	Consideration is given to the use of the building space that the council has direct responsibility for to ascertain how they could be better used.			
Executive Response	Accepted - The importance and relevance of buildings is being considered carefully across the council. Opportunities to combine service delivery and make better use of buildings is being actively pursued corporately.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Data and information about Children Centres is shared and considered corporately.	Assistant Director, Education and Commissioning	November 2016	Detail about building requirements from an early years/children centre services perspective are fed into the corporate decision making	

Review the arrangements at Children Centres to explore and enable better immediate local uses	Head of Education Development	Jan 2017	about buildings. Immediate changes bring about a better use of buildings and efficiencies	
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Recommendation No. 3	A review into the use of children's centre buildings is completed to ensure that the services provided are offered in a more holistic manner for the whole age range (0-5) and meet the needs of the children and families.			
Executive Response	Accepted - The usage of children's centre building is being reviewed in light of recommendation 2 above. There may be a number of opportunities to use them better including incorporating them into family hubs, libraries and community centres.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Establish changes of use and approaches to improved efficiency of each children centre building.	Head of Education Development	Jan 2017	Have a clear statement of the most relevant and cost effective approach to the use of each children's centre building	

Recommendation No. 4	Early year's provision need not be tied to specific buildings; this could include the sustainable use of buildings for example being used by community groups during the evenings and weekends.			
Executive Response	Accepted. Aspects of the above recommendation will be incorporated into actions linked to recommendations 2 and 3. In consulting with stakeholders (see recommendation 2) opportunities to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) deliver early years services in different settings b) deliver services in a more integrated way with early help for example will be explored.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Consult with stakeholders	Head of Education Development	April 2017	Data and information about how services to improve outcomes can be configured differently is established and acted upon, including a long term plan for children centre services.	

Recommendation No. 5	Early years provision should be explored within a variety of localities and consideration be given to utilising existing community spaces.			
Executive Response	Accepted and will be incorporated into the work in addressing recommendation No. 4.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress

Recommendation No. 6	Further investigation needs to be completed to ensure that the council is not subsidising other services that are provided out of their buildings.
Executive Response	Rejected - This investigation will be incorporated into the action under recommendations 2, 3 and 4. However, the council sometimes provides access to buildings at reduced rates to enable wider service benefits and efficiencies to be achieved. If there is a case for other services to use council buildings at reduced rates this will be explicitly considered as part of the plan to utilise buildings.

Recommendation No. 7	The committee recommends that as a matter of urgency the performance of speech and language therapy be reviewed, and if necessary, appropriate resources put in to reduce the waiting time for a first appointment to a maximum of three weeks.			
Executive Response	This is a request that involves the responsibilities of the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group as well as the local authority. This request has been passed to the CCG and a joint commissioning work programme is being developed between the CCG and Children's Wellbeing that will address paediatric therapy provision. In the meantime the committee will receive a report from the CCG on the current situation of the provision of speech and language therapy and actions to address waiting times.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Produce a joint commissioning plan that incorporates actions to address speech and language therapy provision	Assistant Director, Education and Commissioning	Nov 2016	Plan agreed by CCG and Council as part of the approach to deliver the children and young people's plan.	
Review and revise speech and language therapy activity	Deputy Director of Operations, Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group	Oct 2016	Current waiting times clarified Current capacity optimised Improved pathways documented Revised arrangements to address speech and language waiting times are in place.	

Recommendation No 8	Consideration is given to ensure that we identify mental health and emotional wellbeing issues early and provide support to children, young people and families to access the help and services to meet their needs.			
Executive Response	Agreed. This recommendation will inform the work of the children and young people's partnership and particularly the current work developing the approach for mental health and emotional wellbeing. As with speech and language therapy this also involved the responsibilities of Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
The recommendation is incorporated into the work of the mental health and emotional wellbeing workstream and early help workstream of the children and young people's partnership	Deputy Director of Operations, Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group	Sept 2016	Children, families and professionals working with them are able to access advice and support to improve mental health and emotional wellbeing issues. Evidence of this to be reported within the review of the Children and Young People's Plan	



Task & Finish Group Report

Review of Early Years Services

Members of the task and finish group



Councillor Carole Gandy (Chair)



Councillor Emma Holton



Councillor Alan Seldon



Councillor David Summers

Review of Early Years services for young people and children's wellbeing - Review Report

Chairman's Foreword

- 1.1 The health and social care overview and scrutiny undertook to do a short, focussed review of the early years services for children and families in the county. This was intended to help determine what services are available throughout the county to meet the many demands in respect of service provision.
- 1.2 In carrying out the review, the task and finish group conducted face to face interviews and also visited a number of early years services throughout the county. Whilst the group understands that the council is currently assessing whether there are any gaps in the service provision in respect of early years options, it was felt that there needed to be a review of what is currently provided in order to meet our corporate plan objectives and child care needs.
- 1.3 It is hoped that this review will provide essential information to help inform the future plans for these services. These recommendations will hopefully prove useful in early service re-design that may follow the outcome of this review and can be implemented by the executive.
- 1.4 I would like to thank my elected member colleagues who made up the group, for their assistance and support in the completion of this task. Thanks also to the people we interviewed in undertaking this review including officers from Herefordshire Council, Homestart, Hope Centre Bromyard and other early years provision.
- 1.5 Finally, our sincerest thanks go to both Ruth Goldwater, Chris Jones and Gordon Murray for their support in undertaking this task and finish review.

Councillor Carole Gandy, May 2016
Chairman of the Task and Finish Group

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Task and Finish Group (the 'Group') has considered a significant amount of evidence and this report summarises and focuses on those matters identified in the scoping statement for the review.
- 2.2 Early years services are intended to provide support to give children the best start in life and to meet the aims of the Children and Young People's Plan 2015-2018.
- 2.3 Early years services are part of a continuum of services which support children and their families. They include the provision of children centres, nurseries and other child care settings throughout the county.

3. Composition of the Group

- 3.1 Members of the Group were Councillors:
Cllr Carole Gandy
Cllr David Summers
Cllr Emma Holton
Cllr Alan Seldon
- 3.2 Lead Officers, Chris Jones and Gordon Murray
- 3.3 Democratic Services Officer, Ruth Goldwater

4 Context

Why did we set up the group?

- 4.1 The group was set up as a direct result of scrutiny recommending that there needed to be a holistic review of early years services to ensure that they meet the needs of the children and parents of the county. It was agreed by the chair and vice chair of the health and social care overview and scrutiny committee (HSCOSC) as part of the work programme for that meeting that a task and finish group be commissioned.
- 4.2 The group was established to review the current early years provision and determine whether this was meeting the needs of children and families as intended as well as reviewing the communications and plans for services.

What were we looking at?

- 4.3 The Health & Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and adopted a scoping statement for the group. The scoping statement is attached as appendix A.

Who did we speak to?

4.4 During February and March 2016, the group convened meetings and visits to gather as much background information and to seek as many views as possible. In doing this, the group visited and spoke to staff and some parents at:

- Children's centres
 - Coningsby children's centre (Leominster)
 - Hope centre (Bromyard)
 - Ryefield children's centre (Ross on Wye)
 - Widemarsh children's centre (Hereford)
- Children's Nurseries
 - Holmer pre-school nursery (attached to primary school)
 - Little Leintwardine nursery (attached to primary school)
 - Wigmore pre-school nursery (attached to primary school)
- Homestart Herefordshire – Mandie Preece (scheme manager)
- Staff within Children's Wellbeing Directorate, Herefordshire Council
 - Andy Hough (head of educational development)
 - Gordon Murray (head of commissioning children and young people)

What did we read?

4.5 The group was provided with background information to undertake this review.

How did we engage with people?

4.6 The group conducted face to face interviews and also visited the centres and provision outlined above.

5. Key themes

5.1 The following key questions were identified:

- Uptake for under-5 parents of adult learning is very low – how do we increase/ publicise this for parents?
- What impact has the increase in 2 year olds had on your centre/ provision?
- Has there been an increase in the number of children with special educational needs? Is there any specific reason for this?
- Are we reaching and engaging with the parents and children we should be?
- Are centres achieving their core purpose?
- What activities are you promoting to overcome some of the significant issues highlighted as a priority (e.g. managing feelings and behaviour, and speech)?

5.2 Summary of visits and interviews

- 5.2.1 The group visited a number of different early years provisions throughout the county as listed above and found that in the majority of children centres that are run by the council whilst the sessions are provided are of good standard there appears to be a lack of utilisation of the time and space that is available.
- 5.2.2 The speech and language therapy service provision provided within the centres is finding that there is a demand on their services that they are not able to meet. The average wait for an appointment with a Speech Therapist at County Hospital is between 40 – 50 weeks. Urgent referrals can take 20 weeks. When asked if they felt there was a specific need for their service it was cited that modern societal norms are having an effect on speech development and consequently social skills; i.e. children being placed in front of modern technology.
- 5.2.3 The group observed that the services that are provided from the children's centres that the council owns often are delivered by an outreach model. This can cause issues in delivery of services within the rural areas of the county as not all areas are able to be covered within the limited resources available. It is also costly and time consuming whilst providing no opportunity for parent or child interaction with others.
- 5.2.4 The group found that the majority of services within the county appear to be aimed at the 0-2 years provision and feel that this is not meeting the needs of all children and parents of pre-school age 0-5 years.
- 5.2.5 On reflection following the visits to the children centres it is felt that the vast majority are under-utilised and in fact apart from the Hope Centre, the group saw very few children and feel that the physical buildings could be used in a more effective way. It is felt by the group that the services needed to be provided more flexibly to meet the demands of the children and young people of Herefordshire. One centre manager stated "we talk about hard to reach families when really we should be talking about hard to reach services".
- 5.2.6 Following the group meeting children centre staff, it is felt that the different groups that are run may not be reflective of the needs of the users of the centres. This could be as a result of the timing of activities or the location. Coningsby is in fact running some of its provision from Bridge Street Leisure Centre which it believes sets them more within the community.
- 5.2.7 The group felt that there are hidden costs that are associated within the services that are provided out of the children's centres that the council and other public services may be responsible for; e.g. child health, breastfeeding sessions and development clinics.
- 5.2.8 The visit to one centre in Bromyard was an interesting model that could be developed across the county; however, this would require additional resources. The centre provides activities that offers early years education, adult learning and family support. This appeared to be a more comprehensive provision; it offered a variety of activities throughout the week and weekends to meet demands of the demographic within the locality. Their philosophy was that when dealing with a child with emotional or physical needs it was important to support the whole family.
- 5.2.9 The group visited some nursery provision throughout the county and felt that these were providing a good level of service within the resources available.

6 Recommendations

Following all of the visits and interviews that we carried out the task and finish group would like to make the following recommendations to the executive; and that they are given appropriate consideration.

Recommendation	Details
1	Early years provision is considered and a strategy is written that outlines how this is going to be developed over the course of the current administration to meet the needs of the children and families of Herefordshire.
2	Consideration is given to the use of the building space that the council has direct responsibility for to ascertain how they could be better used.
3	A review into the use of children's centre buildings is completed to ensure that the services provided are offered in a more holistic manner for the whole age range (0-5) and meet the needs of the children and families.
4	Early years provision need not be tied to specific buildings; this could include the sustainable use of buildings for example being used by community groups during the evenings and weekends.
5	Early years provision should be explored within a variety of localities and consideration be given to utilising existing community spaces.
6	Further investigation needs to be completed to ensure that the council is not subsidising other services that are provided out of their buildings.
7	Consideration to be given to ensure that speech and language therapy services are further enhanced and waiting times kept to a minimum to meet the apparent underlying needs of young children to develop their language and social skills.
8	Consideration is given to ensure that we identify mental health and emotional wellbeing issues early and provide support to children, young people and families to access the help and services to meet their needs.

Appendix A

Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee scoping statement

TITLE OF REVIEW:	Early Years and Children's Centres
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Reason for Enquiry

To review the development and implementation of Herefordshire's Early Years offer.

Links to the Community Strategy

This review links to the Children and Young People's Plan which has been adopted by full council.

Summary of Review and Terms of Reference

Summary

The aim is to review the progress of the development and implementation of the Herefordshire Early Years offer across the county, what services are planned, available and integrated. The review will consider what the referral pathways and model of delivery of services are that are currently in place within the county.

Terms of Reference

The group will meet as required to review progress and delivery of the early years offer. We need to ensure that we review the multi-agency contribution.

What will NOT be included

Children's safeguarding and family support

Potential outcomes

Review current Early Years arrangements, and plans for the future Early Years provision. Provide recommendations to improve service delivery and outcomes for children and families in Herefordshire.

Inform the development of the Early Years approach in Herefordshire in the context of the Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan.

Key questions

How are we developing Herefordshire's multi-agency Early Years approach, including health visitors, children centre services and other services including links with voluntary and community sectors and schools to provide a more integrated service that meets the needs of the community?

What are the links to the Troubled Families / Families First programme and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub?

What is the role of children's centres with the early years offer and are they providing what is needed?

How would this approach contribute to the preventative/early years agenda in Herefordshire including reducing the need for high threshold services such as some of those provided by children's social care?

What are the referral pathways and model of delivery of services?

Are there any accessibility restrictions with regards to transport?

Cabinet Member (s)

Cllr Jonathan Lester – Young People and Childrens Services

Key Stakeholders/Consultees

Multi-agency partners including Health, Police and Voluntary sector

Children's social care, education and schools

Advisory board members of the children's centres

Early years settings

Potential Witnesses

Chris Baird – assistant director education and commissioning

Andy Hough – head of educational development

Anne Roberts – children's centre manager

Julia Stephens – early years policy and strategy manager

Alison Murphy – early years lead improvement advisor

Andrea Westlake – public health consultant

Gordon Murray – Head of commissioning, children and young people

Research Required

Review other LAs' early years strategies

Central government policies

National best practice in respect of early years

List of where the children centres are located in the county

Mapping of current early years provision

Potential Visits

To children centres to review current provision across the county.

Possible visit to another LA that is considered as a national benchmark for early years provision; subject to clarification with regards to having similar demographic characteristics.

Nurseries across the county to review their provision.

Outline Timetable (following decision by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to commission the Review)	
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
Visits to selected Children's centres	February / March 2016
Review of the Early Help Strategy	February / March 2016
Review the overall levels of early years provision	February / March 2016
Review families access to resources and services in relation to transport arrangements	February / March 2016
Members	Support Officers
Councillors: Cllr CA Gandy (Chairman of the Group) Cllr D Summers Cllr A Seldon Cllr EL Holton	Lead Support Officer Gordon Murray – Interim head of children's commissioning Support Officer Chris Jones – Strategic business intelligence officer
	Democratic Services Representative Ruth Goldwater – Democratic services officer
Additional members of the Group	None identified