

Agenda

Children and young people scrutiny committee

Date: **Monday 16 March 2020**

Time: **10.15 am**

Place: **Committee Room 1 - 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 the Children and young people scrutiny committee

Membership

Chairperson **Councillor Carole Gandy**
Vice-Chairperson **Councillor Diana Toynbee**

Councillor Graham Andrews
Councillor Paul Andrews
Councillor Kath Hey
Councillor Phillip Howells
Councillor Mike Jones

Co-optees

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Pat Burbidge | Church Representative - Archdiocese of Cardiff |
| Andy James | Parent Governor Representative – SEND Sector |
| Sam Pratley | Church Representative – Diocese of Hereford |

Agenda

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| 1. | <p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>To receive apologies for absence</p> | |
| 2. | <p>NAMED SUBSTITUTES</p> <p>To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the committee.</p> | |
| 3. | <p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>To receive declarations of interest in respect of Schedule 1, Schedule 2 or Other Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.</p> | |
| 4. | <p>MINUTES</p> <p>To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting on 14 January 2020.</p> | 5 - 12 |
| 5. | <p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the public. <i>Deadline for receipt of questions is 5:00pm on Tuesday 10 March.</i> <i>Accepted questions and answers will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting. Please submit questions to:</i> councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk.</p> | |
| 6. | <p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the council. <i>Deadline for receipt of questions is 5:00pm on Tuesday 10 March.</i> <i>Accepted questions and answers will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting. Please submit questions to:</i> councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk.</p> | |
| 7. | <p>SCHOOL EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE 2019</p> <p>To consider school performance of summer 2019 and make recommendations to cabinet on how the effectiveness of the school improvement framework and strategy could be enhanced.</p> | 13 - 46 |
| 8. | <p>REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS AGAINST THE SAFEGUARDING AND FAMILY SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2019/20</p> <p>To review progress against the improvement plan produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan 2019 / 2020.</p> <p>To include an update on work with West Mercia Police regarding referrals to the Multi-agency safeguarding hub.</p> | 47 - 132 |
| 9. | <p>WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW</p> <p>To review and agree the proposed work programme for 2020/21, attached.</p> | 133 - 140 |
| 10. | <p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND 2020/21 MEETING DATES</p> | |

The following dates are proposed for meetings of the children and young people scrutiny committee:

- 2 June 2020 – 1.00 p.m.
- 28 July 2020 – 1.00 p.m.
- 15 September 2020 – 1.00 p.m.
- 1 December 2020 – 1.00 p.m.
- 2 February 2021 – 1.00 p.m.
- 23 March 2021 – 1.00 p.m.

Minutes of the meeting of Children and young people scrutiny committee held at Committee Room 1 - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Tuesday 14 January 2020 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor Carole Gandy (chairperson)
Councillor Diana Toynbee (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Kath Hey, Phillip Howells and Mike Jones

Co-optees: Pat Burbidge and Andy James

In attendance: Councillor David Hitchiner, Leader of the Council
Councillor Felicity Norman, Cabinet Member for Children and Families

Officers: Director for Children and Families, Chief Finance Officer, Director of Public Health, Assistant Director Safeguarding and Family Support, Democratic Services Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Manager, Strategic Capital Finance Manager, Early Help Service Manager, Early Help Family Support Team Manager and Speciality Registrar in Public Health.

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Graham Andrews and Paul Andrews.

33. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor John Hardwick acted as a substitute for Councillor Graham Andrews.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting on 25 November 2019 are agreed as a correct record and be signed by the chairperson.

36. REVIEW OF BUDGET AND CORPORATE PLAN PROPOSALS FOR 2020/21 RELATING TO THE REMIT OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The committee considered a report from the Leader of the council which contained the budget proposals for 2020/21 and the draft corporate plan as relating to the remit of the children and young people scrutiny committee. The chief finance officer (CFO) and the director of children and families (DCF) provided the presentation attached to the circulated report.

During the course of the debate the following points were raised:

- It was queried how the corporate plan took account of the priorities contained in the children and young people's plan. *The DCF explained that the corporate delivery plan, underpinning the corporate plan, made specific reference to the children and young people's plan.*
- The reduction in the number of new entrants to care was welcomed and it was queried how this reduction could be explained. It was queried whether the application of thresholds for admitting children to care had in the past been too cautious. *The DCF explained that a number of initiatives over the previous 18 months accounted for the reduction including the alternatives to care panel, early help assessments and the more co-ordinated approach which ensured that needs were identified and co-ordinated support provided. The assistant director safeguarding and family support (ADS&FS) commented that the alternatives to care panel had been established in September 2018 to provide a process to challenge the grounds on which children were taken into care. The Panel ensured that professional were held accountable for ensuring that all potential services had been made available to children and families prior to becoming looked after. The leaving care looked after children reduction strategy was also raised and the focus on reunifying children with their families and seeking special guardianship orders. The ADS&FS commented that without undertaking a review of earlier cases the application of thresholds would be difficult to appraise but it was noted that in June 2018 Ofsted had found that all children in the care system were there appropriately.*
- There was a query regarding the social care pooled budget of £2 million. *The CFO explained that funding had been provided from central government for social care and a budget had been established to enable funding to meet identified need, such as children transitioning to adulthood who continued to require social care. Proposals were being developed for the operation and allocation of the pooled budget which would be reported to the committee in due course.*
- The rate of inflation used to calculate the cost of the replacement of Peterchurch primary school was queried; at 6% the rate of inflation was considered to be in excess of the general inflation rate. *The CFO explained that the rate used in the calculation was based on the inflation of prices and costs in the construction industry which exceeded the general inflation rate.*
- It was queried whether the consultation results that had identified investment in council-owned care homes as a priority was supported by other forms of evidence and feedback from local residents. It was queried whether the investment allocated to council-owned care homes was sufficient to meet identified need and the proposed outcomes. *The CFO commented that the consultation process tended to produce selective engagement with the community with some demographics disproportionately represented in the final results. The determination of priorities for the allocation of investment was often informed through political judgement. The challenges faced by the care market included current providers seeking to withdraw from providing care and the role of the council to meet any shortfall created. Evidence from across the county suggested that the need for care was increasing across all age ranges and work was ongoing to align care provision to the demand in the community. The construction of new facilities would have an impact on the care market including the potential for the concentration of demand in an area where new facilities became available.*
- The committee queried the outcomes from the safeguarding family support development plan for the previous year and the continuation of the plan into 2020/21. *The DCF explained that the quarterly reviews presented to scrutiny provided details of the improvements made. The plan would be refreshed over the next few months and improvement work would continue over future years. Ofsted had recently carried out a focused visit in December and they had recognised the improvements in stability that had been brought to the social work*

workforce but that recruitment remained a significant challenge and additional work was still needed.

- A query was raised regarding the roll-out of the superhubs and the impact on children's centres. It was commented that some of the centres were in a poor state of repair which would require significant resource for use in the future. A query was raised regarding the access to services from rural areas of Herefordshire *The DCF explained that proposals for superhubs were being developed and the potential for children's centres to act as superhubs would be considered but there were no plans for a reduction in the level of service. The services provided by children's centres would look to be involved in the 'talk community' work. The Early Help Manager (EHM) explained that children's centre services were taken out into the community to families in need where work was conducted in homes.*
- The family befriending service was queried and how it could be accessed by individuals. *The EHM explained that the service was funded through the troubled families programme and a contract to operate the service was currently out to tender. The service would commence in April and would be accessed through an early help assessment targeted at families on level 2 and 3 of the needs thresholds with emerging and complex needs.*
- The committee commented that there was a challenge in supporting care leavers to move into apprenticeships and employment. *The Director of Public Health (DPH) explained that the NHS long-term plan contained an intention to offer opportunities to care leavers and the DCF explained that within the contract with Balfour Beatty there was a requirement to provide apprenticeships.*
- The committee supported the budget and the additional investment proposed.

The cabinet member for children and families commented on the budget proposals and explained that the cabinet were backing early help and intervention for which funding was being provided. There was an importance that the projects in children and families link to the talk community proposals which should recognise that active and vibrant communities were in place across Herefordshire. The foremost priority was the wellbeing of children and young people and ensuring they had the best outcomes possible through early intervention and early investment.

The oral health needs assessment (OHNA) was presented to the committee by the DPH and the Specialty Registrar in Public Health (SRPH). The following principal points were made in the presentation:

- The OHNA provided a comprehensive position of dental services in Herefordshire and a full mapping exercise had been undertaken.
- A number of recommendations had emerged from the OHNA including establishing an oral health improvement group of professionals to work in partnership to improve the oral health of children and adults in Herefordshire.
- An action plan including key indicators would shortly be published which would outline the measures necessary to realise local improvement to oral health.
- The issue of dental access was identified as a challenge in Herefordshire; the current provision in Herefordshire was not felt to meet the need across the population. The Public Health Team had met with practitioners to explore the issue and seek to understand why some dentists were withdrawing NHS treatments. It had been identified that there was a lack of contractual or legal levers to ensure dentists provide NHS treatment.
- NHS England would shortly be undertaking a market engagement exercise to investigate alternative delivery models for general dental provision within both urban and rural areas (possibly using mobile provision), domiciliary care and fluoride varnish.

The committee made the points below in the discussion that followed:

- The work being undertaken by NHSE was welcomed but there was concern that there were still families in the rural areas without access to treatment. *The SRPH acknowledged the issue concerning rurality and explained that there was existing investment within the system from NHSE enabling access for 15,000 more NHS patients in Herefordshire. This provision could not be fulfilled however because some dental surgeries appear to be prioritising private dental services over the provision of NHS treatment. The use of mobile provision for general dental provision was unusual and typically mobile provision was for specialist provision. Dental health needs are able to be addressed at Dental Access Centres but dental practices were not obligated to accept NHS patients. The DPH explained that a conventional approach to increasing access was not effective therefore alternative arrangements had to be considered which the market engagement exercise by NHSE would seek to identify.*
- It was queried how the work of the oral health improvement group was accounted for in the budget. *The DPH explained that the work was supported by the public health grant which was ring-fenced but work was ongoing to calculate the costs of future oral health improvement activity and interventions.*
- The involvement of the local MPs in seeking to achieve dental health improvement was discussed. Jesse Norman MP had been approached and was pursuing the issue but it was felt that contact should be made with the local MPs to promote lobbying of central government.
- The campaigns that sought to improve oral health were raised. *The DPH explained that Public Health England had run a campaign which had encouraged people to attend their local dentist to seek to register however this campaign was not promoted in Herefordshire because of concerns over the lack of access to dentists providing NHS treatment. The promotion of healthy behaviours was also undertaken in large organisations such as the NHS and in the council. The SRPH explained that the improvement group had already and were planning to undertake a wider range of activities in respect of improving oral health including awareness raising in early years settings and targeted fluoride varnish in such settings. The group was not solely focused on the issue of access.*
- The committee raised the statistics in the report which showed that the dental health of 12 year olds was worse than neighbouring areas but that Herefordshire had only had a small increase in the number of fluoride treatments. It was asked what was being done to increase fluoride treatment. *The SRPH explained that dental surveys consistently showed that dental health in Herefordshire was generally poorer than regionally and nationally. Fluoride varnish was acknowledged as an effective, safe and cost effective treatment but not all dentists felt that it was worthwhile despite a financial incentive provided for the provision of the treatment. When NHSE communication was undertaken with dentists regarding access, the prioritisation of varnish for 3 – 16 year olds twice a year was also promoted. There was inconsistency among dentists in Herefordshire in providing fluoride varnish and some didn't apply it routinely. Due to access problems alternative arrangements for fluoride varnish were being explored including targeted provision in community settings such as nurseries or schools.*
- It was felt that the ONHA was a good step forward and that there should be a report to the committee in due course to report on progress with the recommendations and action plan.
- It was noted that statistics for dental health in 3 year olds in Herefordshire compared favourably but at 5-12 years of age the county's performance was poor. It was queried whether the absence of fluoridation of the water supply was a reason for such poor dental health at a later stage of development. *The SRPH explained that the Public Health Team had recently explored the value in conducting a feasibility study and a position paper was due to be published shortly. It was noted that about 10% of the national population have fluoride in*

their water supply. Despite being supported as an effective and cost effective measure, it was acknowledged that introduction in Herefordshire at the current time would present a number of challenges which would be explained in the forthcoming position paper. The surveys that produced results concerning dental health had previously relied on small samples; recently the sample had been expanded and it was hoped that there would be better results in the spring statistics.

The cabinet member commented that good dental health was important to wider health indicators and it was important to engage schools to reach as many children as possible in efforts to improving dental health.

RESOLVED: That the committee:

- **Supports the additional areas of investment identified in the budget;**
- **Writes to the local MPs to request details of actions to lobby central government to improve oral health in Herefordshire; and**
- **Requests a report to a forthcoming meeting of the committee containing the high-level action plan for improving oral health in Herefordshire and details of any progress against the recommendations in the oral health needs assessment.**

37. YOUNG CARERS SUPPORT SERVICE

The committee received a report from the director for children and families relating to the young carers support service (YCSS). The early help manager introduced the report and advised the committee of the statutory duty of the council to young carers and the specification for the service which had emerged through the Joint Carers Strategy 2017-2021. The four objectives of the YCSS were outlined, in particular the promotional work that was ongoing around the service including digital material and presentations at schools and the GP forum. The service operated by undertaking an early help assessment of the family of a young carer from which a package of support could be compiled. Young carers were encouraged to complete evaluations of their experiences at the end of the intervention.

The committee made the points below in the discussion that followed:

- It was estimated that there were between 400 -700 carers in Herefordshire and the number the service had been in contact with was 83. The proportion of carers that the service supported was felt to be low but it was acknowledged that some young carers did not require or want support. There was concern if families did not want a young carer, who required support, to have contact with the service and it was queried how this could be overcome. *The EHM explained that it was not an easy barrier to overcome but promotional materials such as the youtube video that had been developed was important in demonstrating the support that the service could provide. The priority for the service was to ensure that those with need were getting the help that they required. Presentations to the GPs Forum had been provided to ensure young carers and their families could be signposted to the service and notions that the service sought to take children into care could be dispelled.*
- It was queried whether children that have been supported had been consulted on how to engage other young carers. For older children a closed group on a social media platform was proposed and it was suggested that the social media details should be included on the services promotional posters. Details of where the poster had been distributed were sought. *The EHM confirmed that a question*

regarding effective engagement with young carers could be added to the evaluation that was completed following intervention. The early help family support team manager (EHFSTM) explained that a number of children that the service works with do not initially identify as young carers and work that was undertaken in primary schools was effective in raising awareness. The poster was distributed to all schools and GP surgeries and adding social media details to the poster would be looked into.

- *The committee queried the definition of a young carer. It was clarified that young carers were not only carers for parents but could also care for siblings. The EHFSTM explained that a question, about jobs in the home, posed of children to determine if they were a young carer was: "if you didn't do it, would it get done?" It was confirmed that the service also provided support to families where siblings provided care.*
- *The committee asked what opportunities existed for young carers to interact and engage with one another. The EHM confirmed that there were young carer groups, some of which were delivered by the Herefordshire Young Carer Clubs. The council also funded tender exercise to identify providers for young carers groups in different locations; the CarersTrust4All had been awarded a contract and were in the process of establishing carers groups.*
- *The committee asked what the advantages had been of bringing the service back 'in house' with the council acting as the provider. The EHM confirmed that one of the reasons for bringing the service back 'in-house' was because statutory guidance stated that a holistic family assessment should be provided and following a consultation with young carers it was ascertained that such a comprehensive approach was not being achieved under previous arrangements. With effective co-ordination of support greater free time was enabled for young carers. The EHFSTM explained that young carers were told about the groups that were available and activities they could undertake. Some young carers wanted to engage with carer groups but others wanted to explore other interests relevant to their age.*
- *The committee queried if the provision of a greater level of early help services had identified more young carers who required support. The role played by Addaction was also raised. The EHM confirmed that was the experience of the service and often there were other issues identified through school such as behavioural problems or lateness which suggested there were family issues which could involve young people acting as carers. It was confirmed that there was some challenge working with Addaction and receiving referrals but where there was a safeguarding concern this was reported through the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).*
- *It was queried if the service received feedback from former young carers about their experiences and the support provided. The EHFSTM explained that former carers could contact the service at any point and if young carers became adult carers they were referred to the adult carer group. The EHM explained that the service had been in operation for two years and methods for gathering feedback from former young carers was something that could be investigated in future. The survey conducted by the children and young people's partnership scheduled for summer 2020 would include questions to ask young people if they were carers which would help the service develop a more accurate picture of numbers in the county. It was hoped that a link to webpages for young carers could be provided on the survey, alongside the question above, to provide instant access to information for those young people who identified as carers.*
- *The service period on the young carers service summary specification was raised, in particular the end date of 31 March 2020. The budget that was planned for the new financial year was queried and the grant funding of £20,000 awarded in May 2019 was raised and if this would be reviewed in May 2020. The DCF confirmed that the service would operate beyond the date in the specification and the budget remained fixed for the forthcoming year. The EHM*

explained that there was a contingency to address an increase in the numbers of young carers if this occurred following the children and young people partnership survey. It was confirmed that the grant funding would be reviewed.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families explained that there was a fine judgement required by those working in this area where there was the potential for exploitation of young carers and where young carers could be involved in care for siblings. *The EHM explained that the service retained a safeguarding obligation and would involve social care where required.*

The Chairperson explained that there had been an intention to hear from young carers at the meeting but this had not been possible due to concerns over the sensitivity of the information they would share in the public domain. It was proposed that an engagement session in private was arranged for members of the committee with an interest in talking to young carers ahead of the next committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That a session is arranged with young carers to discuss their experiences of being a young carer and provide feedback on the support they receive.

38. WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW

The committee considered a report from the democratic services officer which provided the work programme for the remainder of the current administrative year, the outcomes of the peer on peer abuse in schools spotlight review and the recommendation tracker.

The committee noted those items that would be presented to the next meeting on 16 March 2020.

RESOLVED: That the committee's work programme 2019/20, as attached at appendix a, is approved.

The committee considered the outcomes of the peer on peer abuse in schools spotlight review. Two amendments to the recommendations in the report were proposed as below:

- Recommendation vii be expanded to include encouragement to schools to also receive the vulnerability training provided by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner and training from the West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre; and
- Recommendation xi be expanded to include in the business to be considered at future meetings of the spotlight review the monitoring of progress and proposal of recommendations.

The director children and families outlined a number of factual corrections or elements that required clarification in the wording in the report. *The Chairperson explained that the proposed corrections and clarifications would be investigated after the meeting and would be included in the final report to the executive, if appropriate.*

RESOLVED: That the committee agrees the recommendations and outcomes of the peer on peer abuse in schools spotlight review (appendix b) for submission to the executive, subject to the amendments to recommendations outlined above and evaluation of appropriate factual corrections.

The committee considered the recommendations tracker and the Chairperson provided an update on the response received from the Wye Valley Trust to correspondence concerning occupational therapists which would be shared in due course.

RESOLVED: That the committee notes the recommendation tracker in appendix c.

39. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on 16 March 2020.

The meeting ended at 4.55 p.m.

Chairperson



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| Meeting: | Children and young people scrutiny committee |
| Meeting date: | Monday 16 March 2020 |
| Title of report: | School Examination Performance 2019 |
| Report by: | Head of learning and achievement |

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All Wards

Purpose and summary

To consider school performance for summer 2019 and the effectiveness of the Herefordshire school improvement partnership strategy and framework in improving outcomes for Herefordshire's children and young people.

To enable the committee to scrutinise pupil and school performance in Herefordshire as assessed in 2019.

Recommendation(s)

That the committee:

- (a) reviews school performance and determines any recommendations it wishes to make to the executive to enhance the effectiveness of the school improvement framework and strategy.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternatives to the recommendation: it is a function of the committee to make reports or recommendations to the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive.

Key considerations

2. Over the past five years, educational outcomes for children and young people in Herefordshire have demonstrated significant improvement. The county now ranks in the top or second quartile of local authority area performance for the vast majority of key assessment indicators from the early years to the end of the primary phase. Ofsted has identified primary education in Herefordshire as 'strong and improving'. Herefordshire has made good progress in ensuring that the majority of children are given every opportunity to achieve, are kept safe, and have a great start in life. Performance in the secondary phase has not seen the same improvements and the county ranks in the third and fourth quartile for the majority of key assessment indicators at Key Stage 4. In particular outcomes achieved by secondary school pupils in the attainment 8 and progress 8 measures at key stage 4 need to improve.
3. Raising standards for vulnerable groups, particularly disadvantaged children and young people and those eligible for free school meals, remains a key priority for the council. Despite there being some improvement in outcomes for these groups over the past three years, outcomes continue to demonstrate considerable fluctuation across the Key Stages year on year.
4. Herefordshire reflects national trends and developments that have seen rising exclusions and more children entering home education. Reducing the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions, ensuring that schools are focused on improving outcomes for all groups of children and preparing our young people for the world of work are key priorities that form part of Herefordshire's refreshed Education, development and skills strategy.
5. In addition to educational standards across the county, the council is responsible for:
 - ensuring there are sufficient high quality places for the local area
 - providing focus and leadership on the experiences and outcomes for vulnerable children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEN), and those who need support to be safe
 - commissioning and providing a range of services, including social care, to deliver the council's statutory responsibilities
 - providing strategic leadership in the development of education and skills in the local area

The information below is summarised as a presentation (appendix 1) and will be presented at the meeting of the children and young people's scrutiny committee.

6. In February 2020 96.8% of Herefordshire children were taught in primary schools judged by Ofsted as good or outstanding; 78.3% of pupils in the secondary phase were in good or outstanding schools; 99% of early years' group settings inspected were judged as good or outstanding; 97% of childminders inspected were good or outstanding.
7. Herefordshire's youngest learners in the reception year, year one and year two have continued to outperform their peers nationally for a fourth consecutive year. At the end of the primary phase in key stage 2, historically a weakness in Herefordshire, pupils' results ranked in the top quartile nationally for combined attainment in reading, writing and

mathematics, compared with the second quartile in 2018. As a result Herefordshire ranked 31st nationally, an improvement of 61 places since 2017. These successes are set out below:

- The percentage of five year old children reaching a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) in 2019 was 75.4%, above the national average of 71.8%. This is in the top quartile when compared with all local authorities in England, ranking Herefordshire 22/151 Local Authorities nationally. Both boys and girls performed better than the national average with girls' performance ranking in the second quartile and boys in the top quartile. Boys outperformed their peers nationally by 5.6%. 38.3% of Children with special educational needs support also achieved GLD compared to 28.5% of children with special educational needs support nationally.
- The performance of children eligible for free school meals (cohort of 234 pupils) in the early years foundation stage in Herefordshire decreased marginally in 2019. There is a three year downward trend for this measure. A good level of development was achieved by 52.6% of children eligible for free school meals in 2019; nationally 56.4% of children eligible for free school meals met the good level of development. The performance of children eligible for free school meals is now in the third quartile when compared to all local authorities.
- Analysis of success rates over time highlights an improved performance of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) in the early years foundation stage in Herefordshire: (64.1%) EAL pupils reached a good level of development in 2019 compared with 59.3% in 2018. This ranks Herefordshire in the 2nd quartile when compared to all local authorities.
- Analysis of data for the small numbers of looked after children in 2019 (cohort of 12 pupils) shows that they performed less well than their looked after peers nationally in the early years foundation stage with 25% reaching the good level of development (GLD) compared to 48% of looked after children nationally.
- In year one phonics testing, the performance of Herefordshire children continues to be better than the national average although in 2019 there was a small decrease in the number achieving the phonics screening check from 84.2% achieving the expected standard in 2018 to 82% in 2019. For the last four years we exceeded the national average. The percentage of free school meals children achieving the phonics threshold (69.2%) is broadly in line with the national performance of FSM pupils (70.1%).
- At key stage 1, the proportion of Herefordshire children reaching the expected levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was again above the national average and in the top quartile for reading (79%), writing (73%) and mathematics (79%). The percentage of pupils achieving at greater depth in both reading (25%) and writing (15%) was in line with national and 2nd quartile whereas mathematics (20%) lagged behind their peers nationally (22%) and was in the third quartile.
- The attainment of vulnerable groups of pupils at key stage 1 demonstrated some improvements on last year's results. The percentage of free school meals (FSM) pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading (61.5%) was again just above the national average (60.4%). Pupils eligible for free school meals also made improvements in their attainment in writing (52.1%) and maths (59.4%) when compared to last year's results but were still performing in the third quartile. Pupils

with special educational needs (SEN) but not having an Education Health care Plan (EHCP) achieved better than their peers nationally at key Stage 1 in reading (37.3%, second quartile), writing (27.0%, second quartile) and maths (47.1%, first quartile) for the third year consecutive year. The performance of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) in writing and mathematics higher than their peers nationally with 69.9% achieving the expected standard in writing (second quartile) and 78.2% (second quartile) achieving the expected standard in maths. Reading was also in the second quartile, with 71.3% achieving but was marginally below the national average of 72.0%. The achievement of looked after children showed a strong performance in reading at KS1 with 63.6% achieving the expected standard compared with just 52.0% of their peers nationally. In writing and maths the performance was equally as strong with again 63.6% of Herefordshire's looked after children achieving the expected standard compared to 42.0% and 49.0% of their peers nationally.

- At key stage 2, the percentage of children attaining the expected standard by the end of the primary phase in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average of 65% with 69% of pupils reaching the expected standard in Herefordshire. This ranked Herefordshire as the top local authority in the West Midlands for a second consecutive year and in the top quartile nationally. The percentage of pupils working at greater depth (12%) was above the national average for the combined attainment measure in reading, writing and mathematics. The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs (SEN) support who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was 35%, ranking in the top quartile nationally. 64% of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) achieved the expected standard in reading writing and mathematics, slightly below their peers nationally and a small decrease on last year (third quartile performance).
- More girls at key stage 2 achieved the expected standard (72%) than boys (67%), reflecting the national picture. Nevertheless, both boys and girls outperformed their peers nationally, with boys ranked in the top quartile nationally and girls in the second quartile. The gap in attainment between girls and boys in Herefordshire closed in 2019. Pupils made above average progress in the DfE progress measure in reading (+1.5), writing (+1.4) and mathematics (+1.0) at key stage 2 in 2019. In all subjects Herefordshire was in the top quartile of all local authorities for all measures of progress. Progress in reading over the past three years has been particularly strong. Pupils eligible for free school meals also made good progress in reading (+0.01) compared to -0.8 for their peers nationally. FSM progress in writing (0.5) was better than the national figure (-0.7) as was progress in maths (-0.1 in Herefordshire versus -1.0 nationally). Disadvantaged pupils (this includes FSM6 pupils – free school meals at any point over the last 6 years, LAC and post LAC pupils) made better progress than their peers nationally with progress scores of 0.75 in reading, 0.77 in writing and 0.31 in maths. Looked after children made exceptionally good progress in reading (1.89), writing (1.80) and mathematics (1.59) at key stage 2, outperforming their peers regionally and nationally. Attainment for looked after children at Key Stage 2 in 2019 improved greatly from 2018 with 50% of looked after children reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths compared to 37% of looked after children nationally.
- The performance of children with an education health care plan (EHCP) was below national (4.0% compared to 9.13%) in the combined measure of reading, writing and maths. This ranked Herefordshire in the fourth quartile

- In 2019 Herefordshire secondary schools and academies performance at key stage 4 was below national (state funded schools) in the key performance indicators which include Progress 8 (-0.19 versus -0.03), Attainment 8 (44.7 versus 46.8), GCSE English and mathematics attainment at grades 9-5 (40.1 versus 43.4%) and grades 9-4 (62.4 versus 64.9%) and attainment in the E-Baccalaureate (Average Points Score 3.96 versus 4.08). Performance for all indicators was in the third quartile for all external national measures, except progress 8 which was in the fourth quartile.
- Girls' progress (0.03) continues to be better than that of boys (-0.41) in Herefordshire, reflecting the national pattern. Despite this both girls and boys also ranked in the fourth quartile nationally for the Progress 8 measure. Despite the disappointing progress data three secondary schools' progress data was above the national average: The Steiner School, St Mary's High School and Fairfield High School and seven were classified as performing in line with national expectations.
- The national picture for vulnerable groups indicates that the gap between disadvantaged pupils (pupils who have been FSM in the last six years, post looked after and looked after) and their non-disadvantaged peers at Key Stage 4 continued over the last academic year. In Herefordshire the performance of disadvantaged pupils in the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measure was well below national and in the fourth quartile. However, despite performing below their peers nationally, those eligible for free school meals performed in the second quartile for the percentage achieving Grade 9-5 in English and mathematics measure for a second successive year. Pupils with SEN support also performed below national in both the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures, putting them into the fourth quartile.
- There were 19 looked after children (LAC) in the eligible cohort for GCSEs in 2019. Their performance across the range of 8 GCSE subjects (Attainment 8) was better than that of looked after children nationally (Attainment 8 was 24.0 versus 19.0 nationally). Herefordshire's looked after cohort also performed better than their peers nationally in Progress 8 (-0.73) compared to looked after children nationally who scored -1.27. In September 2019, 94.2% of these young people were in education, training or employment.
- Pupils in Herefordshire with an EHCP (education and health care plan) performed in the fourth quartile in the Attainment 8 measure and the third quartile for the progress 8 measure.
- At key stage 5 provisional results show maintained school and academy sixth forms performed well against the national average for state-funded school students in key performance indicators. Across Herefordshire the average points score per entry, recorded by students at A-level was 33.98 at A Level, an improvement on 2018 (32.40). In the progress measure our school sixth forms performed in line with national or better than national. One school sixth form was well above average with a score of 0.48. For students following a less academic route performance improved with an average points score per entry in applied general qualifications rising from 25.08 in 2018 to 30.79 in 2019. It must be remembered that the cohort reported on nationally for these qualifications was relatively small (184 students in Herefordshire in 2019).
- The 2019 annual outturn published by the DfE (Department For education) shows that the combined percentage of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or whose destination is unknown in Herefordshire was 5.8%, which was higher than the England average of 5.5%. Individually 4.5% were reported as

NEET with 1.3% activity not known. England figures were 2.6% NEET and 2.9% activity not known. A recent key focus for Herefordshire has been the procurement of a new data system, the purpose of which is to ensure increased accuracy and consistency of reporting.

8. All schools and academies in Herefordshire are subject to the council's annual risk assessment, developed by the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership (HSIP). The HSIP group comprises of school leaders in both maintained and academy schools. Its focus has been on using performance data to identify areas of strength and concern in pupil outcomes, and developing systems to disseminate good practice and improve standards across the county.
9. The annual risk assessment informs the council's approach to monitoring schools causing concern. This includes monitoring meetings and may include the issue of pre-warning or warning notices. Herefordshire Council continues to highlight issues with the underperformance of academies with the Regional Schools Commissioner's (RSC) office. Local authority officers are currently in discussion with representatives from the RSC and the Department for Education regarding Bredenbury Primary School and Brookfield School, which were recently judged inadequate by Ofsted.
10. Centrally generated targets, developed with members of the Herefordshire School Improvement Partnership, continue to be issued annually to schools by Herefordshire Council. This approach has improved the council's ability to be pro-active in addressing poor pupil outcomes. Schools who are in danger of not meeting targets are prioritised for school-to-school support funding from the council on the completion of a funding bid with either a supporter school or one of Herefordshire's teaching schools. These schools are also invited to participate in school improvement projects such as those run by the HSIP project Board. In 2018-2019 schools who did not meet their targets or who were identified as high risk in the annual risk assessment process participated in a variety of intervention measures including a pupil premium project, a small schools leadership project and a curriculum project.
11. Six small primary schools participated in the HSIP small schools leadership project which was run by Whitchurch Teaching School in 2018-2019. A mixture of six primary and secondary schools participated in the cross phase pupil premium project run by Marlbrook Teaching School and four secondary schools took part in the curriculum project run by Fairfield High School. The HSIP project identified for 2019-2020 include subject networks in science and history for primary teachers who lead in these subjects and a raising boys' attainment in KS4 English project with seven participating secondary schools. Eight schools took part in round 5 of the school to school support programme with particular improvements in outcomes seen in two of the participating primary schools.
12. The 'Solid Roots' which began in the autumn of 2018, aims to support the already good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This project comprises of three work streams: developing speech and language in order to close gaps between vulnerable groups and their peers, training and workforce development including developing parental engagement via the home learning environment and supporting parenting skills using the Solihull Parenting Approach. 560 have started courses in the Solihull parenting approach and 143 have received training in this approach and a further 65 have been trained as trainers for this approach.

13. Building on the success of previous school improvement initiatives in Herefordshire, such as our approach to boosting outcomes in phonics and mathematics, local National leaders in education (NLEs) and the teaching schools continue to be involved in projects or support to individual schools to raise standards at the end of the primary and secondary phase. We continue to have four teaching schools across Herefordshire.
14. The annual Herefordshire school leadership conference focused this year on 'creating excellence in education'. Input from key note speakers including Dame Alison Peacock covered subjects such as growing concerns at national level around young people's mental health, creating a culture of safeguarding, the new Ofsted framework, the achievement of pupil premium students and excellent school governance. Positive feedback was received from many school leaders and governors. A second conference was held for all designated safeguarding leads across Herefordshire that focussed on contextual safeguarding issues such as peer on peer abuse and child exploitation. This conference was extremely well attended and very positive feedback was received.
15. Supporting schools and academies with safeguarding arrangements continues to be a key priority for council officers. Individualised tailored support to improve safeguarding practice has been given to 60% of primary schools, 79% of secondary schools and special schools over the past four years. This input includes one day reviews of schools' safeguarding arrangements, quality assurance audits or feedback on published policies and practice.
16. The vast majority of maintained schools and all academies now subscribe to Herefordshire Council's safeguarding service level agreement which funds two school liaison posts within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). In the autumn maintained, academy and independent schools across the county completed the annual safeguarding audit issued by Herefordshire Council and monitored through the Herefordshire Children's Safeguarding Board. Currently 97% of schools and colleges have made their return. The remainder are being followed up to ensure the same high completion rate as last year (98%). Schools and colleges who fail to complete the audit are targeted for a safeguarding quality assurance visit by council officers.
17. The council has further statutory duties which include supporting the SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) and the moderation of outcomes in the early years and at key stages 1 and 2. The moderation of teacher assessment at key stages 1 and 2 has been undertaken by Marlbrook teaching school for the past four years.

Community impact

18. Pupil performance is important because it enables young people to successfully access employment or higher education and measures progress relative to their starting points.
19. The council's corporate plan has a priority of keeping children safe and giving them a great start in life. Within this plan sits the council's approach to education and its education strategy which considers performance data at both micro and macro level, including vulnerable groups, and looks at performance over time. This informs the work of the strategy, the HSIP and framework, allowing work to be targeted appropriately. Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2024 contains specific work to enhance the life chances of children and give them a great start in life and also provides a focus to develop family support which can improve a child's educational development as well. The Education, Development and Skills Strategy mirrors this in its vision and includes the core purposes of safety and wellbeing, high standards, equity and a successful transition to adult life.

20. In accordance with the council's code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council must ensure that it has an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development, and review.

Equality duty

21. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
22. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.
23. The focus on gaps in achievement between vulnerable groups and their peers has and continues to be a key issue for Herefordshire. There have been some examples of good practice and improvement which has narrowed the gap. However, further work is required and this is taking place as part of Herefordshire's approach to school improvement and includes the Solid Roots Project for children aged 2-5 years. Herefordshire is currently working on a bid with all Herefordshire secondary schools to the DfE to help address the gap.

Resource implications

24. There are no resource implications associated with the recommendation. The resource implications of any recommendations made by the committee will inform the executive's response.

Legal implications

25. Consideration of this report falls within the definition of responsibility delegated to the children's scrutiny committee as set out in part 3 section 4, of the council's constitution.
26. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report, however section 13A of the Education Act 1996 places a legal duty on the council to exercise its educational functions (so far as they are capable of being so exercised) with a view to:

- a. promoting high standards;
 - b. ensuring fair access to opportunity of education and training; and
 - c. promoting the fulfilments of learning potential by every person under the age of 20 (and persons aged 20 or over and for whom an education, health and care place is maintained).
27. The duty in section 13A applies to community schools, but not to academies. While the Council has no direct responsibility for academies, there is an expectation that there will be a relationship whereby the local authority is aware of standards and in a position to raise concerns directly with the school, or with Ofsted, if there is not a satisfactory response.
28. There are no legal implications associated with the recommendation. The legal implications of any recommendations made by the committee will inform the executive's response

Risk management

29. There are no risk management implications associated with the recommendation. The risk management implications of any recommendations made by the committee will inform the executive's response.

Consultees

30. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Examination Results 2019

Background papers

None

Herefordshire school examination outcomes 2019

Primary context

- There are 78 primary schools 3 special schools that cater for primary age pupils.
- 96.8% of Herefordshire's primary schools are judged Ofsted good or better.
- 99% of Early Years settings have been judged Good or better by Ofsted
- 97% of child minders have been judged Ofsted good or better

Early Years Foundation Stage: Strengths

- 75.4% achieved a good level of development (GLD) compared to 71.8% nationally ranking Herefordshire in the top quartile (22/151 Local Authorities)
- Boys outperformed their peers nationally by 5.6%, ranking them in the top quartile.
- Girls also outperformed their peers nationally and ranked in the second quartile.

Early Years Foundation Stage: Strengths

- 64.1% EAL (English as an additional language) pupils reached a good level of development in 2019 compared with 59.3% in 2018. This ranks Herefordshire in the 2nd quartile.
- Children with Special Educational Needs but not an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) also performed better than their peers nationally with 38.3% reaching GLD compared to 28.5% nationally

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Early Years Foundation Stage: Areas for development

- Looked after children (LAC) performed less well than their looked after peers nationally in the early years foundation stage with 25% reaching the good level of development (GLD) compared to 48% of looked after children nationally. (cohort size of 12)
- 52.6% of children eligible for FSM (free school meals) achieved GLD compared to 56.4% nationally, ranking them in the third quartile (cohort size of 234)

Key Stage 1 (including Year 1 phonics): Strengths

- 82% of children in Herefordshire achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check which is just above the national average.
- ²⁸ The percentage of free school meals (FSM) children achieving the phonics threshold (69.2%) is broadly in line with the national performance of FSM pupils (70.1%). The 'gap' between FSM and non FSM in Herefordshire reduced slightly in 2019.

Key Stage 1 (including Year 1 phonics): Strengths

- 79% of Herefordshire children reached the expected standard in Reading and Maths at the end of Key Stage 1, ranking Herefordshire in the top quartile.
- ²⁹• 73% of Herefordshire children reached the expected standard in writing at the end of Key Stage 1, which also ranked Herefordshire in the top quartile.
- The percentage of pupils achieving at greater depth in both reading (25%) and writing (15%) was in line with national and 2nd quartile

Key Stage 1 (including Year 1 phonics): Strengths

- The achievement of looked after children showed a strong performance in the separate measures of reading, writing and maths at KS1 with 63.6% achieving the expected standard compared with just 52.0% of their peers nationally in reading, 42.0% in writing and 49.0% in maths.
- The percentage of free school meals (FSM) pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading (61.5%) was just above the national average (60.4%).

Key Stage 1 (including Year 1 phonics): Strengths

- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) but not having an Education Health care Plan (EHCP) achieved better than their peers nationally at key Stage 1 in reading (37.3%, second quartile), writing (27.0%, second quartile) and maths (47.1%, first quartile) for the third year consecutive year.
- The performance of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) in writing and mathematics higher than their peers nationally with 69.9% achieving the expected standard in writing (second quartile) and 78.2% (second quartile) achieving the expected standard in maths. Reading was also in the second quartile, with 71.3% achieving but was marginally below the national average of 72.0%.

Key Stage 1 (including Year 1 phonics): Areas for development

- The percentage of pupils achieving at greater depth in mathematics (20%) lagged behind their peers nationally (22%) and was in the third quartile.
- Pupils eligible for free school meals made improvements in their attainment in writing (52.1%) and maths (59.4%) when compared to last year's results but were still performing in the third quartile

Key Stage 2: Strengths

- The percentage of children attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average (65%), with 69% of pupils reaching the expected standard in Herefordshire. This ranked Herefordshire as the top local authority in the West Midlands for a second consecutive year and in the top quartile nationally.
- Pupils made above average progress in the DfE progress measure in reading (+1.5), writing (+1.4) and mathematics (+1.0) at key stage 2 in 2019, placing Herefordshire in the top quartile.

Key Stage 2: Strengths

- The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs (SEN) support who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was 35%, ranking in the top quartile nationally.
- More girls at key stage 2 achieved the expected standard (72%) than boys (67%). Both boys and girls outperformed their peers nationally, with boys ranked in the top quartile nationally and girls in the second quartile.
- The percentage of pupils working at greater depth (12%) was above the national average for the combined attainment measure in reading, writing and mathematics.

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Key Stage 2: Strengths

- Pupils eligible for free school meals also made good progress in reading (+0.01) compared to -0.8 for their peers nationally. FSM progress in writing (0.5) was better than the national figure (-0.7) as was progress in maths (-0.1 in Herefordshire versus -1.0 nationally).
- Looked after children made exceptionally good progress in reading (1.89), writing (1.80) and mathematics (1.59) at key stage 2, outperforming their peers regionally and nationally.
- Attainment for looked after children at Key Stage 2 in 2019 improved greatly from 2018 with 50% of looked after children reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths compared to 37% of looked after children nationally.

Key Stage 2: Areas for development

- 64% of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) achieved the expected standard in reading writing and mathematics, slightly below their peers nationally (third quartile performance).
- The performance of children with an education health care plan (EHCP) was below national (4.0% compared to 9.13%) in the combined measure of reading, writing and maths. This ranked Herefordshire in the fourth quartile.

Key Stage 4: Context

- 79.3% of pupils are taught in a secondary school ranked by Ofsted as good or better
- There are 15 secondary schools (1 all through school) and of the 4 special schools, 3 had secondary age pupils.

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Key Stage 4: Strengths

- Pupils with no SEN (special educational needs) performed in the second quartile in two measures: English and Maths at Grade 5 or above (47.3%) and the Ebacc average point score (4.4)
- FSM (Free School Meals) pupils also ranked in the second quartile in the Grade 5 or above measure in English and maths (20.7%)
- The performance of LAC (looked after children) across the range of 8 GCSE subjects (Attainment 8) was better than that of looked after children nationally (Attainment 8 was 24.0 versus 19.0 nationally). Herefordshire's looked after cohort also performed better than their peers nationally in Progress 8 (-0.73) compared to looked after children nationally who scored -1.27 (cohort size 19)

Key Stage 4: Areas for development

- In 2019 Herefordshire secondary schools and academies performance at key stage 4 was below national (state funded schools) in the key performance indicators of :
 - Progress 8 (-0.19 versus -0.03),
 - Attainment 8 (44.7 versus 46.8),
 - GCSE English and mathematics attainment at grades 9-5 (40.1 versus 43.4%%) and grades 9-4 (62.4 versus 64.9%) and
 - attainment in the E-Baccalaureate (Average Points Score 3.96 versus 4.08).
 - Performance for all indicators was in the third quartile for all external national measures, except progress 8 which was in the fourth quartile.

Key Stage 4: Areas for development

- In Herefordshire the performance of disadvantaged pupils (FSM in the previous 6 years, LAC and previously LAC) in the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measure was well below national and in the fourth quartile (A8 – 33.2 and P8 -0.69).
- Pupils with SEN support also performed below national in both the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures, putting them into the fourth quartile.
- Pupils in Herefordshire with an EHCP (education and health care plan) performed in the fourth quartile in the Attainment 8 measure and the third quartile for the progress 8 measure.

Key Stage 5 Context

- There are 3 secondary schools with sixth forms: Earl Mortimer College, John Masefield High school and John Kyrle High School.
- These schools are all judged Ofsted Good.
- Only two of these secondary schools offer 'Level 3 qualifications' (A Level or their equivalent)

Key Stage 5: Strengths

- Across Herefordshire the average points score per entry, recorded by students at A-level was 33.98 at A Level, an improvement on 2018 (32.40).
- The average grade achieved at A Level is a C+ which is in line with the national average.
- ⁴²• In the progress measure our school sixth forms performed in line with national or better than national. One school sixth form was well above average with a score of 0.48.
- For students following a less academic route performance improved with an average points score per entry in applied general qualifications rising from 25.08 in 2018 to 30.79 in 2019. (cohort size 184)

Key Stage 5: Areas for development

- The average points score per entry in Tech Levels (28.75) was below national for a second year. (cohort size 8)

What are we doing to improve outcomes for all learners?

- Solid Roots project for Nursery and EYFS children: Three strands – the home learning environment, speech and language and Solihull parenting
- Golden Ticket scheme to get more two year olds into nursery
- School to school support projects
- ⁴⁴• HSIP (Hereford School Improvement Partnership) projects: 2018 -19 these focussed on small school leadership, Pupil Premium and the KS4 Curriculum. In 2019-2020 they are focussed on raising the attainment of boys in English at KS4 and for primary schools developing subject knowledge and leadership in the foundation subjects of History and Science through subject networks.
- Leadership, safeguarding, RSE and Ofsted Conferences

What are we doing to improve outcomes for all learners?

- Phonics project
- KS4 – Herefordshire Challenge. This project is under development. All secondary schools have in principal agreed to support and participate in this work which will look at raising attainment and increase social mobility.
- The use of external NLEs (National Leaders for Education) in underperforming schools.
- The use of Primary Teaching Schools to support and drive up standards in underperforming primary schools.



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|-------------------------|--|
| Meeting: | Children and young people scrutiny committee |
| Meeting date: | Monday 16 March 2020 |
| Title of report: | Review of performance and progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan 2019/20 |
| Report by: | Assistant director for Safeguarding and Family Support |

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To review progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan 2019 / 2020 (appendix a) produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent focused visits carried out in 2019.

To provide an update on work with West Mercia Police regarding referrals to the Multi-agency safeguarding hub.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) **The committee review progress and determine any recommendations it wished to make to the executive to secure further improvement.**

Alternative options

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Liz Elgar, email: liz.elgar@herefordshire.gov.uk

1. There are no alternative options to the above recommendation; it is a function of the committee to review action taken in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive and make reports or recommendations to the executive.

Key considerations

2. The children and young people scrutiny committee received a report at their meeting on 25 November 2019 that provided an update on the progress against the overall improvement plan for Safeguarding and Family Support 2019 / 2020 that was developed to ensure that the continued focus on improvement is driven forward. This includes further actions to improve the service and moves beyond the initial actions from the 2018 Ofsted inspection. The 13 remaining actions from the Ofsted improvement plan have been incorporated into the individual services plans. This is to ensure that the continued focus on improvement is driven forward and that this is embedded to take account of the cross cutting actions that all services are required to deliver against; for example, the timeliness of visits and completion of both case and personal supervision.
3. The Ofsted focused visit of January 2019 looked at the local authority's arrangements for receiving referrals about children who may be in need or at risk of significant harm, children transferring to and from Early Help services, the effectiveness of child protection enquiries and the quality of assessments and interventions for children in need of help and protection. The conclusions were that from a very low base action taken by senior leaders had improved the overall stability of the social care workforce and that this had been achieved over a relatively short period of time. Plans for improvement were appropriately focused and there was a realistic view of quality of practice which was too variable and not yet good.
4. Revised performance management and quality assurance approaches were starting to show some early impact. The pace of progress was hampered by staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting to key management posts including the lead officer for quality assurance. There continued to be strong political and corporate support for children's services.
5. On 18 and 19 December 2019 Ofsted carried out a focused visit. The focus of the visit looked at our arrangements for children in need and children subject to a child protection plan. This included elements of contextual safeguarding, particularly peer on peer abuse. The conclusion regarding work in the Child Protection/ Court area of the organisation was that little progress had been made in improving the quality of practice, including the quality of management supervision and guidance, and timely recording. A major factor impacting on the ability to bring about improvement was difficulty to recruit experienced and skilled social workers into the service.
6. Ofsted have published their report (appendix b) and further information has been provided to all councillors. There are some positive elements to the feedback received from Ofsted. No children seen were identified at risk of significant harm and all were receiving interventions. There was positive recognition of the work of the children with disabilities team, the work on contextual safeguarding, peer on peer abuse, the stabilisation of the workforce through the recruitment and retention strategy and the planned investment. However, as the council recognises, little progress has been made in improving the quality of practice for child in need and child protection and the challenge in this area is heightened by difficulties in recruitment and staff turnover. Further work to address these issues is contained in the safeguarding improvement plan that is reviewed on a quarterly basis by children and young people's scrutiny committee.

7. Ofsted were provided with our “self – evaluation” (appendix c) and there was recognition that we know ourselves well, that the quality assurance framework provides appropriate and in depth knowledge, that there is senior leadership commitment to the service including resourcing and further plans for development.
8. The individual service plans continue to be monitored on a regular basis and they have been further enhanced following the focused visit in December 2019 to ensure that they are consistent in approach.
9. Improvements continue to be made around performance information being provided to the services areas and a process has been developed to ensure that the information is received and reviewed and is being used across the division; this includes the monthly performance scorecard, (appendix d).
10. Early Help has developed considerably over the past two years since the introduction of Herefordshire’s Early Help Assessment (EHA) which replaced the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). There are now 1266 EHAs compared with 500 CAFs in January 2018. Families with emerging or more complex needs below the threshold of requiring statutory intervention are identified and assessed using the EHA. The assessment is of the whole family and identifies their unmet needs then an outcome focused support plan is drawn up with the family to bring about sustainable change and leave the family stronger for the future. Each family has a ‘Key Worker’ who is the main link for the family and coordinates the agencies required to bring about the sustainable change.
11. Performance data for MASH indicates that 89% of all contacts were completed within 1 day. We will be moving toward all contacts being completed within 24 hours. To achieve this the Head of Services for MASH and Assessments and Early Help visited Redbridge Local Authority in December 2019. Redbridge Local Authority are OFSTED rated “outstanding” and have a highly effective and well-functioning MASH. From this visit the Head of Services of MASH and Early Help will present improvement options to the Senior Management Team with an aim to ensure children and families receive the most appropriate and timely support they need to prevent Social Care involvement.
12. During 2019 we have seen a significant shift in the recognition and understanding of child exploitation within children’s services and across the multi-agency workforce. A revised exploitation risk assessment was implemented in August 2019; this has been embedded throughout Q3 and has led to a reduction in the number of young people and care leavers assessed at moderate, significant risk or subject to actual exploitation. This is because the revised tool is more appropriate for assessing risks of exploitation in all its forms. All new exploitation assessments continue to include oversight from an Exploitation Coordinator prior to being authorised by the relevant team manager.
13. Both Essex in their work in Herefordshire in November 2019, and Ofsted in their focused visit of December 2019, identified too many children’s cases escalated to child protection too quickly, and could have lower level of intervention, such as early help or child in need plan.
14. The focused visit by Ofsted identified that there is limited evidence of case management oversight and direction given to social workers and inconsistent quality of case supervision, which is impeding the progress of improving outcomes for children. Issues were also identified with the adequacy of family support provision despite this service being well resourced and social workers cited waiting lists of 4 months for families to access vital support. There are plans to re-align the family support service so that families identified as

requiring intervention can access family support either during the course of an assessment, or if a CIN plan is required, at the conclusion of an assessment.

15. The local authority continues to have a high number of looked after children. At the end of December 2019 there were 358 children in care which equates to 99 per 10,000, which is higher than the national average (64 per 10,000) and that of statistical neighbours (53 per 10,000). The number of looked after children has been fairly stable over recent months but has increased from 334 at the end of March 2019. At the end of quarter 3; 87 of the children looked after have been looked after for less than 12 months. 78 children are long term matched with their foster carer. 22 children are placed with parents. 12 children are placed with prospective adopters. 48 children have potential care plans of special guardianship orders, decisions regarding these are taken on a case by case basis. Work is continuing to reflect on the most appropriate long term plan for other children within the overall number of 358, including reunification with families; this work is being reviewed on a monthly basis.
16. An Alternatives to Care panel which is chaired by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding was introduced in September 2018. This panel decides whether care proceedings should be initiated, whether children should be admitted to care under Section 20, and reviews decisions to admit children to care in an unplanned way. The number of children admitted to care during quarter 3 was at rate of 27 per 10,000 which is in line the average rate in the West Midlands region.
17. The local authority has had a lower rate of children leaving care than statistical neighbours and the focus is upon identifying children who could safely return to their parents' care or who could be cared for under a Special Guardianship Order. Initially, many foster carers were reluctant to consider applying for SGO's as they were concerned about the financial impact and in some cases supervising contact for children with their birth families. Both of these issues have been resolved as Cabinet agreed an increased financial support offer which is equivalent to that received by foster carers and increased resource for our LAC support service to enable them to supervise contact for children subject to SGOs where this is necessary. Progress has not been made at the pace that was expected, and this is now being challenged and tracked by the assistant director safeguarding and family support, with the expectation that the numbers of children leaving care will increase during the remainder of 2019/20 and onwards. At the end of December 2019 applications for discharge of care orders had been made for 16 children.
18. The agreement of funding for an Edge of Care service (ECHO) will assist with the reunification of children home from the care system.
19. At the end of December 2019 only 42% of care leavers were reported as engaged in education, employment or training. This is very low and is a priority for improvement. Training options in Herefordshire are fairly limited and this impacts on the choices available for young people especially if they are excluded from attending a provider. The 16+ team have just started working with Landau a supported employment and training charity; who are funded to reduce the number of young people who are NEET in the County. Landau are now providing a weekly drop-in based at the 16+ office and it is hoped that this will help to increase the number of our care leavers engaged in education, training or employment. During the last year the Council has employed 3 care leavers as apprentices which is positive, however this needs to develop into a rolling programme and commitment.
20. Within the Children with Disabilities team the recent focussed visit confirmed that CIN plans are tailored and responsive to children's needs. Packages of support are appropriate to

needs identified and social workers are quick to ensure these are adapted if children's needs change or in response to crisis. Children's and carer's views are consistently recorded and these views influence planning decisions. Social workers know the children well and are skilled at communication with children using a variety of different methods and applying observational skills to ascertain children's wellbeing. Supervision is of a high quality in this team, it is well recorded and includes elements of reflection helping to ensure timely progress.

21. A Quality assurance framework commenced in July 2019, and has established a timetable of audits of social work cases, undertaken through a formalised audit programme which includes combined audit activity such as deep dive audits, thematic audits and moderated audits. Monthly audit feedback reports are produced following the collation of the details captured in the audits. These are reported into the Assistant Director/ Head of Service meetings on a monthly basis, and workshops to provide learning from audit activity, plus bi monthly learning sessions are now taking place to close the learning loop following audit activity and findings.
22. The first "Signs of Safety" workshop took place in December 2019 and work is progressing towards implementation of Signs of Safety, an approach to underpin practice with a strengths based model working with families. This is an approach that will focus on building relationships with families, and identifying their strengths and support networks. To be successful, partners across the safeguarding and family support network need to adopt this approach to achieve a whole partnership change to working with children and families.
23. At the end of quarter 3 a number of performance indicators for safeguarding and family support had shown some improvement. However, a number of key indicators including visits and supervision remain overall below targets; there has however been an overall improvement since the start of the financial year with some teams making more improvement than others. Performance information is subject to weekly and monthly review by managers. Performance challenge sessions, to be held quarterly and chaired by the Director of Children's Services are to be introduced at the start of Q4, January 2020.
24. There were 1790 contacts received in quarter 3; which is a reduction against the number of contacts received in quarter 2 which was 1853. The conversion rate of contacts to referrals has also seen a slight decrease from 24% in quarter 2 to 21% in quarter 3. Contacts completed within a 1 day timescale (year to date) at the end of quarter 2 was 89% and at the end of quarter 3 was 88%. However, we are moving to contacts being dealt within a 24 hour period; this is required under the 'Working Together statutory guidance. As we move forward on improving the service provision. We have seen a drop in the number of assessments being completed in timescales from 79% in quarter 2 to 73% in quarter 3; with the year to date outturn decreasing from 84% to 80%; this is against a target of 95%
25. Recruitment continues to be supported by taking on an agency specifically tasked with recruiting social workers for Herefordshire and a bespoke microsite has been developed. Retention has been supported through a variety of enhancements, but filling vacant posts, keeping caseloads down and managing the work across the service remains a challenge. The vacant posts in the social work academy have been recruited to, and the Principal Social Worker post has been filled. Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) recruitment continues for newly qualified social workers and the ability to offer ASYEs good learning and development opportunities will be improved with the recruitment into the social work academy.

26. The Multi Agency Safeguarding hub continues to receive the highest number of contacts from West Mercia Police. Work has been undertaken by the Safeguarding Partnership, Assistant director safeguarding and family support and the Director for children and families to address this. In addition, the chair of Children and young people's scrutiny committee has also written to West Mercia Police and there continues to be no reduction in the number of contacts received into the MASH.
27. To provide an update on the work with West Mercia Police in summary, over quarter three there were 874 contacts received from West Mercia Police; this was 48.82% of all contacts received for this period and only 9.26% of these progressed to a referral requiring social work intervention; this can be broken down as follows:
- .In October 2019 295 contacts were received; this was 44.43% of all contacts received; only 9.49% of these contacts progressed to a referral requiring social work intervention.
 - In November 2019 262 contacts were received; this was 45.49% of all contacts received; only 9.16% of these contacts progressed to a referral requiring social work intervention.
 - In December 2019 317 contacts were received; this was 57.64% of all contacts received only 9.15% of these contacts progressed to a referral requiring social work intervention.

Community impact

28. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review. To support effective accountability the council is committed to reporting the progress on action completed and outcomes achieved.
29. The successful implementation of the improvement plan will continue to bring about further progress towards achieving the council's priorities of keeping young people safe and giving them a great start in life, contributing to Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2024 priorities. Furthermore, enabling residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives; improving access to learning opportunities at all levels and improved outcomes for all children and young people, and and those contained within priority two of the health and wellbeing strategy.
30. The families and carers of vulnerable children and young people are experiencing different and improved approaches to service delivery as we continue our implementation of the actions set out in our plan and in the context of the plan's status within the wider children's development plan. This includes looked after children and care leavers up to the age of 25.

Equality duty

31. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

32. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. We continue to make sure that as our improvement plan is implemented that we pay due regard to equality legislation.

33. The Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan supports the council in its overall duty to promote equality. In particular, the implementation of the plan continues to improve the outcomes of children and young people, by ensuring their diversity factors are assessed and assisting children and young people and their families to access services to meet their needs.

Resource implications

34. There are no resource implications arising from the recommendation. The resource implication of any recommendations made by the committee will inform the executive's response to those recommendations.

35. The implementation of the improvement plans required additional resources; these have been considered as part of the council's budget setting process; including what could be done in terms of prevention and edge of care services which are being implemented.

Legal implications

36. There are no specific legal implications of the recommendation in this report.

Risk management

37. The risks associated with the failure to implement the improvement plan are:

- a. The council does not deliver sustained improvement. Too many children and young people receive a poor service, there is drift and delay, children, and young people receive high threshold services that are reactive. There is not sufficient capacity for good social work to flourish and there are not a range of effective preventative and edge of care services to support children and young people safely in families. The council then runs the risk of being judged as inadequate by Ofsted under the ILAC's framework.
- b. Reputational. The council does not make progress quickly enough and diversely affects the recruitment and retention of social work staff. This can have a knock on effect of increasing caseloads, which in turn has the potential to negatively impact on performance and quality of services for children and families. Consequently, the council would have to invest significant resources to then rectify the situation.

38. The risks to successful delivery of the plan are:

- a. If insufficient resource is identified to implement the action plan in full. If this occurs there is a risk that the council will not deliver sustained improvement.
- b. Change in culture and practice does not take place quickly or robustly enough and is not sustained. Accurate performance management information that is used at least weekly to manage and improve service delivery is a critical part of culture change, alongside capacity, training and development, audit work and changing practice as a result.

Consultees

39. The safeguarding and family support services regularly engage our children about the performance and delivery of our services to ensure that the voice of the child is heard within the feedback on our children and families within Herefordshire young people have been actively involved in safeguarding briefings to all newly and re-elected councillors.

40. We have implemented a system called “Mind Of My Own” that will enable young people and children to provide feedback on the services that they are receiving from children and families; the apps enable young people to have their voices heard and to participate in decisions about their lives. This will provide us with rich qualitative data that will be used to enable us to continue our journey of improvement and influence our plans.

Appendices

Appendix A – Safeguarding and Family Support Improvement Plan 2019/2020

Appendix B – Ofsted Focused Visit Letter January 2020

Appendix C - Herefordshire Children’s Safeguarding Social Work Self - Assessment to end of quarter 3 2019/2020

Appendix D – Safeguarding and Family Support monthly scorecard December 2019

Background papers

None identified

Safeguarding and Family Support Improvement Plan 2019-2020

(updated to end of quarter 3, December 2019)

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| Statutory Visits to children will be completed within timescales 55 | Heads of Service Team Managers | Children are seen to be safe and well, their voices heard, and they can develop a trusting relationship with their social worker | Looked after child (LAC) visits will be completed to timescale. Target 95% | 86% | Yellow | ↑ |
| | | | LAC visits average Sept 2018 – March 2019 : 79% | 69% | | ↓ |
| | | | Child in need (CIN) visits will be completed to timescale. Target of 95% | | | |
| | | | CIN visits average Aug 2018 – March 2019 : 53% | 82% | Red | ↓ |
| | | | Child protection (CP) visits will be completed to timescale. Target of 95% | | | |
| | | | CP visits average Aug 2018 – March 2019 : 77% | 98% | Green | ↔ |
| Strategy discussions will take place within timescales | Heads of service Team managers | Risks to children and young people are assessed, and | Strategy discussions are held within timescale - target of 90% | | | |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| | | intervention agreed is effective in keeping them safe | Outturn 2018/19 : 97% | | | |
| Section 47 (S47) investigations will take place within timescales | Heads of Service Team Managers | Levels of risk will be identified in a timely manner, and children will receive the most appropriate intervention to safeguard them, according to their needs, swiftly. | S47 investigations will take place within timescales. Target 95% Outturn 2018/19 : 34% | 66% | | ↓ |
| Children and family assessments will be completed within 45 days | Team Managers | Children will be seen, their voices heard, and their level of need identified in a timely manner | Assessments will be completed within timescale. Target 95% Outturn 2018/19 : 65% | 80% | | ↓ |
| Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC's) and Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC's) will take place within timescales | Team Managers IRO Service Business Support | Risks to children will be assessed, and services required to protect them will be identified and planned, so risk is reduced and children are safeguarded. | ICPC's and RCPC's will take place within timescales Target 90% | ICPC: 79% | | ↓ |
| | | | Outturn 2018/19 : ICPC 65% RCPC 100% | RCPC: 100% | | ↔ |
| LAC Reviews will take place within timescales | Team Managers IRO Service | Children will not be subject to drift and delay | LAC reviews will take place within target timescales 90% | Total LAC reviews % in timescale 88%. | | ↑ |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| | | | | | | |
| All contacts received into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will be assessed within 24 hours of receipt into MASH. We will strengthen MASH by adding an additional social worker to the establishment. | MASH TM and Head of Service | Risk will be identified and no child will be left at risk of significant harm. | Target of 95% of contacts dealt within 24 hours of receipt into MASH will be met. | 1 day 88% 24hr: 45% We will be moving to reporting contacts that are dealt with in a 24 hour period | | ↓ |
| We will ensure children receive early help swiftly where this is the appropriate service, by establishing an early help hub in MASH. | Head of Service Early help. Assistant Director Education | Issues will be addressed at the earliest opportunity with the lowest level of intervention where appropriate and safe to do so, to prevent escalation of issues for children. Children will wait no more than 4 weeks to receive a service. | Increase in children receiving early help intervention. Outturn 2018/19 : 1088 | Early Help: Jun 19: 1188 Sep 19: 1230 Dec 19: 1159 There has been a waiting list for early help with some children waiting for more than 4 weeks for a service. At the end of Q3 there were 37 families' | | ↓ |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---------------------------|---|---|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| 58 | | | | with a maximum waiting time of 5 weeks on the waiting list. | | |
| | | | Reduction in % contacts converting to referral. Outturn 2018/2019: 17.4% | Contacts to Referral (year to date %): Q2 2019: 24% Q3 2019: 23% | | ↔ |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| 50 | | | Decrease in re-referrals Outturn 2018/19 : 31% | There has been a decrease in re-referrals. End Q1: 23% End Q2: 19% End Q3: 19% | | ↔ |
| We will “shift” CIN work to the assessment service and to achieve this will establish a third team in the assessment service, one Team Manager, a Senior practitioner and four social workers | Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Family Support | Children will receive services, appropriate to their level of need without delay, and without a change in social worker. We will intervene swiftly at CIN level preventing unnecessary escalation to CP | CP numbers will decrease and stabilise. CIN interventions will evidence sustainable change. | Funding for assessment team 3 agreed, posts currently out to advert. | | ↔ |
| We will “shift” the family support service to work alongside the assessment service, to support families at the child in need level with | Assistant Director Safeguarding and family support | Children and families will receive family support at the earliest opportunity, to address issues, and work with families | CP numbers will decrease and stabilise. CIN interventions will evidence sustainable change. | Consultation with Heads of Service and team managers completed. AD/HOS group agreement to change as described. | | ↔ |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| strong intensive family support | | to bring about sustainable change | There will be a decrease in repeat CP plans. There will be a decrease in re-referrals | Consultation with HR to commence. | | |
| We will enable CP Court workers to focus on CP cases, cases in pre proceedings and proceedings. | Assistant Director safeguarding and family support. CP/Court Head of Service | Children who require intervention as they are at significant risk of harm will receive intervention that promotes their safety and wellbeing. | Decrease in repeat CP interventions with children Maintain CP numbers @ 140-150 (appropriate number for Hereford demographic compared to statistical neighbours) | CP numbers @ month end: Sep 18: 124 Mar 19: 111 Jun 19: 105 Sep 19: 153 Dec 19: 173 | | ↑ |
| | | | | Second CPP (within 2 years) Mar 19: 18% Jun 19: 17% Sep 19: 16% Dec 19: 14% | | ↑ |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| 20 | | | | Second CPP (ever) Mar 19: 30% Jun 19 : 35% Sep 19: 33% Dec 19: 36% | | ↓ |
| We will progress cases through pre proceedings and ensure actions identified are carried out to timescale. We will appoint an additional case progression officer to track cases and ensure they are working to timescales | Heads of Service CP/Court and safeguarding and review. | Children will not experience drift and delay. Parents will be clear what needs to change and timescales for children for changes to be made. | Evidence timescales in pre proceedings are consistently met. Decision regarding children's futures at the conclusion of pre proceedings are taken at panel without delay. | Suggested changes to alternatives to care panel and pre proceedings being consulted upon and being implemented in February 2020. | | ↔ |
| We will consider permanence planning at the earliest opportunity upon agreement to issue care proceedings. | Head of Service CP/Court. Case progression officer. | Children will not experience drift and delay. The most appropriate permanency option for each individual child will be considered at the earliest opportunity. | More children have appropriate permanence plans identified earlier in proceedings. | Initial permanency planning meetings established. Review permanency meetings also established to ensure permanence options considered and timescales | | ↔ |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| 29 | | | | met to inform planning. Full impact of this has yet to be evidenced. Review to be undertaken end March 2020. | | |
| We will front load work to ensure when we do enter proceedings these can be concluded in a timely manner. | Assistant Director safeguarding and family support. Heads of Service Team Managers | Children will not be subject to extended care proceedings | Maintain high performance in care proceedings concluding in 26 weeks. | Local Family Justice Board data indicates high performance against 26 week timescale | | ↔ |
| We will ensure cases are transferred without delay to the appropriate part of the service | Heads of Service Team Managers | Children will receive the right service from the right social work service at the right time | Weekly transfer meetings will be held. There will be no unallocated cases. Cases will not remain on CIN or CPO plans for extended periods of time. | Transfer meetings held on a weekly basis chaired by HoS. No unallocated cases. | | ↔ |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| We will develop our intervention with children and young people at risk of exploitation and develop a multi-agency approach to address child exploitation and rebrand this as contextualised safeguarding. | AD Safeguarding and family support. HoS safeguarding and review | Children and young people at risk of Child exploitation are diverted or where necessary supported to reduce the risk of harm ensure the child has | Young people and children who are at risk of exploitation will have regular risk management meetings and safety plans. Police operations can take place if required on information gathered. Multi agency prevent and disrupt activity will be effective. | Risk management meetings are being completed. Reporting on activity in this area of the service to scrutiny committee, November/December 2019. Scrutiny committee findings will be incorporated into Q4 improvement plan update once executive notified. | |  |
| Risk assessments are completed within timescales where risk of exploitation has been identified | AD Safeguarding and Family Support. HoS safeguarding and review | Young people will receive an effective response and support to prevent them from being exploited or further exploited | 90% of exploitation risk assessments completed within 5 working days | Clarification is being sought to enable system and reporting to meet the requirements of the indicator | | |
| Risk management meetings are held within prescribed timescales | AD safeguarding and family support. HoS safeguarding and review | Young people will receive an effective response and support to prevent them from being exploited or further exploited. | 95% of risk management meetings held at least every 4 weeks for young people who are known to be exploited or at significant risk of exploitation | Dec 19: 79.63% | | |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|--------------------|---|
| We will provide a service where children are protected, and do not experience drift or delay in the progression of their plans | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | End of quarter progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| | | | 90% of risk management meetings held no more than 12 weekly for young people at moderate risk of exploitation | Dec 19: 100% | | |
| Safety plans are developed in a timely manner during and following risk management meetings | AD safeguarding family support. HoS safeguarding and review. | Young people will receive an effective response and support to prevent them from being exploited or further exploited. | 90% of safety plans provided and distributed within 5 working days of a risk management meeting | Clarification is being sought to enable system and reporting to meet the requirements of the indicator. | | |
| Children who are reported missing and are found receive an effective response and their views are heard | AD safeguarding and family support. HoS safeguarding and review. | Young people will receive an effective response and support to prevent them from being exploited or further exploited. | 100% of young people not previously receiving a service have a return home interviews within 1 working day of being found | Clarification is being sought to enable system and reporting to meet the requirements of the indicator | | |
| | | | 100% of children placed from another local authority or already receiving a service have return home interviews within 3 working days | Clarification is being sought to enable system and reporting to meet the requirements of the indicator | | |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|--------------------|--|
| We will recruit , train and develop a highly skilled and confident workforce who are enabled to develop and progress in their social work careers | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | Quarterly progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| Every staff member will receive regular supervision 59 | Assistant Director safeguarding and family support Heads of Service Team managers | Children will receive a high quality service and are safeguarded through plans and support which are effective | 90% supervisions undertaken every calendar month Outturn 2018/ 19 : 71% overall | December supervisions: 62% overall 69% operational 33% business support | |  |
| Recruitment of social workers, will mean caseloads will be at a manageable level to enable staff to fulfil their responsibilities | Assistant Director safeguarding and family support. Organisational Development Business partner. | Children and families will receive an improved service as social workers will have time and capacity to build relationships, reflect on issues and appropriate responses, with children and families. | Fortnightly caseload performance information will evidence all caseloads under 20. | % workers holding more than 20 cases. 16+ team: 0% Assessment Team 1: 57% Assessment Team 2: 100% Court Team 1: 40% Court Team 2: 40% Court Team 3: 60% CWD: 50% LAC Team 1: 0% LAC Team 2: 0% | |  |

Safeguarding and Family Support Improvement Plan 2019-2020

(updated to end of quarter 3, December 2019)



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| Learning from audit activity will be shared with teams in learning workshops to aid development in social work practice across the service. | Principal Social Worker. QA Manager Heads of Service | Learning will inform and develop social work practice, improving services and interventions offered to children and families. | All workshops will take place in the timescales set and attendance by children and families' social workers will be at least 70%. | 9 of 9 identified workshops have taken place. All have happened within timescales set. Attendance at 8 events has ranged between 55% and 100% for Social Workers (not including bi monthly learning event). | | ↑ |
| Bi-monthly learning events will take place to aid learning and development across the workforce, and embed a learning culture which informs development of good practice. | Principal Social Worker | Children will benefit from having a stable workforce that is highly skilled | QA Manager report will evidence bi monthly learning events have taken place. 70% of staff will have attended. | Learning event re. parental participation held on 02/12/2019. Two sessions held. Overall attendance 32 staff (a mix of FSW, SW, IRO, TM, HoS from a variety of teams). Bi monthly learning event dates are now set throughout 2020 (next event 03/02/2020). | | ↔ |

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| Group Supervision will be held on a monthly basis, led by senior practitioners, to aid and enhance learning and development | Heads of Service | Children and families will benefit from improved service delivery through social worker reflection on practice. | HoS will report in their improvement plans that group supervisions have taken pace as required. | Group supervision has commenced across all services. PSW and QA manager will work on embedding this across all service areas. | |  |
| Feedback and learning from audit activity will evidence improvement in the quality of social work practice on a quarterly basis. | Principal Social Worker | Practice will improve for children and families in Herefordshire. | Audit activity will show an increase in the % of work graded good: End September target; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% good. • 0% inadequate End December target <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% good • 0% inadequate End March target <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% good. • 0% inadequate. | End December 2019 43% Good 45% RI 12% Inadequate | |  |

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| <p>We have put in place a range of measures to enhance salaries and benefits for social workers</p> <p>Commissioned an external recruitment agency to recruit to hard to fill posts</p> <p>Worked with the regional ADCS Future Social Scheme to bring in agency workers.</p> <p>Increased business support and family support to assist social workers and take tasks from them</p> | <p>Organisational Development Business Partner, Assistant director safeguarding and family support, Director Children and Families</p> | <p>Children benefit from having well qualified, committed social workers</p> | <p>Vacancies will be filled and over time Herefordshire will recruit permanent social workers who stay</p> | <p>There are 3.4 permanent vacancies in Assessment teams 1&2, 3 posts are filled with agency staff.</p> <p>There are 10 vacancies in CP Court 1, 2&3. 7 posts are filled with agency staff (1 of the 10 vacancies was a Senior Practitioner)</p> | | |
| <p>We will recruit newly qualified social workers to complete an Assessed and Supported year in employment (ASYE) social workers.</p> | <p>Principal Social Worker</p> | <p>Herefordshire will increase the number of qualified, substantive social workers, reducing change in social worker for children</p> | <p>We will have a clear rolling programme of ASYE joining the organisation and ASYE completing their first year of practice.</p> | <p>3 ASYE starters in Q3</p> | | |
| <p>We will establish a clear social work career pathway to enable</p> | <p>Organisational Development</p> | <p>Children will benefit from having well qualified,</p> | <p>We will retain workers in Herefordshire, and appoint</p> | <p>Career pathway proposal to be presented to AD/HOS</p> | | |

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| social workers to invest in a career in Herefordshire | Business Partner | committed and experienced social workers. | to senior positions from within. | business and practice meeting in quarter 4 2019/20. | | |
| Signs of safety will be implemented across the council so there is a consistent approach across all partners in working with children and families. | Principal Social Worker | A strengths based approach will be embedded across all agencies, relationship based social work practice will flourish, feedback will be positive, from families, partners and Ofsted. | Signs of safety is implemented, embedded and informs all practice across the directorate and partnership. | First signs of safety workshop with lead consultant has taken place on the 17 December 2019. Governance and reporting arrangements report being finalised. | |  |
| We will establish an apprenticeship scheme to train non-qualified workers to social worker level and will back fill posts for apprentices to enable them to maximise their study activities | Organisational Development Business Partner | Children will receive a service from a suitably qualified social worker. Children will be able to build relationships with their social worker, and will not experience unnecessary changes in the social worker allocated to work with them. | The apprenticeship scheme will be operational, with all places filled. | Scheme to commence February 2020 and all places have been filled. | | |

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| We will increase our children's social work leadership and capacity to enable the council to have the capacity to improve. | Director children and families | Children will receive a high quality and timely service | We will be able to demonstrate appropriate workloads for staff and clear evidence of improvements in quality of practice being embedded in day to day work – evidenced by performance and quality measures improving and reported in this plan. | Business case developed for a range of leadership and quality posts as well as additional social workers for assessment team, tracking and put forward for 2020/21 budget. | | |

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| Aim We will embed a system of performance management that provides strong management grip, oversight, and decision making, informed by a robust QA system. | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|--------------------|---|
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | Quarterly progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| We will use performance information to interrogate practice and performance, to inform progress against improvement plan targets | Assistant Director safeguarding and family support Heads of Service Team managers Performance team | All managers across Childrens and families will know area for development, and can take swift action to rectify areas where minimum standards required are not being met. | Performance information will be green across the board and all KPIs will be consistently met. | Performance reports are available weekly, consistently collated and distributed, and used to inform evaluation of progress against service area improvement plans. | |  |
| Each HoS will oversee a service area improvement plan which will track improvement against KPIs. This will be updated on a monthly basis and be reported into AD/HoS Budget & Performance monthly meeting | Heads of Service | As performance improves, children and families will receive services of a consistently high quality. | The RAG rating in each plan will move from majority red to majority green. | Plans are updated every quarter, so the process of reviewing performance and reporting on performance against plans is embedded. Performance improving to majority green not being achieved. | |  |

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| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | Quarterly progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| Each HoS will provide a SEF to report on overall service area activity on a quarterly basis 72 | Heads of Service | Each service area will have an up to date and accurate assessment of its strengths, areas for improvement, and timescales to achieve improvement, so are continually driving forward to improve the quality of services. | SEF will increasingly identify areas of good practice and strengths within service areas. | SEFs being completed for end of quarter 3. | | ↑ |
| Each HoS will hold monthly service area performance meetings with team managers and senior practitioners so all managers are conversant with performance in their individual teams, service areas and across the organisation | Heads of Service | In identifying areas where performance needs attention, children and families in Herefordshire will be served by an organisation seeking to continually improve its service to children and families in Herefordshire. | Trends will show improvement. Areas identified as requiring improvement will receive appropriate attention and show improvement. | Performance information is now available on a weekly basis. Embedding the use of this to drive performance improvement requires embedding across all service areas. | | ↑ |

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| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | Quarterly progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| A Mosaic improvement group will meet on a monthly basis to develop and improve the efficiency and breadth of reporting across children & families | Business Support leads. Performance team. | Processes to identify case progression for each child will be improved, so cases that may be subject to drift and delay are quickly identified. | Performance against timescale targets will improve. | Mosaic improvement group meeting. Work plan for improvements to system being revised. | | ↑ |
| Monthly audit activity will take place, the outcome of which will be reported into AD/HOS monthly business and practice meeting by PSW and QA manager | Principal social worker | As an organisation, we will identify good practice that can be rolled out across all services, so children and families in Hereford will benefit from improvement in social work practise and intervention. | Audit activity will take place every month as planned. Outcome will be reported into AD/HOS business and practice meeting on a regular basis. % of work graded good will increase. % work graded inadequate will decrease. | Audit activity is taking place as planned, monthly reports are discussed at AD/HOS business and practice meeting. Impact of audit activity on practice improvement has yet to be established. | | ↔ |
| Quarterly deep dive audit will take place focussing on a specific practice area but in all deep dive audits timeliness quality and consistency of management grip will be measured | Principal social worker | Over time, a clear, detailed picture will be established as to the quality of practice, areas for improvement established and training required to support practice | Training programme will be informed by outcomes of deep dive audit and practice in specific service areas will improve. | First deep dive audit took place in September 2019, concentrating on CIN work. Next deep dive audit taking place January 2020 and have been programmed in to be | | ↔ |

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| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | Quarterly progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| 74 | | improvement will be developed, improving services to children and families across Herefordshire. | | completed on a quarterly basis. | | |
| Actions required following audits will be followed up by QA manager to ensure they are completed by a specified date. A weekly report will be provided to the AD and HOS highlighting outstanding audit actions. HOS will ensure these actions are completed within 48 hours. | QA manager | Cases where actions are identified to benefit children and families will be completed in a timely manner, improving the safety and wellbeing of children receiving social care intervention. | QA manager will report into AD/HoS meeting that there are no actions outstanding from timescale agreed. | This process has been reviewed following Ofsted focused visit in December 2019 to ensure all actions are completed in a timely manner. | | ↑ |
| We will recruit an additional Quality Assurance (QA) manager to provide greater opportunity for quality assurance, feedback and learning | Director Children's Services | Children and families will benefit from improvement in intervention and quality of social work practice identified in QA activity. | Additional QA manager will be in post. | Included in budget setting 2020/21. | | |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---|---|---------------------------|--------------------|---|
| We will achieve positive futures for looked after children; avoid drift, achieve permanency at the earliest opportunity, and ensure looked after children and care leavers receive effective support into adulthood | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | Quarterly progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| Looked after children (LAC) reviews are held and records distributed within statutory timescales | HoS Safeguarding and Review | Children will not experience drift and delay. Plans will be progressed due to reviews taking place within timescales. | 95% of 1st LAC reviews held within timescale | 84% | Red | Down arrow |
| | | | 95% of 2nd and subsequent LAC reviews held within timescale | 88% | Yellow | Down arrow |
| | | | 90% of LAC review minutes written and distributed within 20 working days | 44% | Red | Down arrow |
| Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) recommendations from LAC reviews are agreed and progressed within timescales | HoS safeguarding and review | Children's plans will be progressed so they will not experience drift and delay and the best options for their future will be progressed swiftly. | 90% of LAC review recommendations are completed and sent to relevant team manager within 5 working days of the review | 72% | Red | Down arrow |
| | | | 90% of LAC review recommendations are responded to by the relevant team manager within 5 | 40% | Red | Down arrow |

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| | | | working days of having received them | | | |
| IRO is effective in ensuring care plans are appropriate to meet needs and do not drift | HoS Safeguarding and review | Children's plans do not drift and their progress is overseen by their IRO. | 90% of cases have at least 2 IRO oversights recorded within a 12 month period | 95% | | ↑ |
| | HoS safeguarding and review | Where issues are identified that are preventing plans for children progressing, these are acted upon swiftly by using the escalation process, evidencing IRO grip on the progression of children's care plans. | 100% of formal disputes resolved within 20 working days | 6 dispute resolutions were raised, 5 were dealt within timescale. | | ↑ |
| Children will be encouraged to participate in their LAC reviews in a meaningful way | HoS safeguarding and review | Children will be able to voice their views and inform their care plans. | 90% of children over the age of 4 participate in their LAC review in some form | 96% | | ↑ |
| Children will have the opportunity to consult with their IRO before their LAC review and will be | Safeguarding and Review Head of Service | The wishes and feelings of children will be heard, validated, | 85% of children have a consultation with their IRO as part of each LAC review | 94% | | ↑ |

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| provided with information about their rights and entitlements | | and will be part of establishing plans for children. | | | | |
| Life story work and later life letters will be completed for every child moving to adoption in a timely manner. | LAC head of Service | Children will be able to understand their own family and care history | The backlog of life story work and later life letters will reduce every month and be eliminated | There is a backlog of 38 life story books. The quality of life story work has improved. | | ↑ |
| Children who don't need to be looked after will be supported to return to their parents care or to be cared for outside of the looked after system via adoption or Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). | LAC head of Service | Children who can be safely cared for outside of the LAC system can grow up within a family without state intervention. | Number of looked after children leaving care will increase to that equivalent to or above statistical neighbours. Numbers of looked after children will decrease. | Numbers of LAC moving to appropriate arrangements have not been achieved to the level expected. The assistant director is meeting with the relevant head of service on a monthly basis to review progress on this. | | ↔ |
| We are investing in property for our care leavers and support services in the accommodation. | LAC head of Service | Care leavers who require a level of support will be able to obtain this in Hereford, maintaining | Funding for placements will decrease. Young people will remain in Hereford. | Planning underway and estimated time for | | ↔ |

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| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | Quarterly progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel compared to previous quarter |
| We are submitting a further business case for an expansion of local supported accommodation in Herefordshire | | their links with friends, kin and community in surroundings they are familiar with. | | property to be ready for occupancy is May 2020. | | |
| We will establish clear transition pathways for vulnerable young people so they receive the services they require to assist them in adulthood. | Assistant Director safeguarding and family support | Young adults, vulnerable to risk will receive services to assist them transition into adulthood. | There will be an increase in young people who receive services when entering into adulthood. | Limited progress in this area, reporting on vulnerable young people at risk of exploitation moving into adulthood to be reported on in Q4. | |  |

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| Aim | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|--------------------|--|
| We will aim to strengthen families and enable children to live within their family network through early help and edge of care offers | | | | | | |
| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | Quarterly progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel |
| We will invest resources into both early help and family support resources to ensure children receive services at the earliest possible opportunity. 79 | Assistant director safeguarding and family support. | We will establish a culture of maintaining children within their families where it is safe and appropriate to do so. | Re referrals will decrease. Early help interventions will increase. LAC numbers will decrease. CP numbers will decrease Outturn 2018/19 Re-referrals 31% Early Help 1088 LAC 334 CP 111 | There has been a decrease in re-referrals. End Q1: 23% End Q2: 19% End Q3: 19% Early help interventions remain high @ 1159 LAC numbers have not decreased. CP numbers have risen to 173. | |     |
| We will reconfigure where the social care family support system operates to ensure it can work with families at the earliest opportunity. | Assistant director safeguarding and family support. | Children and families will receive services aimed to enable them to become more resilient and maintain sustainable change at an earlier opportunity, reducing the need for statutory social care intervention | We will have fewer children on CP plans, caseloads in CP/Court will reduce, and fewer children will be re-referred to children's social care. | Agreement from children and families AD/HoS group to reconfigure. Review of family support service concluded end of November 2019. New approach to be discussed and agreed at AD/HOS meeting in January 2020 | |  |
| We will developed an edge of care service, to enable children to reunify to and/or remain with their families | Assistant director safeguarding | Children will be enabled to remain within their family network, or return to their family network where safe to do so, | We will have a fully functioning edge of care service. Less children will enter the looked after system, more children will | Oct 2019 Cabinet has approved funding to be used in 2019/20 to start the service. Good support | |  |

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| Actions to achieve aim | Delivery lead | Impact on children | How will we know | Quarterly progress | RAGB Status | Direction of travel |
| | and family support. | maintain their links with kin and community. | leave the looked after system, both where safe and appropriate for the child. | from internal stakeholders and council | | |

08

Direction of travel key:-



Increase in improvement of direction of travel



Remained same as previous period



Decrease in improvement of direction of travel

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21 January 2020

Chris Baird
Director, Children and families
Herefordshire County Council
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Hereford
Herefordshire
HR4 0LE

Dear Chris Baird

Focused visit to Herefordshire local authority children's services

This letter summarises the findings of a focused visit to Herefordshire children's services on 18 December 2019. The inspectors were Peter McEntee, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Pauline Higham, Her Majesty's Inspector.

Inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for children in need and children subject to a child protection plan. This included elements of contextual safeguarding, particularly those issues relating to peer-on-peer abuse. Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including case discussions with social workers and team managers. They also looked at local authority performance management and quality assurance information and children's case records.

Overview

The local authority has made little progress in improving the quality of practice for children in need and those subject to a child protection plan since the last inspection. There remain areas of concern identified at the last inspection in relation to children in need and child protection services that have not been resolved. Despite ongoing investment by senior leaders, children in need and child protection social work services remain challenged by vacancies as well as turnover of staff and ongoing difficulties in attracting experienced staff. Supervision of staff is inconsistent in quality and, when considering casework, does not provide good enough guidance or an overview of progress. While no child was seen to be left at significant risk and without intervention, child protection plans are not sufficiently focused on the links between parents' actions and the impact on the child, making it more difficult for parents to understand their responsibilities. There are gaps in the recording of both

core groups and children in need meetings, resulting in slower progress in meeting children's and family's needs. There is better work in the children with disabilities team; plans for children are more focused on their needs and there is more consistent guidance and reflection from supervising managers.

A quality assurance framework is in place and is providing accurate information to the local authority in relation to practice standards and compliance. However, actions to correct issues found in audit activity are not completed quickly enough. The local authority has improved its understanding and overview of contextual safeguarding in relation to peer-on-peer abuse and has assured itself that schools recognise this issue and work with social care services to minimise risk.

What needs to improve in this area of social work practice

- The frequency and quality of supervision offered to staff.
- The prioritisation of family support work for those children and families most in need of this service.
- How child protection plans are written in order to ensure that children are clearly identified as the focus of actions to reduce risk.
- Support for newly qualified social work staff, including a review of case holding expectations and responsibilities.
- Timeliness of actions taken in order to address deficits identified in case audit activity.

Findings

- Despite strategic and financial interventions to improve staff stability and managerial capacity and to ensure better quality practice, Herefordshire has made little progress in improving the quality of practice for children in need and those subject to a child protection plan since the last full inspection. Areas of concern identified at the last full inspection in relation to children in need and child protection services have not been resolved.
- Senior managers have taken steps to better understand the quality of services and what needs to be done to improve services in Herefordshire. There has been good use of assistance from other local authorities to identify both good and poor practice and an updated self-assessment is open about the issues faced by the local authority. There is a clear understanding of the need to further invest in services, and the political and financial commitment to do so. As a result, senior managers have plans to reconfigure services, including the introduction of an edge-of-care service and a re-focused child in need service. A recruitment and retention strategy has been put in place and greater stability of staff has been

secured, including a permanent senior staff group. However, it remains difficult to attract permanent social work staff with experience to Herefordshire.

- The current court and child protection service that works with the large majority of children in need and those on a child protection plan is struggling to provide consistently good services to children and families. These teams are under pressure from too many staff changes, including changes in team managers, and a fourth head of service in 18 months. A third of staff are agency staff, and turnover is high, with a large number of inexperienced and newly qualified staff. This has had a significant impact on the ability of senior managers to ensure a consistent quality of practice in these teams.
- There are significant gaps in the frequency of recorded supervision, and, in too many instances, social workers are unable to refer to clear guidance on how cases should progress and by when. In some instances, supervision on cases is not evidenced for many months. In some cases, there is evidence of drift and delay in progression of plans, which is compounded by a lack of supervision and poor handover of cases, particularly when staff have left with little notice.
- Both children in need (CIN) and child protection work is supported by a family support service working in social work teams. This work is valued and provides additional skills in parenting assessments and a range of direct work with families. However, there are waiting lists of up to four months for both family group conferences and allocation of work to family support staff. In some instances, such waits for intervention fail to take into account the priority of the case and actively impede the possibility of progress in cases, leading to delays in achieving key goals in plans.
- In both children in need and child protection cases, risk to children is clearly identified, and no child was seen to be left at significant risk and without intervention. However, issues of neglect are not always recognised quickly enough, and the graded care profile to help identify neglect and poor parenting is not being used consistently to help measure progress. In a few cases, thresholds were not correctly applied, and some children were subject to child protection plans when it would have been more appropriate for them to have been subject to CIN plans.
- Child protection reviews are timely and well attended by multi-agency professionals. However, child protection plans are often too parent-orientated and focused on what they must do. This is not linked to the impact on the child or to how matters will be made better for the child as a result of the plans. For some parents, this will mean a disconnect between their actions and the impact they have on children. Children are barely mentioned in some plans, and are not the focus. In some cases, there are gaps in core group recording. This means that it is difficult to evidence progress, and, as a result, some children stay on child protection plans longer than necessary.

- There have been some very recent improvements in the recording of CIN plans and CIN planning meetings, but this is from a low base, and, in a number of cases, CIN meetings have not been entered into the record in a timely way. In these instances, this absence has not been identified by managers quickly enough, and, as a result, some families have waited longer than they should for the right help.
- In the children with disabilities team, CIN plans are better tailored and responsive to children's needs. Packages of support are appropriate to needs identified, and social workers are quick to ensure these are adapted if children's needs change, or in response to crisis. Children's and carers' views are consistently recorded and influence planning. Social workers know the children well and are skilled at communication with children; they use a variety of different methods and apply observational skills to ascertain children's well-being. Supervision is qualitatively better in this team, is well recorded and includes elements of reflection that help to ensure timely progress.
- The caseloads of newly qualified social workers with a year or less of experience show little evidence of protection. This is in relation to absolute numbers: one new social worker has been in post for only eight weeks and has 19 cases. It is also in relation to types of case allocated. Several newly qualified social workers were seen to have complex cases in care proceedings and on child protection plans. Expectations of and responsibilities put on these staff are too great, and there is risk that they will have a poor experience of Herefordshire local authority and the support it offers. The consequent risk is that these social workers will not stay, and this will exacerbate current staffing difficulties.
- A quality assurance framework is in place and is providing accurate information to the local authority in relation to practice standards and compliance. Case audit activity is supplemented by thematic deep dive audits, and a learning tracker is helping the local authority to close the loop that connects the impact of audit activity and subsequent learning. The local authority accepts that there is more to be done in this area of its work. In particular, staff have been slow to address actions identified by audits. For example, the response to a CIN deep dive audit shows that a month after the target date for completion, only 31% of cases had all actions completed. This is concerning as it means that deficits identified are not being remedied in a timely way.
- There has been a significant strategic focus by the local authority since the last inspection on contextual safeguarding, and, in particular, peer-on-peer abuse and ensuring that there are appropriate responses to risk in this area. The local authority has worked closely with schools to ensure that all have policies and procedures that both help to identify peer-on-peer abuse concerns and help to limit risks. The local authority has ensured that these issues have been the subject of practice reviews, including through a recent multi-agency spotlight review on peer-on-peer abuse. The local authority has also undertaken audit activity in relation to service responses, including looking at school safety

planning. The responses of children's services indicate that thresholds for services are appropriate and that schools are using the multi-agency hub to appropriately refer concerns. They are also using both social care staff and education officers to discuss issues and plan further work with children and families.

Ofsted will take the findings from this focused visit into account when planning your next inspection or visit.

Yours sincerely

Peter McEntee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Overview

Herefordshire children's safeguarding self-assessment has been produced to broadly reflect the child's journey across service areas. It also incorporates reflections on quality assurance, performance management, systems and development and workforce including recruitment and retention.

The self-assessment is updated on a quarterly basis with each head of service/service manager taking an active role in producing the assessment for their area. This continues our approach of developing our performance management culture. This self-assessment is up to the end of the third quarter for the 2019/20 financial year.

Herefordshire has been rated as requiring improvement for overall effectiveness by Ofsted in the 2018 inspection of local authority children's services. Within this the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection and the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection were judged as requiring improvement. The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families was judged inadequate, overall in not securing an environment within which good quality social work can flourish, whilst recognising that some areas had improved since the last inspection insufficient progress had been made in a number of key areas.

The Ofsted focused visit of January 2019 looked at the local authority's arrangements for receiving referrals about children who may be in need or at risk of significant harm, children transferring to and from Early Help services, the effectiveness of child protection enquiries and the quality of assessments and interventions for children in need of help and protection. From a very low base action taken by senior leaders had improved the overall stability of the social care workforce and that this had been achieved over a relatively short period of time. Plans for improvement were appropriately focused, with a realistic view of quality of practice which was too variable and not yet good. Revised performance management and quality assurance approaches were starting to show some early impact. The pace of progress was hampered by staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting to key management posts including the lead officer for quality assurance. There continued to be strong political and corporate support for children's services.

These themes were echoed in the Ofsted focused visit of December 2019 which looked at our arrangements for children in need and children subject to a child protection plan. This included elements of contextual safeguarding, particularly peer on peer abuse. Little progress had been made in improving the quality of practice, including the quality of management supervision and guidance and timely recording and response to audits. Work was affected by recruitment. There was recognition that we know ourselves well, that the quality assurance framework provides appropriate and in depth knowledge, that there is senior leadership commitment to the service including resourcing and further plans for development. There was recognition of the work in the children with disabilities team which was noted as being demonstrably different. There was also strong recognition of the extensive strategic and operational work regarding peer on peer abuse, including the work with education settings.

Herefordshire has continued to implement the recommendations from external high-performing Partners in Practice, from both Doncaster and Essex Councils in 2019. Using PiPs will continue to in 2020 to support our improvement and has the commitment from the DfE.

Summary: Early Help (Nicky Turvey – Early Help Manager)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

The Early Help approach in Herefordshire is ‘Working towards Stronger Families and Connected Communities’.

Early Help has developed considerably over the past two years since the introduction of Herefordshire’s Early Help Assessment (EHA) which replaced the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). There are now over 1200 EHAs compared with 500 CAFs in January 2018.

Families with emerging or more complex needs below the threshold of requiring statutory intervention are identified and assessed using the EHA. The assessment is of the whole family and identifies their unmet needs then an outcome focused support plan is drawn up with the family to bring about sustainable change and leave the family stronger for the future. Each family has a ‘Key Worker’ who is the main link for the family and coordinates the agencies required to bring about the sustainable change.

Partnership working is strong within Early Help in Herefordshire. Data for the year 2018/19: The Key Worker for EHAs - Primary Schools 23.4%, Health Visitors 21.4%, Secondary Schools 16.4% and Local Authority staff 14.1%.

Early Help is fully integrated with the Troubled Families programme, the EHA is linked to the troubled families criteria and outcomes for families to the Herefordshire Family Outcomes Framework.

Early Help Assessments are managed by the Early Help Coordinator team who administer the assessments, support key workers and organise and facilitate Family Network Meetings (FNMs). FNMs are multi-agency meetings where partner agencies meet to discuss cases which are sticking (with the consent of the family), share good practice and discuss any community concerns. They are held twice termly in eight locations throughout the county and are well attended by representatives from schools, health professionals, mental health workers, housing associations, Police and voluntary agencies. They are chaired by an experienced Early Help Manager and social care provide a senior social worker at every other meeting to give advice and guidance on cases. The presence of a social care representative since November 2018 has been appreciated by partner agencies.

Early Help services are trained in Make Every Contact Count (MECC) so are equipped to talk to, signpost and support families about healthy eating, oral health (childhood obesity and dental health are both issues in Herefordshire), physical activity, smoking cessation, alcohol consumption, sexual health and mental wellbeing. Early Help delivers Solihull and Triple P parenting programmes to mixed groups of parents from those accessing just universal services to those with children on Child Protection Plans. The programmes are Solihull for parents of children 0-5 years, Triple P standard for parents of children 2-10, Triple P Teen for parents with teenagers, and Stepping Stones Triple P for parents of children with additional needs. The programmes are delivered throughout the county where the needs are and at times to suit parents.

There are three specialist family support services working with the whole family with EHAs. They go into the family home and work with individual family members and families as a whole. The three services are; an internal, experienced Early Help Family Support team which works with families with the most complex needs and those families stepping down from statutory intervention; Vennture4families, a commissioned service using a professional link worker and volunteer model; and Homestart, also commissioned and which uses a volunteer model. Vennture work with families who are lower level three on the Herefordshire level of needs and Homestart with families with less complex needs. The specialist services seek to address the core issues affecting families systemically such as parenting issues, mental health issues, domestic abuse, problem debts, parental conflict, drugs and alcohol abuse, with a strong focus on worklessness using the Troubled Families Employment Advisor.

These specialist services have started closing cases with a 'Family Wellbeing Plan' which leaves the family with information on the success they've achieved and where to go within their family, friends and community if they have a 'wobble' rather than perhaps letting things slide and requiring specialist services intervention again. The plan can have a photo of the family on it and be laminated so it can be put on the fridge for easy access.

The link between Early Help and MASH is developing. An Early Help coordinator sits in MASH and picks up those cases which don't meet the threshold for statutory intervention and have consented to support from Early Help. Their work includes: identifying with the family the most appropriate agency to complete an Early Help assessment and so starting the process of getting a package of support in place for the family, to signposting to a single agency for support without requiring an Early Help assessment e.g. Grandparents who were looking after their grandchild were concerned they could no longer do this as they couldn't afford to - they were put in contact with Pension Credits. Early Help Family Support also provide a duty system where a family support worker and senior family support worker will visit the family usually on the same day when there is a need to offer Early Help support immediately to prevent the case escalating, meeting threshold and requiring statutory intervention.

Children Centre services was restructured in June 2019 in order to target resources to support the most vulnerable families with children 0-5 years and use some resource to engage and map community assets for families with children 0-18. The service now has a team of early years support workers who deliver one to one support in families' homes using evidence based intervention such as Let's Talk with your Baby, Communication Steps, Bookstart Corner, Solihull Parenting, and they can give guidance and support on, for example, healthy eating, dental health and immunisations.

The Solid Roots programme is an investment to improve outcomes for foundation (0-5) children and families. This includes training for early years professionals to ensure children have adequate speech, language and communication skills so that they are ready to engage in school. Training early years professionals in the Solihull Approach and purchasing Solihull licenses so all parents in Herefordshire can access Solihull parenting courses on line and training the early years workforce in a range of areas to ensure all children reach a good level of development.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Early Help Assessment data is collated and analysed on a monthly basis. The data has shown the increase in the number of families being identified, assessed and supported to achieve sustainable change. In 2018 there were 500 Early Help cases with evidence of approximately 30% making sustainable change, in December 2019 there were 1266 early help cases. The current conversion rate is 61% of families who meet at least two Troubled Families criteria and making sustainable change for at least 6 months (Troubled Families data).

Early Help assessments are quality assured when received by the Early Help Coordinator (EHC) team. Key workers from partner agencies are supported by the EHC team to improve their assessment skills if required.

The support work of the Early Help family support team is audited on a monthly basis, any actions are addressed within a month through individual supervision sessions or any trends at team meetings. Feedback from families about the service is collated and analysed quarterly in order to develop the service and address any issues. The feedback is almost always positive and compliments about the work of the team is regularly received from families and partner agencies. The two Early Help commissioned services are regularly reviewed at quarterly monitoring meetings.

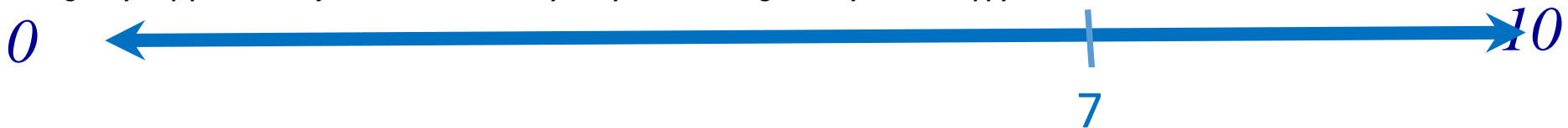
Areas of strength, evidence

1. Identifying and assessing families in need of Early Help by partner agencies is well established. 500 cases in January 2018 and over 1200 in December 2019.
2. Children Centre Services became integrated into Early Help and the EHA is used to access the service in 2019. They now supporting the most vulnerable families with children 0-5 years. The measure will be through Troubled Families payment by results.
3. Two primary schools are paying for the 'added value' of having an EH FSW linked to their school as they see the benefit of the work they do.
4. All three specialist family support services are trialing the closure of cases with a 'Family Wellbeing Plan' This leaves the family with a plan of who to go to within their own network of family, friends and the community before requiring any specialist services, leaving them stronger.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. To further develop the Early Help work in MASH through a single front door. October 2020.
2. To develop a strength based approach within Early Help – Signs of Safety to be rolled out over the next three years.
3. To develop the use of Mosaic as a database for all Early Help partners. It is used as a caseload management system by internal council teams which allows information to be shared easily when cases are stepped up or down. The development will be through a portal - Finestre with controlled access for partners but allowing information to flow both ways. March 2021.
4. To improve the knowledge of Herefordshire's community assets available to families and share this knowledge on WISH (Wellbeing, Information & Signposting for Herefordshire) and with partner agencies. Phase 1 completed. Regular checking of information and sharing at Family Network Meetings.

Thinking about practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that the early help practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being early help practice has just lost its and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: MASH and Assessment Service (Sue Rogers – Head of MASH and Assessment)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

The June 2018 Ofsted inspection identified that the “Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is responsive and ensures that good-quality information sharing results in strong decision-making”. The January 2019 OFSTED focused visit commented “effectiveness of responses in the MASH has been maintained and improved since the last inspection”. The December 2019 focused visit recognised the work on peer on peer abuse including verbal feedback that all cases reviewed that were dealt with by MASH were worked appropriately with thresholds correctly applied.

The Head of Service for MASH and Assessment and Early Help visited Redbridge Local Authority in December 2019. Redbridge Local Authority are Ofsted rated “outstanding” and are achieving their target of 95% of contacts being completed within 24 hours. Performance data for Herefordshire MASH indicates that 89% of all contacts were completed within one day. We are going to strengthen our approach, learning from Redbridge to develop the front door. Currently we have a system that all Multi agency referral forms come through the MASH which could be diverted to Early Help. Work has been done between the Head of Services of MASH and Early Help to present options to the Senior Management Team with an aim to ensure children and families receive the most appropriate and timely support they need to prevent Social Care involvement.

All contacts have a chronology of past risk, concern and involvement with Children’s Services. Every attempt is made to contact the parents/ carers for consent for multi-agency checks which are routinely requested. It is an expectation that the threshold document will be used by partners to inform making referrals to MASH, and by MASH social workers to determine the best course of action required for that child/family. There is also an expectation consent will be sought by the referring agency prior to a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) being submitted. Recent audit on cases, such as peer on peer abuse evidenced there are still instances where consent is not sought- in this case, this is being taken up by education colleagues through Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) meetings.

There continues to be a strong multi-agency commitment and engagement with the MASH. Police, Health, Early Help and Education are the main agencies based within the MASH and Probation, Youth Offending Service (YOS) and West Mercia Women’s Aid are our virtual partners. Strategy discussions take place within the MASH at the point of referral if required and immediate actions are taken to safeguard children. Data evidences that between 20% and 25% of contacts progress to referrals and the need for intervention. This is in line with our statistical neighbors.

In July 2018, Ofsted noted that a significant number of contacts are signposted away from children’s social care, which would indicate that too many children were being referred that did not reach threshold for intervention. The amount of contacts received have remained the same, there has been a consistent reduction of re-referrals received, and an increase of cases being referred to the Early Help Team. However, once Early Help have been referred to there is a delay for some family support going into place. At the start of Q3 contacts converting to referrals continued to be high, partly due to changes in management in MASH and some staffing issues with sickness impacting on consistency in decision making in MASH. To address this, a change in management took place,

thresholds were readdressed and consistency of staffing was maintained. Weekly data is now showing that contacts progressing to referrals stands at an average of 22%.

The Emergency Duty Team (EDT) service is commissioned by Herefordshire Council. Worcestershire Children First provide the out of hours services for Herefordshire. There is a senior manager from Herefordshire available to make decisions when required.

In July 2018, the inspection by Ofsted noted that Domestic Abuse notifications are not triaged prior to them arriving into MASH and that the process potentially could have left children at risk or not responded to in a timely manner. Work has been undertaken with partner agencies to develop a process that effectively manages the Domestic Abuse notifications. Domestic Abuse meeting take place on a daily basis with partner agencies on DASH assessed standard and medium risk to ensure appropriate information sharing and support is provided. DASH high risk are investigated by MASH. A Domestic Abuse audit was conducted in October 2019. The outcomes were 1, good, 2 requires improvement and 4 inadequate. Actions have been taken to address the findings. The report was presented to the MASH Partnership Forum in Dec 2019. The further multi agency audit is planned for February 2020 and a report will be presented to the MASH Partnership forum in March 2020.

The Ofsted report of July 2018 outlined an inconsistency in the quality of assessments. During the summer of 2018, much work was undertaken, led by the then Quality Assurance manager to develop skills in completing assessments within the service. It was noted that this was not consistent and the historical concerns were not routinely considered. The focused visit in January 2019 evidenced some improvement in the quality of assessments, but identified some children were not being seen in a timely manner. To address this, there is now an expectation children will be seen within 3 days of a case being allocated for the purposes of an assessment being completed, and this is reported on. The data is showing that 75% of children are seen within 3 working days. This is an improvement but this is not yet at target of 95%.

Whilst the Assessment Service did have a decrease in caseloads, recently we have seen an increase. This is due to staffing and the amount of referrals progressing to assessments. An audit of thresholds of cases in MASH, progressing to referrals and needing Social Care intervention takes place on a monthly basis. Consistent thresholds have seen a decrease in referrals month on month and December 2019 evidenced that 17.3% referrals were accepted for Social Care intervention. This will enable the Assessment Teams to start to reduce caseloads. It will take time for the current assessment to be completed and by the end of quarter 4 it is envisaged that caseloads will be lower.

A deep dive audit is planned for January 2020, which will look at the thresholds across Children's Services. This will include the MASH and Assessment Teams.

Time frames for Children and Family Assessments being completed are set at 95%. The Assessment Service are standing at an average of 73% completed within timescales, falling some way short of the target of 95%.

The target of 95% strategy meeting are being completed within timescales.

The Head of Service and Team Managers have weekly performance meetings to scrutinize performance and to ensure targets are met. To ensure progress is being made. Daily briefings will commence in January 2020, to ensure children are being seen within 3 working days, Children and family Assessments, strategy meetings and s47's are completed within timescales.

Agreement has been given by Council Members to fund a third Assessment Team. This is so the Assessment Teams can hold the child who are subject to Child in Need cases. Recruitment is underway to increase staffing. In addition to this, plans are progressing to have 9 full time equivalent Family Support Workers based within the Assessment Teams. Their role will be to work directly with the families and children subject to Child in Need plans.

The June 2018, Ofsted visit highlighted that private foster care was not well managed. The Local Authority responded immediately to the concerns raised. Data is now available to monitor children that are privately fostered. The Local Authority have been notified of a small number of children in private foster care. Work is being undertaken by the Head of Service for MASH and Assessments and the Assistant Director for Education to raise awareness within the community and amongst professionals to identify children living in a private fostering arrangement and the responsibility of professionals to notify the Local Authority.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

A weekly performance report measures the overall rate of contacts that the service receives and the outcome of all contacts following the initial screening process. This is measured in terms of the percentage of referrals passed to children's social care, advice and information provided or cases diverted to early intervention. Multi-agency audits are completed to review cases that have not progressed from contact to referral to scrutinize decision making. The outcome of these audits is fed into the MASH Partnership Forum.

The weekly performance report provides details of all strategy meetings, s47s, and Child and Family Assessments. The reports provide information on timeliness and outcomes. Staff performance is recorded and challenged if required. The Monthly Information Booklet provides information regarding trends, challenges and volume within the service and what is working well.

Social work practice in the MASH and Assessment Service is monitored through management oversight. Every MASH record, Children and Family Assessment, and s47 is signed off by a manager. Challenge of threshold is used as a learning mechanism both in supervision, team discussions, group supervision and multi-agency performance meetings.

EDT have operational processes and procedures in place which ensures a high level of performance out of hours. Quarterly monitoring meetings take place to provide scrutiny of the service provided.

| Areas of strength, evidence | Areas for development, intended impact, timescales |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The MASH works to a well-established multi-agency model. 2. There are experienced social workers collating information from partner agencies to provide clear recommendations and defensible decisions. 3. Good responses to immediate harm to children between Police, social services and our multi-agency partners. 4. Strong threshold decision-making with good impact of social work and early intervention services. 5. Monthly case audits are undertaken across the management structure and recommendations put in place 6. Funding and implementation of the third Assessment Team to enable Child in Need cases to be held in the Assessment Teams. 7. Proposal of Family Support Workers to be within the Assessment Teams 8. Weekly performance meetings between HoS and Team Managers 9. Daily briefing meetings between HoS and Team Managers 10. Strategy Meetings are being completed within timescales. 11. The Assessment Team caseloads are reducing. 12. Evidence in the data is showing that the frequency of supervision is increasing. 13. The Social Work Academy are supporting the ASYE's. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Domestic Abuse Hub process to be embedded and reviewed at the end of January 2020 to ensure safety of children and evidence that appropriate support is provided. 2. We will explore options for best retaining social workers within the MASH and Assessment Teams. The Social Work Academy is supporting the staff but further development is required as more staff are recruited. 3. Work between MASH and Early Help needs to develop to provide a consistent and fast response of support for children and families. Proposals to be presented to Senior Managers on the 31st January 2020. 4. Work with partners to reduce the level of referrals and re-referrals. 5. Completion of Child and Family Assessments to meet targets of 95% within timescales and evidenced in January 2020 data. 6. Completion of s47's to meet the target of 95% within timescales and evidenced in January 2020 data. 7. Regular supervision to take place, be recorded, and HoS to observe supervisions to ensure quality of supervision provided to ensure a well-supported workforce, management oversight of cases and reflection. With immediate effect. 8. Reduce caseloads in the Assessment Teams to ensure a manageable caseload. A caseload of 22 for an experienced Social Work by 28th February 2020. |

Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being that MASH and Assessment practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: Child Exploitation/Contextual Safeguarding (Cath Thomas – Head of Child Protection and Court)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

This area of work has been subject to a scrutiny committee task and finish group with three meetings taking place between 8th November 2019 – 6th December 2019; in addition a spotlight review was carried out in respect of peer on peer abuse on the 16th December 2019; the committee will report back to the executive in quarter 4.

During 2019 we have seen a significant shift in the recognition and understanding of exploitation within children's services and across the multi-agency workforce. The revised exploitation risk assessment implemented in August 2019 has been embedded throughout Q3 and has led to a reduction in the number of young people and care leavers assessed at moderate, significant risk or actual exploitation. This is because the revised tool is more appropriate to assessing risks of exploitation in all its forms. All new exploitation assessments continue to include oversight from an Exploitation Coordinator prior to being authorised by the relevant team manager.

All children and young people at moderate or significant risk of / actual exploitation have a multi-agency Safety Plan which is reviewed on a multi-agency basis through Risk Management Meetings (RMMs), their frequency being determined by the level of risk for each young person. The level of risk is also reviewed at every RMM as a shared multi-agency decision. The detailed Safety Planning guidance introduced in August 2019 is well embedded and supports the development of robust Safety Plans for young people at risk of exploitation and young people who go missing, and supports effective application of the Home Office Disruption Toolkit.

Young people, parents and carers are invited to attend their RMMs and they are now attending more regularly. Mechanisms are in place through our Participation Team to gain feedback from young people about their experiences of having a Safety Plan and we are currently considering how we can change the RMM process based upon their recent feedback.

All RMMs are chaired by Exploitation Coordinators who bring their expertise and a degree of independence to developing and reviewing Safety Plans, including offering challenge to partner agencies to ensure that young people are recognised, and supported, as victims of exploitation, including awareness of the language professionals use to describe risks and behaviours. The specialist Family Support Worker and Personal Advisor undertake short term, targeted direct work with young people who find it difficult to engage with other agencies. The team has developed and maintains a People & Places tracker which allows for links between people and locations to be easily identified. All of these responsibilities combined mean that concerns for young people that might ordinarily be understood in relative isolation become understood within a wider context, leading to early identification of contextual concerns and the potential need for a complex strategy meeting.

Return home interviews are offered to all young people who go missing in Herefordshire, within 3 working days in most cases or within 24 hours in cases where children are not already receiving a service at Level 4. This means that the content of return home interviews can be shared with the MASH prior to a decision being made following a missing incident, which is now always responded to as a MASH Contact.

Clear multi-agency processes are in place for all agencies to highlight concerns to the Prevent & Disrupt group using the West Mercia Police intelligence form. Prevent & Disrupt is co-chaired between West Mercia Police and Safeguarding and Family Support and is able to identify themes and links between victims, perpetrators and locations and identifies actions to address concerns directly and through direct report to the Exploitation sub group of the Community Safety Partnership. Improved Prevent & Disrupt arrangements were introduced in November 2019. This promotes a wider and more consistent attendance across all agencies with a role in safeguarding against exploitation, followed by a smaller group of professionals (first responders) to meet immediately afterwards, to discuss significant risk and actual exploitation cases where risk has not reduced, and to discuss and identify a number of children and young people where a complex strategy meeting may be required.

In Q3 we have skilled up staff to provide a more flexible and consistent response to return home interviews and co-locating 2 days per week with the police, including progressing National Referral Mechanism referrals and Child Abduction Warning Notices. At the end of Q3 the exploitation team and police colleagues have commenced a Monday early morning briefing every week at the police station.

Contextual Safeguarding multi-agency training was launched in October 2019 and by the end of Q3 two full days training have been delivered. Dates have been identified and advertised for all multi-agency staff throughout 2020. Training has been very well attended with excellent feedback. In early January 2020 we identified a small number of social workers and team managers have booked onto the course. We have now made this course mandatory for all children's social care teams and a further review of bookings will be undertaken at the end of January 2020.

The exploitation team delivered a presentation to the countywide Safeguarding in Education conference in November 2019 and received very positive feedback from attendees.

In December 2019 the local authority led a bid for bespoke support from the national Tackling Child Exploitation programme (Research in Practice and The Children's Society). This bid has been successful and discussions are currently underway to progress the bespoke support.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Quantitative information

In October 2019 a manual review of performance information indicated that the number of young people and care leavers assessed as being at risk of exploitation and subject to RMMs was 55. 31 of these were assessed at moderate risk and 24 were assessed at significant risk or actual exploitation.

Performance reporting continues to be developed and therefore no further performance information was available at the end of Q3.

No complex strategy meetings held in Q3.

Qualitative information

Positive feedback from the presentation delivered to the Safeguarding in Education conference

Positive feedback from attendees at the Contextual Safeguarding training

Areas of strength, evidence

1. Expertise provided by Exploitation Coordinators in chairing RMMs and developing robust Safety Plans.
2. Ability to provide advice and support to social work teams and partner agencies, skilling them up to more effectively recognise and respond to exploitation.
3. Detailed knowledge of every young person subject to RMMs within a contextual framework means we can quickly identify links between victims, perpetrators and locations.
4. Providing the same level of service to care leavers at risk of exploitation – not many local authorities appear to be doing this.
5. Resources pack available to all social work teams to share with other professionals, young people, parents and carers.
6. Multi-agency Contextual Safeguarding training embedded with good attendance and feedback.
7. Effective joint working with Police including weekly briefings, 2 days co-location and revised Prevent & Disrupt arrangements including significant risk case reviews.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Revise arrangements to ensure that looked after children placed out of county who go missing have robust return home interviews and information is shared in a timely way – 31 December 2019 – this is in progress and requires further discussion with Placements Team.
2. Draw upon what we know about the services young people need and receive to influence commissioning – 31 March 2020 – achieved through information presented to Scrutiny task and finish group for Exploitation.
3. Effective and supportive transitions for young people at risk of exploitation when they become adults – this work is being led by the Community Safety Partnership in conjunction with HSAB and SCYPH.
4. Working with Public Health to develop a bespoke website for exploitation in Herefordshire and to raise awareness in local communities, possibly including through parish councils – an initial meeting has taken place however progress is slow.
5. Develop a clear pathway with YOS and Vennture for younger siblings of young people at risk of exploitation to receive preventative direct work – 31 December 2019 – pathway developed and children have been identified, social workers are currently in the process of gaining parental consent.
6. Increase understanding of the NRM criteria, process and its benefits across the professional network and provide training to first responders – 31 March 2019.
7. Strengthen multi-agency arrangements (Prevent & Disrupt) to i) ensure all agencies and professionals can recognise exploitation and know how to raise their concerns; and ii) more effectively respond to identified themes and links, particularly regarding locations – 31 December 2019 – achieved.
8. Weekly and monthly performance information to be implemented in order to effectively manage the RMM process and understand the

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| | <p>cohort of young people subject to RMMs – 31 December 2019 – not yet achieved.</p> <p>9. Extend the remit of contextual safeguarding to incorporate peer on peer abuse – 31 March 2019.</p> |
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being that child exploitation/contextual safeguarding practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: Safeguarding and Review (Barb Langstaffe – Head of Safeguarding and Review)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

At end of Quarter 3 there are 8.6 Safeguarding and Review Managers (with mixed Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), CP Conference Chair and Independent Chair caseloads) allocated to and with direct case review responsibility for 579 children; undertaking IRO duties for 358 Looked After Children, Conference Chair duties for 173 Child Protection case and Independent Chair duties for 48 Child In Need cases (the majority of which are Independently Chaired due to being stepped down from CP or were previously LAC). This represents a caseload average of 67. This is within the recommended combined caseload of 65 - 75. The Safeguarding and Review Managers are line managed by the Principal IRO who is in turn line managed by the Head of Service Safeguarding and Review. All team members receive two hours reflective supervision each month in line with supervision policy, with year to date supervisions completed at 94.4% at the end of quarter 3, a slight dip due to the Christmas leave period.

Of the 8.6 staff, 6.6 are permanent staff, one is agency on a fixed term basis and one is agency covering for the one remaining vacant permanent post. As such, the Safeguarding and Review Managers (IRO and Conference Chair) Team is establishing as a stable team which will enable improvements to be implemented consistently and embed as standard practices as well as provide continuity and consistency of IROs for Looked After Children. At the end of quarter 3 the Principal IRO moved into the position of Interim Head of Service for Safeguarding and Review and as a result interviews are taking place to fill the Principal IRO post on a fixed term contract. It is anticipated this position will be filled by the middle of February 2020.

IRO Service:

All Looked After Children are allocated an IRO on completion of the first LAC notification and wherever possible any brothers and sisters also Looked After have the same IRO. A new monitoring system is being introduced to ensure this is the case and where it is not possible the reasons for this are clearly recorded. LAC Reviews are scheduled in accordance with statutory timescales and when there are proposed changes to a child's care plan. Quarter 3 saw a dip in statutory timescales being met and Lac Review minutes being written and distributed within timescale. This was in part due to adjustments to the data collection rectifying previous anomalies and in part IROs completing a number of overdue minutes which were then subject to data recording, the delay having happened in quarter 2.

LAC Review minutes are written addressed to the child in the large majority of cases (and where this is appropriate to do so) and IROs evidence the developing relationship with the child through LAC Review minutes and consultations with children. An increasing number of LAC Reviews are undertaken as a series of meetings. Parents of children who are Looked After are kept informed of the progress of their child and have opportunity to contribute to care planning through the Lac Review process. Letters are now sent out to both the child and to parents inviting them to the first Lac Review and introducing them to the child's IRO, providing contact details, information about the frequency of Lac Reviews, how to contribute to care planning and how to make complaints or compliments. Parents are informed that in the very rare event they are not to be invited to their child's Lac Review at some point in the future they should be informed of this in advance and have a right to provide challenge to this through the Independent Reviewing Officer.

IRO Oversight in between LAC Reviews is clearly evidenced on children's files with IROs raising both informally and formally issues in respect of children's care planning and welfare and having improved significantly throughout the year remains a strength. Quarter 3 saw an increase in IROs highlighting delay in Life Story work for children with plans for adoption and with plans of long term foster care as well as delays in updating Pathway Plans for 16 and 17 year olds. One IRO has supported adopters to undertake the complaints process on behalf of their adopted child. These more systemic themes are being raised with Heads of Service. Formal dispute resolutions in quarter 3 were resolved within timescales in all but one case which is an improvement on quarter 2.

IROs are now accessing independent legal advice where required, with two consultations with designated local family solicitors having taken place in quarter 3 which resulted in successful challenges to planning and amendments to proposed care plans. This dialogue enabled matters to be resolved without recourse to the Dispute Resolution Process or external escalation.

Child Protection Conference Service:

Within the Conference Chair role outline plans are largely recorded in a timely way and plans are becoming SMARTer, although 30% still require improvement to be more specific, measureable and outcome focused. This was noted in the previous SEF and picked up by Ofsted in their focused visit in December 2019. In accordance with the Neglect Strategy the use of the Graded Care Profile is part of planning for children on Child Protection plans because of neglect and provides a quantitative and qualitative measure of the daily lived experiences of children and how parents are able to meet their needs or where they struggle to do so. A review of the progress of these neglect cases during quarter 3 has identified the completion of the graded care profile needs to be undertaken at greater pace and this is being addressed for each individual case.

Minutes are read and approved by Conference Chairs within timescales and Chairs will provide some oversight on the progression of CP plans. This is however an area which requires monitoring measures and targets to be established which recognize both the need not to impede time required to fulfill IRO duties and yet provide case oversight, particularly for cases where there is high risk to the child, risk of drift or non-compliance.

The Independent Chair role in reviewing Child In Need plans remains at a similar level as quarter 2, with 48 children being allocated an Independent Chair to review their cases. This provides independent oversight of planning when it is stepped down from Child Protection to reduce delay in supporting families to become autonomous of Children's Safeguarding services, or where necessary escalate promptly where safeguarding concerns increase. A review of the efficacy of the introduction of the Independent Chair role is to be undertaken before the end of January 2020.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

IRO activity:

Total LAC Reviews in timescale = 86%. LAC recommendations completed within 5 day timescale in October, November and December (Quarter 3) = 85% in timescale. This is an improvement from 82% in Quarter 2 but below improvement target of 90%.

LAC review minutes in timescale = 76% in Quarter 3, significantly down from the 91% recorded for quarter 2 as a result of adjustments to data collection rectifying the data for minutes which were overdue and now completed.

Participation of children over 4 years of age in their LAC Review is at 96%. This includes attendance, completion of consultation or Mind of My Own forms, or their views being represented by someone advocating on their behalf.

IRO Oversight case notes – 99% LAC longer than 3 months have at least 1 oversight; 90% of all LAC have 2 or more oversights.

IRO Dispute Resolutions:

There were 6 formal dispute resolutions undertaken in Quarter 3, an increase on quarter 2 from 4. All six have been resolved, with five being resolved in accordance with the process within 20 working days, which is a significant improvement on quarter 2. One required escalation to Assistant Director level.

IRO access to Independent Legal Advice:

This system is now established with two identified external designated family solicitors providing a service. In Quarter 3 there were two cases where IROs accessed Independent Legal Advice which led to successful challenge to care planning and without recourse to formal dispute resolution processes or external escalation.

CP Conference Chair / Independent Chair activity:

ICPCs within timescale – the figure for the year to date is 75%, the same as at quarter 2 but not yet meeting Improvement target of 90%. Clarification is needed on the timescales as Conferences are booked in from the point of strategy meetings but may be deferred if S47s go over timescale or a decision is made to initially work with families under Child in Need status and a short time later a decision made to request an ICPC, thus impacting on the data gathered. A new duty system for Conference Chairs was implemented in part from 4 November 2019 and in full from 30 December 2019 to establish availability throughout the week for booking in ICPCs. 100% of RCPCs are completed within timescales.

95% of ICPC and RCPC minutes approved and distributed within timescales. This meets the 95% improvement plan targets.

Learning Activity

An audit of the IRO Service was commissioned from SWAP Internal Audit Services arising from the Partners in Practice visit from Doncaster in January 2019 and following on from court judgements which were critical of the IRO Service at the end of 2018. This audit report was completed during quarter 3, looking into the standards of management of the service. The audit result was the service was ‘Reasonable’ and identified “Most of the areas reviewed were found to be adequately controlled. Generally, risks are well managed, but some systems require the introduction or improvement of internal controls to ensure the achievement of objectives.” Six actions were identified for improvement. These have either already been actioned or added to the Safeguarding and Review Improvement plan with agreed timescales for completion.

Learning from Complaints and Compliments:

There have been no complaints received during Quarter 3. Compliments have been received from families and partner agencies for Conference Chairs although no compliments received in respect of the IRO role this quarter.

Areas of strength, evidence

1. IRO Oversight of children’s cases evidences the ‘IRO footprint’ in progressing care planning in between LAC Reviews.
2. Recent improvements in communicating with and involving parents within their child’s Lac Reviews to support parental contributions to care planning for their child. More Lac Reviews are undertaken as a series of meetings to enable input from parents and parents receive an introduction letter from their child’s IRO outlining the Lac Review process, how to make compliment or complaint and the IRO contact details to enable feedback on the service and any issues parents wish to raise regarding the welfare of their children.
3. Formal dispute resolutions continue to be escalated, with improved response rates to reduce time taken to achieve resolutions.
4. New duty system developed for chairs to be available for ICPCs and 1st Lac Reviews one day each week. This enables availability for Conferences as well as allowing IROs to structure their diaries to be able to undertake their IRO duties of Lac Reviews and consultations with children and young people

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. CP plans to focus on outcomes for the child and link these to the actions tasked to parents as the reasons for achieving change, as identified within the Ofsted focused visit in December. This has been addressed with Conference Chairs in the January S & R Team Meeting and one CP plan will be reviewed with each Conference Chair in each monthly supervision to develop practice.
2. Graded Care Profiles should be part of all CP plans with the category of neglect. Currently this appears only on 79% of plans. Use of the profile provides evidence of the child’s daily lived experiences and measures progress over time, so contributes to action point 1. Supervision to review neglect CP plans in February 2020 to reinforce this directly with Conference Chairs. Observations of Conferences by the Principal IRO and Head of Service will be booked in with all Chairs and completed by 30.04.2020, with subsequent observations of Lac Reviews and Conferences with feedback sessions booked in on a quarterly basis.
3. Compliance with statutory timescales for Lac Reviews and completion of minutes has dipped. A standard tracker will be drawn up for the completion of work for each IRO to use and be viewed at each supervision from 20.02.2020.

Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being that safeguarding and review practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy



Summary: Child Protection & Court Service (Cath Thomas – Head of CP and Court)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

In December 2019 Ofsted undertook a Focused Visit of the CP and Court Service. Overall, their findings are that progress has been too slow since the full inspection undertaken in June 2018, in part hampered by serial changes in Head of Service, reliance on agency staff which includes some degree of turnover, and limited numbers of experience staff compared to newly qualified workers. Ofsted had significant concerns about how we support and protect our ASYEs in terms of complexity and number of cases allocated at the beginning of their ASYE year. The service currently has 3 posts not filled with any worker, which is approximately 15% of the social worker establishment, with one third of the workforce in post being in their ASYE year and one third being agency staff.

Too many children's cases continue to be worked within the service with some children subject to child protection plans that could have been more appropriately progressed as child in need. This was similarly identified by Essex (Improvement Partner) who completed a peer review in November 2019.

The focused visit identified that there is limited evidence of case management oversight and direction given to social workers and inconsistent quality of case supervision, which is impeding the progress of improving outcomes for children. Issues were also identified with the adequacy of family support provision despite this service being well resourced and social workers cited waiting lists of 4 months for families to access vital support.

No children were identified as being left at significant risk and the focussed visit did not result in any priority actions.

Whilst the quality and progress of child in need plans has improved (from a very low base in June 2018), Ofsted found that child protection plans, although containing appropriate actions, are not sufficiently focused on children's needs, which means that parents are less likely to understand how the actions being asked of them will improve outcomes for their children.

Both Essex and Ofsted found that social workers are committed, engaged and know their children well and there is evidence of some good quality direct work although this is not consistent for all children. However, Essex in particular found that the use of working agreements / safety agreements were overly used and oppressive.

In September and October 2019 a deep dive audit of all cases in the CP and Court service was undertaken. This audit evidenced significant drift across a large amount of casework and concerns about significant risk left unaddressed for some children. The actions resulting from the audit were not effectively progressed and whilst Ofsted commented positively on our quality assurance framework, the lack of progress to rectify issues identified in audit was understandably seen as a significant weakness.

Performance in relation to CIN, CP and LAC visits continues to be poor. Anecdotally the response from social workers is that children have been visited but not yet recorded. Urgent action is required in order to address this. Despite previous assertions teams have not been using performance data to ensure compliance with statutory timescales in an effective way that is led by the team managers and shared across their teams.

The Graded Care Profile is being utilised more in neglect cases, however there continue to be a number of children and families for who this has not been completed.

Personal supervision performance and case supervision performance has improved throughout Q3, however this needs to be built upon in Q4 to ensure that we meet targets and sustain them. The quality of case supervision needs to improve and the service will be supported by the HOS and Essex to achieve this.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

December 2019 data

Visits – target 95% - not met

CIN: Team 1 57%, Team 2 73%, Team 3 50%

CP: Team 1 85%, Team 2 86%, Team 3 63%

LAC: Team 1 84%, Team 2 62%, Team 3 41%

Personal supervision – target 95% - not met

Team 1 83%

Team 2 71%

Team 3 83%

This represents 4 social workers not receiving personal supervision across the 3 teams in December 2019.

Case supervision – all cases to have a case supervision recorded at a minimum of 3 monthly

Team 1 95%

Team 2 80%

Team 3 88% - the majority of those overdue in Team 3 are adoption cases where children are soon to be adopted that the Team Manager has retained responsibility for from her social worker post – these should have been supervised by the Head of Service and this has been completed on all cases in January 2020.

A small number of strategy discussions and s47 investigations take place in the CP Court service however timescales for completion are highly inconsistent which leads to performance involving small numbers being very poor:

Section 47 investigations in timescales: Team 1 0%, Team 2 33%, Team 3 none undertaken.

There have been a significant number of Child and Family Assessments reported as overdue. The majority of these are Mosaic recording issues which are being resolved in January 2020.

The volume of care proceedings activity in Q3 has been particularly high following a spike in care proceedings being issued. In January 2020 there are 13 children for whom final evidence is being prepared and 16 children for whom an issues resolution or final hearing is being held. The volume of court work being undertaken by some staff impacts on their capacity to fully undertake pre-proceedings work and evidence compliance with statutory timescales for visits and section 47 investigations in particular. Urgent action is required to implement systems which enable social workers to manage these competing timescales.

Areas of strength, evidence

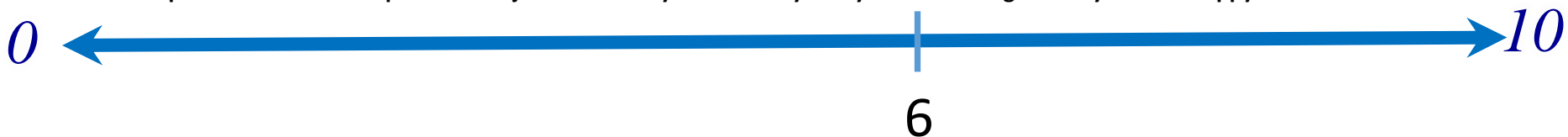
1. There are a core group of permanent staff – both social workers and family support workers in the CP/Court team who are skilled and committed to staying in Herefordshire.
2. The family court which sits in Worcestershire is one of the best performing courts in the country for completion of care proceedings with 26 weeks.
3. Both Essex and good Ofsted found, as have we, that the service consists of quality social workers who know the children and families they are working with.
4. The family support service provide consistently high quality support to children and families, although this impacts upon their responsiveness to families needing a service.
5. Morale in the service is high and there is significant enthusiasm, energy and commitment to achieving change.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Mailshot targeted at agencies included in the higher rate agency scheme – why their clients should consider Herefordshire including direct quotes from current agency staff – Jan 2020.
2. Revised duty system arrangements and proscribed time for social workers and managers to complete case recordings – implemented with effect from 1st Feb 2020.
3. Caseload management reporting and process implemented to ensure personal supervision consistently takes places and is recorded and to ensure an understanding of the nature of caseloads in addition to the numbers – Jan 2020.
4. Implementation of twice weekly performance meetings for each team manager with their team to ensure all visits are completed and recorded within timescales and to promote teams supporting each other at times when court work demands are higher for individual workers. HOS to observe 1 per month for each team manager.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. The recent support from the Social Work Academy is already proving invaluable to support our ASYEs, and other social workers with court work and parenting assessments. 7. There is a new head of service, who started in January 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. PLO task and finish group to commence January 2020 to develop an Early Permanence Handbook. 6. Revised arrangements to Alternatives to Care Panel, Permanence Planning Meetings, Case Progression Officer focus and HOS oversight of the progress of pre-proceedings – Feb 2020. 7. Revised administrative arrangements in relation to pre-proceedings, care proceedings and adoption decision making. 8. Work with the HoS safeguarding and review to ensure CIN and CP plans are SMART. 9. Review of family support services – underway in Jan 2020, to be fully implemented by end of Q4. 10. Review of CP Court service structure – to be completed by end of Q4. 11. HOS to provide clear expectations for staff with implementation of a core group / CIN review agenda – Jan 2020. 12. HOS to provide clear expectations for staff in relation to the use of case summaries – Feb 2020. 13. HOS to provide clear expectations for staff in the proportionality of visits recording – Feb 2020. 14. HOS to work with Essex and team managers to improve the quality of supervision – by end of Q4. 15. HOS to observe a minimum of 2 supervisions per quarter – commencing Feb 2020. 16. Revised transfer checklist to be implemented in all teams – Jan 2020. 17. Transfer and closure checklists and processes to be built into Mosaic – by end of Q4. |
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 that child protection and court practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy



Summary: LAC Service (Gill Cox – Head of Looked After Children)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

The local authority continues to have a very high number of looked after children. At the end of December 2019 there were 358 children in care which equates to 99 per 10,000, which is significantly higher than the national average (64 per 10,000) and that of statistical neighbours (53 per 10,000). The number of looked after children has been fairly stable over recent months but has increased from 334 at the end of March 2019.

An Alternatives to Care panel which is chaired by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding was introduced in September 2018. This panel decides whether care proceedings should be initiated, whether children should be admitted to care under Section 20, and reviews decisions to admit children to care in an unplanned way. The number of children admitted to care during quarter 3 was at rate of 27 per 10,000 which is the average rate in the West Midlands region.

The local authority has had a lower rate of children leaving care than statistical neighbours and the focus is upon identifying children who could safely return to their parents care or who could be cared for under a Special Guardianship Order. Initially many foster carers were reluctant to consider applying for SGO's as they were concerned about the financial impact and in some cases supervising contact for children with their birth families. Both of these issues have been resolved as Cabinet agreed an increased financial support offer which is equivalent to that received by foster carers and increased resource for our LAC support service to enable them to supervise contact for children subject to SGOs where this is necessary. However progress has been too slow with continued drift and delay in the progression of assessments and applications to Court. This is further impacted by a risk averse culture which is reluctant to apply thresholds of need when considering the potential for reunification. This is now being robustly challenged and tracked with the expectation that the numbers of children leaving care will increase during the remainder of 2019/20 and onwards. At the end of December applications for discharge had been made for 16 children.

The Case Progression Officer chairs Permanency Planning meetings for children in care proceedings. The initial meeting is convened following the initial hearing with a review meeting convened at least 3 weeks prior to final evidence being submitted. This is supporting a collaborative approach to care planning and effective communication between children's social workers, fostering team, adoption service and where relevant the long-term looked after children's teams to reduce delay and ensure full consideration is given to the long-term needs of children in care at this crucial point.

Following critical court judgements against the local authority regarding use of S.20 arrangements for looked after children a very robust procedure is in place for monitoring and progressing care plans and all children looked after under S.20 are regularly reviewed at the Alternatives to Care panel. Consequently only around 6% of looked after children are S.20.

Staff teams within the looked after children's teams and 16+ team are relatively stable which enables Social Workers to get to know children well and establish trusting relationships. In July 2019 the LAC team was split into 2 teams with the appointment of a further team manager to enable greater levels of support, supervision and challenge to Social Workers. Since then the performance in both teams has improved in relation to compliance with LAC statutory visits to timescale and regular case supervision. Compliance has been above or within 5% of the 95% target in the last quarter with a small dip in December. Performance has been less consistent within the 16+ team and needs to improve.

Pathway plans for looked after children are not always completed to timescale or updated prior to LAC reviews as they should be. Those young people who do not have an up to date pathway plan have now been identified and this will be addressed with reporting mechanisms in place to enable reliable monitoring of this area of practice established by end of April 2020.

Placement stability for children in care is good with the numbers experiencing more than 3 placements in the last 12 months at 7.8% at the end of December, which is below the rate nationally and for statistical neighbours. The service is not complacent though and we continue to work to reduce this further by improving the quality of support, supervision, and training provided to our foster carers. 71% of children have been in the same placement for over 2 ½ years which is in line with national indicators although this will be affected by our high numbers of children in care and so is likely to reduce as our plans to reduce the numbers of children in care are progressed.

There are not enough foster carers to meet demand and so there has been a refreshed focus upon recruitment activity which has seen an increase in the number of enquiries during 2019/20 that is resulting in more applications and should result in an increase in approvals by the end of the year. A new fostering workflow within Mosaic has been implemented in September. Initial performance reports have been completed that need further development but will enable greater scrutiny and management oversight of this area of the service. The number of children and young people placed more than 20 miles from home is relatively low.

Routine audits of completion of delegated authority have been completed which has shown that IROs now consistently address the need for delegated authority to be completed although further focus is required to ensure that all children benefit from the completion and regular review of this in a timely way. A new step in Mosaic has been introduced and the performance report should be available by the end of January 2020 to enable easier oversight.

In August 2018 additional resource was agreed to enable our LAC support service, who provide supervised contact, to take on responsibility for producing later life letters and life story books for children with a plan for adoption. Fixed term workers were employed with two additional permanent posts to enable the backlog of work to be completed and for the service to be sustainable in the longer term. Unfortunately most of the fixed term workers left for new jobs before their contract was due to end and with an increase in numbers of looked after children the demand for supervised contact has increased and so less progress has been made than was anticipated. At the end of quarter three 38 adopted children were waiting for a life story book and/or a later life letter with the longest wait being 4 years for a later life letter and 2 years for a life story book. Options to identify additional resource to resolve this are being pursued.

Our adoption service joined Adoption Central England (ACE) on 1 July 2019 and this has gone well with a smooth transition for children with a plan for adoption, prospective adopters, and adopters. Our service is adjusting to new ways of working and this is supported by the formation of an “early permanency hub” based within the Child Protection and Court team who focus on supporting Children’s Social Workers in adoption work and provide a very helpful bridge with ACE. Already there has been a welcome increase in children who have been placed in Foster to Adopt placements which we hope to further build on as our pre-birth planning work improves.

The local authority has revised its approach to assessing and managing the risk of exploitation to children and young people. Children in care and care leavers are a significant cohort of those who are at risk. Details regarding this work is included within the Exploitation section of this self-assessment.

Children and young people’s views are well understood and children are encouraged to attend relevant meetings. We also use Mind Of My Own app which enables children and young people in care to send their views directly to their Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer or to make a complaint.

Virtual School

The Virtual School in the Education and Commissioning Directorate is a strong and stable team that support the education of Looked After Children and Post-LAC. The team feels that social workers value the work they do – one team manager reported recently that the service provided by the Virtual School in Herefordshire is ‘gold standard’. There are close links between the Virtual School team and the CWD, LAC team and 16+ teams. The links with the CP Court teams and Assessment teams is starting to improve. Because the Virtual School team have taken the responsibility of organizing and chairing the Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings for the last 9 years there can be occasions when social workers and their managers do not attend PEP meetings, knowing that a member of staff from the Virtual School will attend. In the last quarter, 20% of PEP meetings had no social worker in attendance. The VS team feels strongly that social workers (especially in the CWD and LAC teams) know their children well and are passionate about getting good outcomes for them.

The Virtual School have been piloting a project (SEEdS) to support school stability since January 2019. This has mainly been through Multi-Element Planning Meetings (PEP+) and Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). The input from social workers at the PEP+ meetings has been very good. One social worker commented “[It’s] a very structured approach to focusing on the needs and strengths of the child through the lens of developmental trauma and attachment. The visual recording on flipchart paper was so helpful to focus the meeting discussion. [The session leader] used skilful questioning to encourage the team around the child to reflect and consider the young person’s needs in depth. We were left with clear strategies to support the child in school.” VIG has also supported carers and teaching assistants to identify which strategies are most helpful in supporting children “You don’t realise what you are doing, the biggest thing is seeing what you are doing well, and it makes you want to do it more”

The challenge offered by the Virtual School, including more robust internal scrutiny and quality assurance has led to an improvement of the quality of PEPs completed by schools. The contribution from social workers is improving but in the last quarter, social workers did not complete 18% of documents

Provisional end of Key Stage education outcomes (2019) for children in Key Stages 1, 2 are above those for looked after regionally and nationally. Provisional Key Stage 4 outcomes in key assessment measures e.g. Attainment 8 (A8) are above regional and national outcomes for LAC in England in 2019. Further analysis shows that the attainment gap between Herefordshire's looked after children and 'all' Herefordshire children reduced in 2019, most notably at Key Stage 1.

The lack of placement availability locally is impacting on school placements and 7 children have experienced an unexpected school move because of a placement move in the last quarter. Of the 21 young people in year 11 who have been in care for more than 12 months, 4 have moved school and care placement in the last 12 months

Health

Compliance with meeting timescales for completion of Health Assessments has improved during 2018/19 with 63% of initial health assessments completed in timescale and 87% of review health assessments completed in timescale. The LAC health team see children placed in counties bordering Herefordshire. This ensures continuity of assessment and where appropriate referral for health services. Health reviews completed by Out of County Health Teams are quality assured and health care plans reviewed to ensure progress. Difficulties arise when the LAC health team are not informed about placement moves however the team now receive notifications of placement moves recorded on Mosaic.

The LAC health team has been very small with just 1.6 full-time equivalent nurses. A business case to agree additional funding by the CCG was agreed to increase the staff group by 2 full-time equivalent posts. These staff are now in post. This will enable further development and improvement within the service with targeted support to be offered to foster carers, children and young people who would most benefit and a development of the service for care leavers. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) have provided training and weekly consultation to social work teams which commenced in May 2019 and this is valued by teams.

Corporate Parenting

The Corporate Parenting strategy has driven improvement with much achieved since it was agreed. All elected members attended Corporate Parenting training as a mandatory part of their induction training and during this made a personal offer of support to Looked After Children and care leavers which now provides a directory of interests and skills that the Service can call on. The training was developed jointly with Your Voice Matters (YVM), our children in care council, and was co-delivered with them.

Corporate Parenting panel meets bi-monthly and has a work plan for the year based on the priorities within the strategy. It has taken time since the elections in May to establish which Councillors will join the panel and so work will now focus on agreeing "champions" for each of the priorities.

Work is underway to refresh the Corporate Parenting strategy for April 2020.

YVM meet monthly and are active members of the Corporate Parenting panel. They meet monthly themselves and are involved in recruitment for all Social Worker and Personal Advisor posts within the service. It is acknowledged that further work is required to ensure that children in care and care leavers are able to contribute and affect change at a service level.

An annual celebration event was held in September which was well attended by children, young people and their foster carers and where the achievements of many were recognized and celebrated.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

- Monthly performance data shows performance and trends in comparison with national and statistical neighbours (where available)
- Themed monthly audits are completed which show areas of strength and those for improvement
- Regular team meetings and managers meetings provide forum for open discussion and reflection upon what is working well and what needs to improve

Areas of strength, evidence

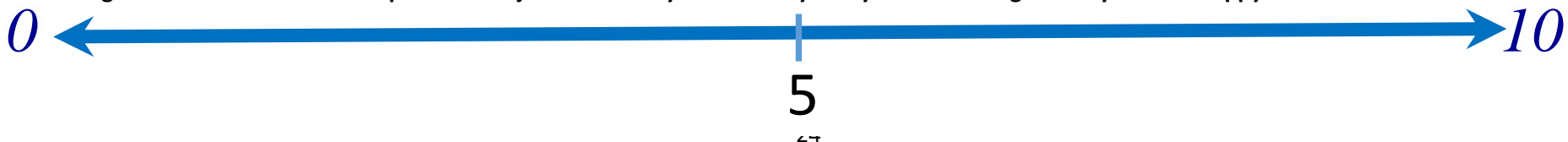
1. The number and rate of children being admitted to care has reduced
2. Stability of LAC teams and Fostering teams
3. Improved compliance with timescales for statutory visits
4. Improved performance in providing personal and case supervision
5. Placement stability
6. A smooth transfer has been achieved to the regional adoption agency
7. SEEds is providing an intervention that is valued by Social Workers and schools
8. Provisional data shows that outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 are above those achieved nationally by LAC in England.
9. Additional resource has been agreed for the LAC health team
10. CAMHS are providing weekly consultations to Social Work teams

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Reducing the number of children in care by progressing care plans for reunification or SGO where this is assessed as in the best interests of children
2. Sustaining improvement in performance in relation to statutory visits and supervision so that targets are consistently met
3. Increasing the number of children who are long-term matched
4. Completion and review of Pathway plans within timescales
5. Increasing the number of foster carers
6. Ensuring all children have a regularly reviewed delegated authority form completed
7. Reduction in the number of adopted children waiting for later life letters and life story books
8. Attendance and contribution of Social Workers to PEP meetings
9. Timeliness of completion of LAC health assessments

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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being that looked after children practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: Care Leavers Service (Gill Cox – Head of Looked After Children)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

Care leavers are supported by the 16+ team and for a small number of young people the Children with Disabilities team. After a period of significant change and staff turnover the 16+ team is now fairly stable and so young people are benefitting from relationships with workers who know them well. However with some recent resignations there will now be a turnover of Social Work staff.

There has been investment into the 16+ team which now benefits from a Managing Practitioner who is able to deputise for the team manager and provides direct line management for the Personal Advisors. A Senior Personal Advisor post has also been created to provide additional mentoring support to Personal Advisors. Additionally another full-time Social Worker and Personal Advisor post have been created to add capacity to the team.

The 16+ team moved offices in December 2018 and are now very centrally located in an office that enables them to provide a drop in service. The building is of a good standard and communicates that young people and staff are valued.

Mark Riddell, National Implementation Advisor for care leavers, visited Herefordshire in September 2018 and again in May 2019 to review our progress. Mr. Riddell reported that our care leavers told him that “it is good to be a care leaver in Herefordshire”. In May 2019 we were able to demonstrate that we had taken forward many of his recommendations to us.

Our published performance data in relation to care leavers has been very poor in past years and did not accurately reflect the work of the team. Much work has been done to understand and rectify the issues impacting upon this which have been partly recording and partly reporting. This is much improved although further work to embed this and ensure that the service has accurate and accessible data on a weekly basis continues. At the end of December 79% of care leavers are reported to be in touch with the service which is much lower than either national or statistical neighbours. This is not thought to reflect performance accurately and work to improve this is a priority.

Care leavers in suitable accommodation is reported as 77% which is lower than national and statistical neighbours. Again it is likely that actual performance is better than this. Much work is being done to improve the accommodation options available to our care leavers. We are focusing upon growing the number of in house supported lodging providers as well as commissioned alternatives in Herefordshire. Citizen Housing provides 30 bed foyers across the County which the service and Housing Solutions Team can refer directly to. A fairly low number of older looked after children and care leavers are living at the foyers and we have worked closely with our commissioning team and the provider to try and increase this. Through this project we now have agreement that we can refer to Citizen Housing for an emergency “crash pad” and also for a “taster flat” which allows young people to try the Foyer before committing to a tenancy so that they can see whether they are ready for this next step towards independence. The overall contract for this service will be re-commissioned in 2020 and work is underway to assess what would best meet need of our care leaver population. This has established that we have a

large cohort with low needs, a small group with moderate needs but a large cohort with complex needs and a small cohort with very complex needs which the foyers are not the right service for. The Council has invested in purchasing a building which will provide 5 beds for care leavers with complex needs. The unit is based in the city centre and a 24/7 support service has now been commissioned with the service planned to commence in April 2020. The Council is willing to consider further buildings like this if required.

A growing number of care leavers with complex needs arising from poor mental health, risk of exploitation and substance misuse are placed with supported accommodation providers. There are limited providers within Herefordshire and so some young people are placed out of County. Together with commissioners we are working to develop the local market. Currently we are concerned that the quality of support provided to some of our care leavers has been very poor. Our Placements Team are completing regular monitoring visits and together with the 16+ team concerns are addressed robustly and young people moved where necessary.

At the end of December only 42% of care leavers were reported as engaged in education, employment or training. This is very low and is a priority for improvement. Training options in Herefordshire are fairly limited and this impacts on the choices available for young people especially if they are excluded from attending a provider. The 16+ team have just started working with Landau who are funded to reduce the number of young people who are NEET in the County. Landau are now providing a weekly drop-in based at the office and it is hoped that this will help to increase the number of our care leavers engaged in education, training or employment. During the last year the Council has employed 3 care leavers as apprentices which is positive however this needs to develop into a rolling programme and commitment.

The Council has a published [Care Leavers covenant](#). The Council provides council tax exemption for care leavers up to the age of 25. The Council is keen to progress its own Care Leavers covenant and is likely to be an early adopter working with the national lead.

Audit work has identified a need to improve SMART planning within the 16+ team. A workshop has been held with the team and this issue will be re-audited in January 2020 to see if improvement is evident.

Pathway plans for care leavers are not always completed to timescale or reviewed as they should be. Those young people who do not have an up to date pathway plan have now been identified and this will be addressed with reporting mechanisms in place to enable reliable monitoring of this area of practice established by end of April 2020.

Additional resource has been agreed for the LAC health team and staff have now been recruited. This will enable a service to be offered to care leavers and greater time to engage with older looked after children who are reluctant to meet with LAC nurses.

Relationships with Adults Social Care are improving although there remains concern that some very vulnerable care leavers are not eligible for a service. This is particularly true of young people at risk of exploitation, some of whom are care leavers, and the best way to meet this need is being considered.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

- Monthly performance data shows performance and trends in comparison with national and statistical neighbours (where available)
- Themed monthly audits are completed which show areas of strength and those for improvement
- Regular team meetings and managers meetings provide forum for open discussion and reflection upon what is working well and what needs to improve

Areas of strength, evidence

1. Investment into the service to reduce caseloads and increase management capacity
2. Central office that provides drop in service
3. Published data shows improvement in performance in relation to “in touch” and “suitable accommodation”
4. Availability of new crash pad and taster flat options
5. Purchase of building and commissioning of support to provide new 5 bed unit for care leavers with complex needs from April 2020
6. Partnership with Landau to increase number of care leavers in education, training or employment.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Need to ensure data accurately reflects performance in the team and drives further improvement
2. Number of care leavers in education, training or employment needs to increase
3. Quality of pathway plans
4. Services for vulnerable care leavers who don’t meet criteria for adult social care or mental health services

Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being care leaver practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: CWD Service (Les Knight – Head of Additional Needs)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

The ILASCs inspection in June 2018 recognised that the quality of help and protection offered to children by the disabled children’s team is a strength. It observed that workers know the children they are working with very well and they ensure that children’s views are evident in their reviews and assessments. A recent internal focussed audit on ‘the child’s voice’ also viewed this in a positive light.

The recent Ofsted focussed visit (Dec 2019) confirmed that CIN plans are tailored and responsive to children's needs. Packages of support are appropriate to needs identified and social workers are quick to ensure these are adapted if children's needs change or in response to crisis. Children's and carers views are consistently recorded and influence planning. Social workers know the children well and are skilled at communication with children using a variety of different methods and applying observational skills to ascertain children's wellbeing. Supervision is qualitatively better in this team, is well recorded and includes elements of reflection helping to ensure timely progress.

The Children with Disabilities (CWD) Team has been part of a 0-25 multi-disciplinary SEND service which has seen the CWD and SEN Assessment Team co-located since 2016. This has improved communication and joint working between the teams. Families requesting a statutory Education, Health & Care (EHC) assessment are now screened using an Early Help Screening Tool to establish whether there are any unmet care needs, which should improve the quality of the care advice into EHC Plans and ensure families get the appropriate support.

The CWD Team is fully staffed with permanent staff and has appropriate caseloads. The team is rapidly gaining experience having recruited the majority of its staff as newly qualified workers 2-3 years ago. The team receives regular positive feedback on the quality of its work from IROs, the legal team and education staff.

The ILACS inspection report also commented on strong and effective work with partner agencies (which) results in effective support to children and their families. Most of the team's referrals come via the multi-agency Single Point of Referral team which the team attends. Working relationships are strong with the transition team in adult well-being and the revised transition protocol describes expectations for cases transferring.

The Ofsted Joint Local Area SEND Inspection was undertaken in September 2016. No written statement of action resulted and inspectors commented that the local area has clear procedures in place to check that children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are safe. They also commented that leaders 'have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the different partners who contribute to the implementation of the [2014 Children and Family Act] reforms'.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Weekly and monthly performance reports are shared with Head of Service, Team Manager and the Director. These include CWD specific performance information. Performance concerns are addressed through supervision and are intended to be proactive rather than just reactive comment when performance has slipped. Feedback from HOS/AD Performance meetings

Team Managers sign all assessments. Court documentation is subject to Team Manager and Head of Service Quality Assurance.

All Staff are supervised in line with the corporate supervision timescales

Audits have been undertaken through the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and internal audit arrangements. Internal audit processes include auditors reviewing the case with the worker involved to promote learning and developing a shared view of a case. Processes for the administration of short breaks and direct payments have been reviewed as part of the corporate internal audit programme (SWAP). The findings from these audit processes have been shared with the team.

Learning from complaints and Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) findings/recommendations

Views of parent/carers and the child is recorded on most workflow forms. Information is also gathered from the local parent carer forum including at the 6 monthly SEND Summits.

Areas of strength, evidence

1. The safeguarding of children with disabilities is a strength with timely and planned responses to individual cases. Regular supervision and the trackers used across children’s social care ensures that cases do not drift.
2. The use of short breaks and direct payments has developed with families reporting that this is no longer an area of concern. The graduated use of short breaks supports families in a timely way and ultimately prevents some families breaking down.
3. An experienced team of specialist disability support workers deliver a proportionate response to families with lower levels of need. The use of S2 CSDA 1970 allows support to be delivered without the need for a social worker being involved. Reviewing of these cases is via the EHCP Review offering a family a ‘single plan’ and review mechanism.
4. Staffing stability and a strong team ethos supports team members to deliver a good service to clients.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Developing much greater consistency and focus around performance measures, e.g. visits within timescale.
2. Further work on the criteria and internal thresholds for the team (particularly around autism and mental health) to achieve clarity for referrers.
3. The development of a ‘CWD Specific’ training programme in conjunction with the principal Social Worker and the Social Work Academy.
4. Developing a greater understanding of the Mental Capacity, DOLs and LPS across all social workers in the team.
5. To further develop ‘working together’ arrangements through the HSCB in order to improve improved understanding of roles and responsibilities within the system.

Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being children with disabilities practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: Children and Families Performance team

What do you know about the quality and impact of your work on social work practice in Herefordshire?

Quality

- Timely, regular reports are being produced and distributed to appropriate colleagues in childrens' services.
- Accurate data is being produced and distributed.
- Performance analysts aligned with teams to ensure that their reporting needs are met and that queries on accuracy of data are resolved.
- Performance team lead attending monthly AD/HoS meetings to keep informed/up-to-date with the service and to respond to and get feedback on the reporting.
- Annex A/ChAT tool updated weekly and distributed monthly.

Impact

- Informs improvement plans. The Heads of Service have an accurate picture of their service area to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Enables measurement of performance against targets and regional and national data in key areas.
- Gives each service area clear quantitative picture of where performing well and where improvements are needed.
- Embedded analysis of performance as business as usual.
- Regular reporting can now identify trends within the service, which helps to measure the impact on children of decisions made.
- Helped to establish Herefordshire on a regional basis as an organisation that wants to work with others to improve outcomes for children.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Quality

- Work/Reports are sensed checked before they are distributed. We do not send out any report which we are aware has inaccurate or questionable data.
- Close working with Heads of Service and teams to ensure data is accurate. Heads of service have a key worker in the team who they meet with regularly to discuss the monthly reporting and data to ensure quality of the data.
- Culture of checking any queries about accuracy of data and responding to those queries quickly and efficiently, keeping people informed of progress.
- Reduction in e-mails/queries that reporting is not accurate which indicates and increase in customer satisfaction that the reporting is accurate.

Impact

- Performance information provided is being used to measure performance improvement in individual areas and the overall performance in the Children and Families Directorate.

- Increased confidence in accuracy and presentation of information being distributed regionally and nationally.
- Increasing requests for more information to inform practice improvement e.g. requests for performance information for fostering & family support
- Every service area has weekly/monthly information as to measure its performance against key performance indicators e.g. visits/supervision
- Assisting to embed a climate of support and challenge within individual teams, based on accurate performance information.
- Enabling the organisation to measure performance against expected targets. These may be internal targets set by the service or comparisons to other authorities or Government expectations.

Areas of strength, evidence

1. Ability to meet core business requirement of producing clear accurate reports (we know this as the visit to Doncaster evidenced Herefordshire data reporting similar to their more established performance reporting)
2. Reporting and outcomes is online with a number of West Midlands colleagues (know this by attendance at West Midlands regional forums)
3. Skilled, stable team (no turnover, proficient SQL programming)

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. To integrate more fully into the service generally; team managers, social workers. This will give a greater understanding of social work practice/challenges (timescale: April 2020)
2. Establish performance reports for areas of service not yet supplied e.g. family support, child exploitation/missing. (separate improvement plan with detail of all areas for reporting developments and timescales)
3. Develop team and team culture from reactive to proactive. Identify areas of reporting that could be developed to support the service (timescale: January 2020), create a system for reporting requests that encourages dialogue and collaborative planning of reporting (timescale: January 2020)
4. Integrate more into Children and Families Directorate ethos (e.g. pictures in reports to embed Herefordshire aims/values)
5. Establish a pre-emptive self-service approach to performance indicators to support team managers in managing workers performance improvement of the key areas (e.g. visits due, timeliness of activities).
6. Create a 'Performance Team Improvement Plan' to structure the progress and goals of the team in a way that has rigor, challenge and evidence of progress.

Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being that the children and families performance team has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



7

Summary: Quality assurance and Practice Development (Maia Whitelegg – Principal Social Worker) – update to be provided in Q4**What do you know about the contribution of quality assurance activity and the impact on practice in Herefordshire? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)**

Quality assurance arrangements are in place with audits of social work cases undertaken through a formalized audit programme which includes combined audit activity such as deep dive audits, thematic audits and moderated audits. Monthly audit feedback reports are produced following the collation of the details captured in the audits.

The general findings and outcomes of audits in quarter 2 apply across services in Herefordshire:

- Management oversight and grip of cases is not consistently robust. The frequency of supervision is not sufficient to support managers to have a good knowledge of all children and their families and an understanding of the risks and how these will be managed and addressed in all cases.
- Practitioners report that in the CP & Court service area the volume and complexity of their caseloads impact upon the quality of work they are able to complete with families, with a particular impact noted upon the quality of services delivered to families who are in receipt of Child in Need services in this area of the service.
- Audits identify that work is still required to develop and evidence parental participation where children are looked after.
- There are emerging areas of good practice in the quality of assessments within the Assessment team service, where there is evidence that assessments are holistic, identify risk effectively, are multi agency in nature, are child-focussed, and make clear reference to the Herefordshire levels of need guidance and thresholds.
- There is emerging evidence of good multi-agency working relationships which have a significant impact on improving outcomes for children and their families and provide a base for families to use resources effectively and build resilience.
- Input from the family support service was a clear strength in a number of cases, with the allocated family support worker providing day to day oversight within case note recordings. Records of their visits were clear, purposeful and timely. Supervision of family support workers was additionally a clear strength and provided clear direction to staff.

The newly formed local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are in place and multi-agency audits are commissioned under the auspices of the Safeguarding Children and Young People in Herefordshire (SCYPiH) strategic leadership of the Quality and Effectiveness group. The audit themes are prevalent to the trends in Herefordshire and illustrate multi-agency working and areas of required improvement. A review mechanism is in place to review the implementation of the recommendations by all agencies to assess the impact of the audits on practice. Under the new local arrangements, the Development and Practice Group is tasked with the dissemination of learning and improvements to practice across the multi-agency partnership.

The Council is a member of the West Midlands Teaching Partnership (WMTTP) which was awarded funding to develop professional Social Work teaching across the West Midlands. The partnership brings together Local Authorities with Higher Education Institutes to support innovation in social work practice and education across the region, seeking to ensure that there is a reliable supply of high calibre professional social workers. The partnership supports better integrated working between the local authorities and universities, with frontline support to the education of future social workers matched by academic input to front line practice.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Each service area has a focussed thematic audit once per quarter. In Q2, the services areas for LAC, Safeguarding & Review and 16+ were targeted. The subsequent month, each service area, supported by the QA manager and the relevant Head of Service, focuses on completing audit actions and embedding the learning from audit activity. The relevant Heads of Service, operational managers, QA manager and Senior Practitioners work together to identify and respond to learning and training needs. This includes group supervisions, workshops on specific practice areas or system alterations such as changes to Mosaic forms.

The QA manager produces monthly reports setting out the key findings and learning from each focussed audit completed, including the agreed actions to address areas for improvement or share best practice identified. The reports are shared at Head of Service business and practice meetings and Childcare Managers Meetings (CMM).

Every quarter, auditors partake in moderated audit workshops where full case audits are completed. Thematic actions are recorded and recommendations are tracked. Progress against identified recommendations is delivered by the QA manager at Head of Service meetings.

Areas of practice that have not met required standards are identified for re-audit and incorporated in the annual audit cycle.

Areas of strength, evidence

1. The Principle Social Work post has been established at Head of Service level and was recruited to in September 2019. The PSW is a

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. A collective commitment to learning and development needs to be strengthened across the service. This is a key area for development. A cross-representative group of practitioners and managers is being

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| <p>member of the senior management team with strategic input and influence regarding practice development.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The QA Manager attends bi-monthly Head of service meetings to report on audit activity and progress against identified actions from audit. 3. There is an established programme of combined audit activity which is widely understood by managers and practitioners and is acknowledged in its value and purpose to improve practice. 4. A quarterly cycle of deep dive thematic audits has been introduced. 5. A learning briefing newsletter is disseminated to all staff on a monthly basis. 6. Bi-monthly learning practice sessions are delivered to practitioners across the service in response to identified areas of learning need. 7. Opportunities for sharing good practice and partnership learning are being strengthened through PSW participation in the West Midlands Children’s Services PSW network, the West Midlands Teaching Partnership and building links with the local university centres of Worcester and Gloucester. 8. The ASYE programme/training offer is valued by NQSWs. 9. The Local Authority has earmarked funding for embedding ‘Signs of Safety’ as the core, multi-agency approach to working with children, young people and their families to identify and manage needs, risks and family strengths where children are in need of help and protection. Following some delay, initial conversations have taken place with the allocated Consultant to take the first steps to implement the methodology. | <p>established, coordinated by the PSW, to develop a shared set of core values and practice standards across the service which, once embedded, will enshrine the expectations for driving up the quality of practice provided to children and their families in Herefordshire and against which practice and performance will be measured.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The Signs of Safety methodology is yet to be implemented as a model for practice. A project plan is under development with initial strategic management training dates scheduled in December 2019. 3. Quality assurance and performance management systems, especially case monitoring and audit, need to focus relentlessly on learning as the basis for improving the quality of practice, providing a learning feedback loop to practitioners and their supervisors about the quality of their work. Timescale end of March 2020. 4. Quarterly Audit Summary reports will be produced following the collation of the details captured in the audits, evidencing the themes and quality of social work practice and the service delivery provided to families. 5. The PSW is developing a strategic plan to deliver a core curriculum of learning in evidence-based approaches to assessment, analysis, planning interventions and measuring outcomes in child protection. Timescales for this work will be established in November 2019. 6. The PSW is recruiting to vacant posts in the SW Academy and the closing date for applications is 25/10/2019. 7. Effective quality assurance arrangements as identified by Skills for Care are not in place to quality assure the ASYE programme and need to be developed. |
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Summary: Workforce Development (Maia Whitelegg – Principal Social Worker) update to be provided in Q4

What do you know about the contribution of recruitment and retention activity and the impact on practice in Herefordshire?

We have a comprehensive action plan designed to address issues across the service. The plan has recently been updated and additional actions identified to address the recruitment of social workers in child protection/court and assessment teams.

The activity on recruitment and retention over the last 18 months has resulted in an increase in staffing within some teams, the appointment of a permanent management team in all areas and resolution of issues related to pay and reward competition with neighbouring authorities.

Activity has included collaboration with the regional FutureSocial programme to maintain integrity of the agency memorandum of understanding whilst increasing the number of workers engaged. We have introduced a market forces supplement for all HCPC registered staff, the Individual Learning Account and the implementation of the council's benefits platform 'The Orchard'.

Further work has been undertaken to attract experienced staff to the area through an 'urban to rural' campaign. Our 'grow your own' programme is focusing on increasing the number of NQSW we recruit each year and offering 6 places on the social work apprenticeship programme starting in February 2020.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

| As at 17 th October 2019 | Base fte | In post fte | Vacant fte | % | Net vacancy fte | % agency cover |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-------------|------------|-------|-----------------|----------------|
| Children's Social Work Managers | 12 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Senior Practitioners | 10 | 9.8 | 0.2 | 2 | 2.2 | 0 |
| Social Workers | 67.99 | 46.31 | 21.68 | 31.89 | 7.68 | 18 |

Areas of strength, evidence

1. We routinely track the number of vacancies and have a forward projection of staffing based on the number of starters, leavers, absence and agency workers in place.
2. The assistant director routinely reviews the volume and type of case work within the service and resource is moved to ensure it is in the right place.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Further work is required to develop the programme of CPD to ensure it meets future needs and can be delivered. Timescales to be delivered in November 2019.
2. Further work is required to develop and implement a career progression pathway for practitioners which is aligned to the CPD framework. Timescales to be delivered in November 2019.

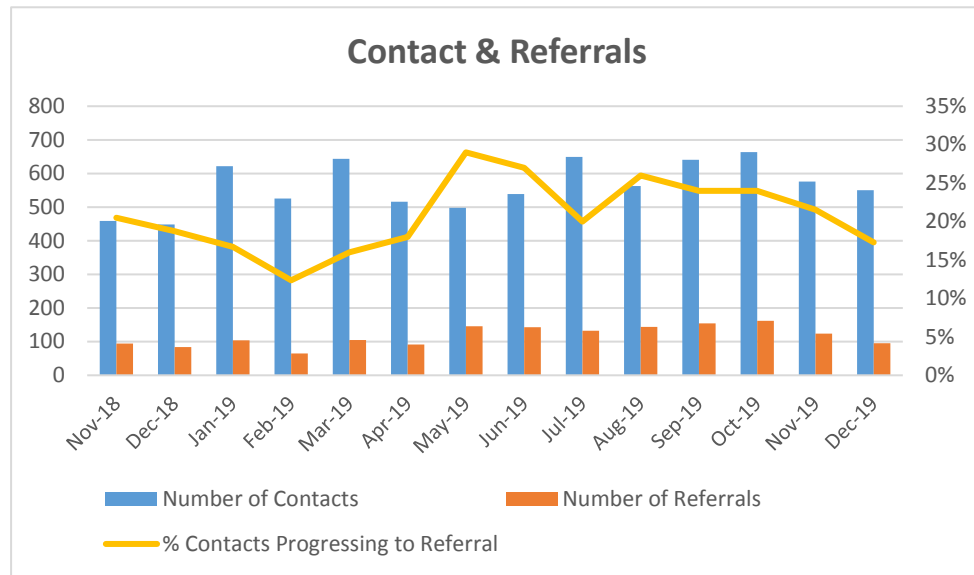
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. A board meets on a monthly basis to review activity and assess further opportunities. These are tracked via a regularly updated plan. 4. Recruitment is a standing item on management agendas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Further work is required to develop the practice educator network across the service. Timescales to be delivered in November 2019. 4. Further work is required to engage with universities early and ensure the right number and quality of student placements. 5. A 'health check' is to be carried out in January 2020 following the all council's employee opinion survey in October 2019. |
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being workforce development practice has just lost its way and everyone is working makes you so unhappy.

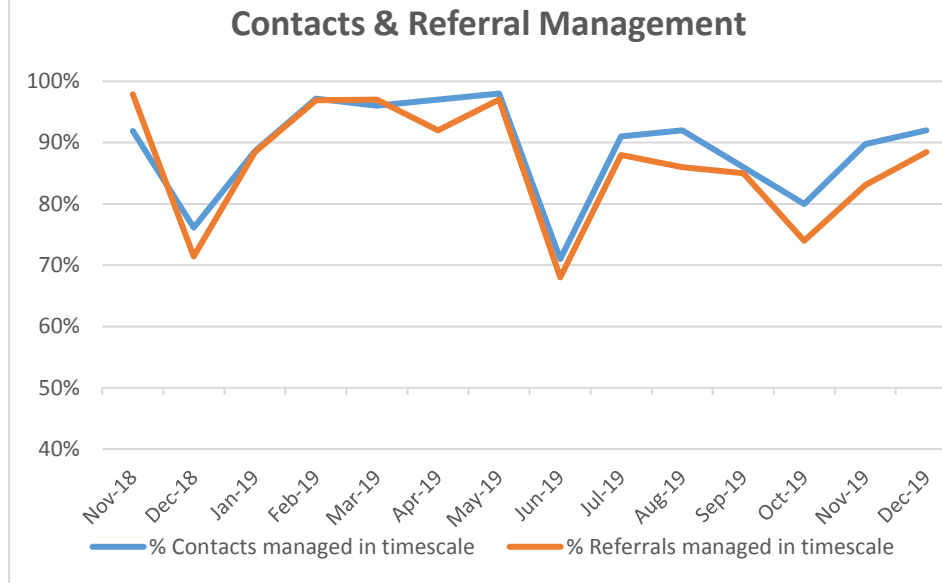


December 2019

Referrals & Assessment



Contacts and Referrals: In December, 17% of contacts progressed to referral. This is a reduction from the % progression from last month and a smaller % compared to 1st October 2018 (21%), when the new contact and referral process was implemented.



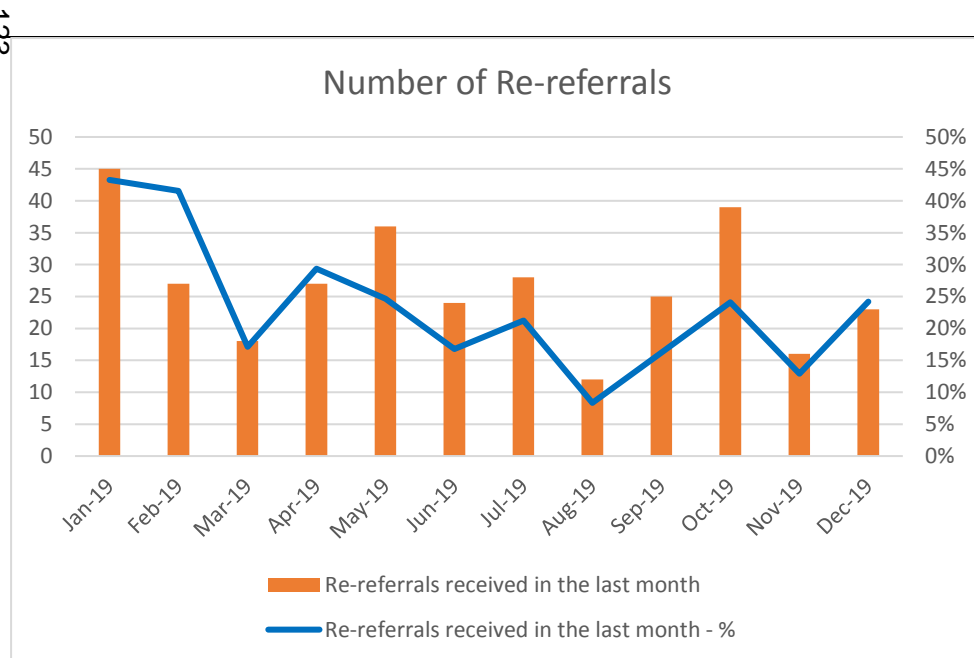
Contact & Referrals Management: The above graph shows the proportion of Contacts and Referrals which have been managed within the revised timescale of the next working day.

Contacts and referrals managed in timescales has increased in December. The year to date % for contacts is 88% and for referrals is 84%.

Source of Contacts and Referrals

| Source of Contacts and Referrals | Total Contacts | % of Contacts | Total Referrals | % of Referrals | % of Contacts Progressed to Referral |
|---|----------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Anonymous | 2 | 0.36% | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Education Services | 1 | 0.18% | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Health services - A&E (accident and emergency department) | 11 | 2.00% | 3 | 3.16% | 27.27% |
| Health services - General Practitioner (GP) | 10 | 1.82% | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Health services - Health Visitor | 5 | 0.91% | 4 | 4.21% | 80.00% |
| Health services - Other eg. hospice | 2 | 0.36% | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Health services - Other primary health | 38 | 6.91% | 13 | 13.68% | 34.21% |
| Health services - School Nurse | 2 | 0.36% | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Housing - local authority housing or housing association | 2 | 0.36% | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Individual - acquaintance eg. neighbours / child minders | 1 | 0.18% | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Individual - family member / relative / carer | 13 | 2.36% | 2 | 2.11% | 15.38% |
| Individual - other Individuals e.g. strangers / MPs | 2 | 0.36% | 0 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| LA services - social care, for example, from another local authority's adults social care | 30 | 5.45% | 12 | 12.63% | 40.00% |
| Other - including children's centres, independent agency providers or voluntary | 29 | 5.27% | 6 | 6.32% | 20.69% |
| Other Legal Agency - incl. courts, probation, immigration, CAFASS or prison | 22 | 4.00% | 5 | 5.26% | 22.73% |
| Police | 317 | 57.64% | 29 | 30.53% | 9.15% |
| Schools | 63 | 11.45% | 21 | 22.11% | 33.33% |
| Total | 550 | | 95 | | 17.27% |

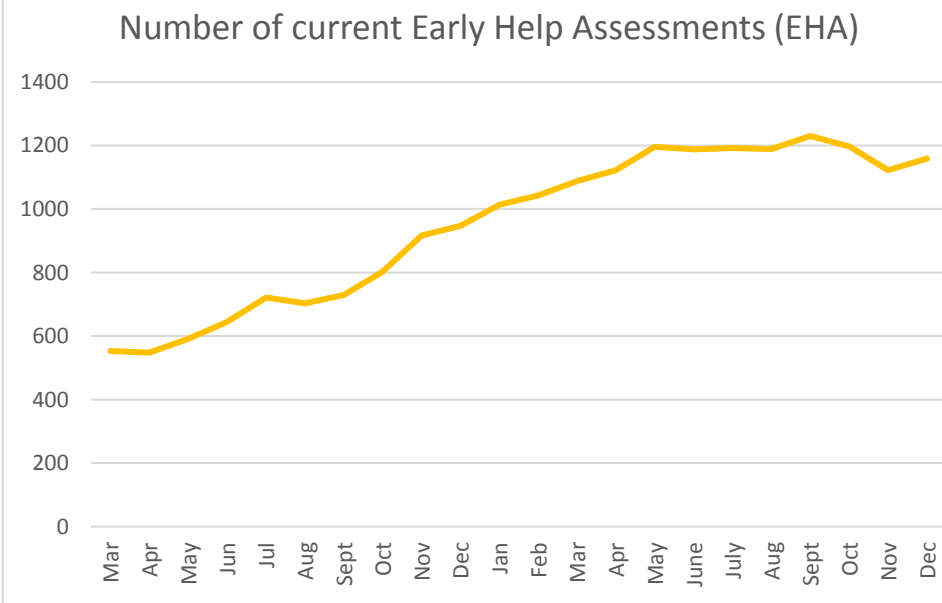
Contact/Referral by agency: The table above shows the amount of Contacts and Referrals received during December. As can be seen from this table, the majority of our activity continues to be driven by the Police.



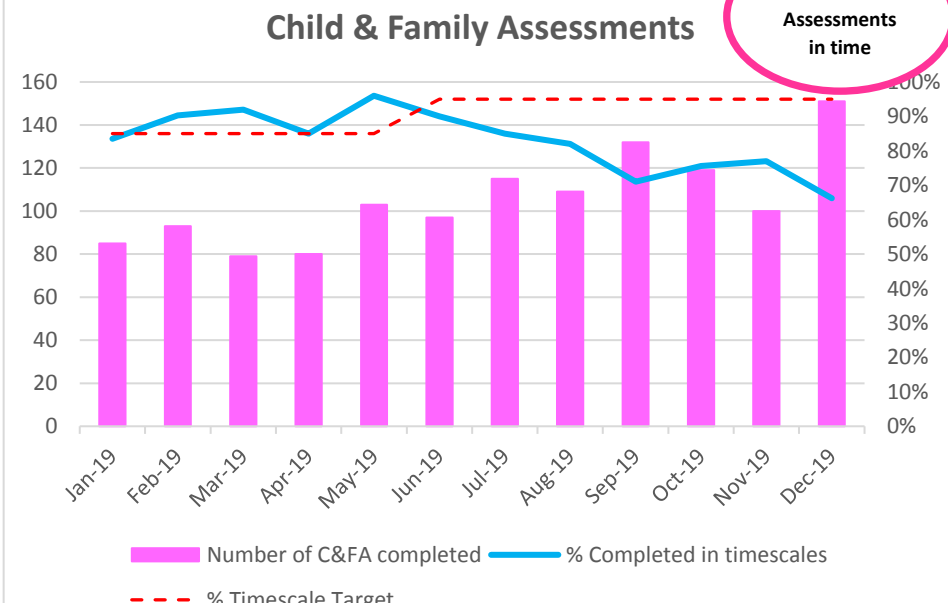
Percentage of Re-referrals: The re-referral rate is based on referrals on cases that have previously been open in the last 12 months. The proportion of re-referrals in December was 24%, which is an 11% point increase from November.

| Re-referral % comparison | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|----------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Hfd Dec | Hfd YTD | England* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 24% | 19% | 22% | 20% | 25% | 17% | 20% | 19% |

*2017/18 figures used for comparison (England, statistical neighbours, West Midlands & OfSted).



Early Help Interventions: As can be seen from the above graph, the number of cases open to Early Help is similar to the last few months.



Child & Family Assessments (CAFAs): In December, the number of CAFAs completed had a large increase. 66% of assessments completed met timescales, this is a decrease compared to last month, but falls short of our 95% target. The YTD position is has now fallen to 80% (from 82% last month).

| Assessments in timescale % comparison | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------|------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Hfd Dec | Hfd YTD | Eng* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 66% | 80% | 83% | 78% | 85% | 86% | 84% | 86% |

*2017/18 figures used for comparison (England, statistical neighbours, West Midlands & OfSted).

Incomplete Child & Family Assessments: As at the end of December, there were 224 assessments awaiting completion. The table below summarises where the incomplete assessments sit.

| Team | Total Number awaiting completion | Number beyond 45 days |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Assessment 1 | 85 | 7 |
| Assessment 2 | 100 | 22 |
| CP & Court 1 | 6 | 3 |
| CP & Court 2 | 13 | 12 |
| CP & Court 3 | 12 | 9 |
| CWD | 7 | 7 |
| Other | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 224 | 61 (27%) |

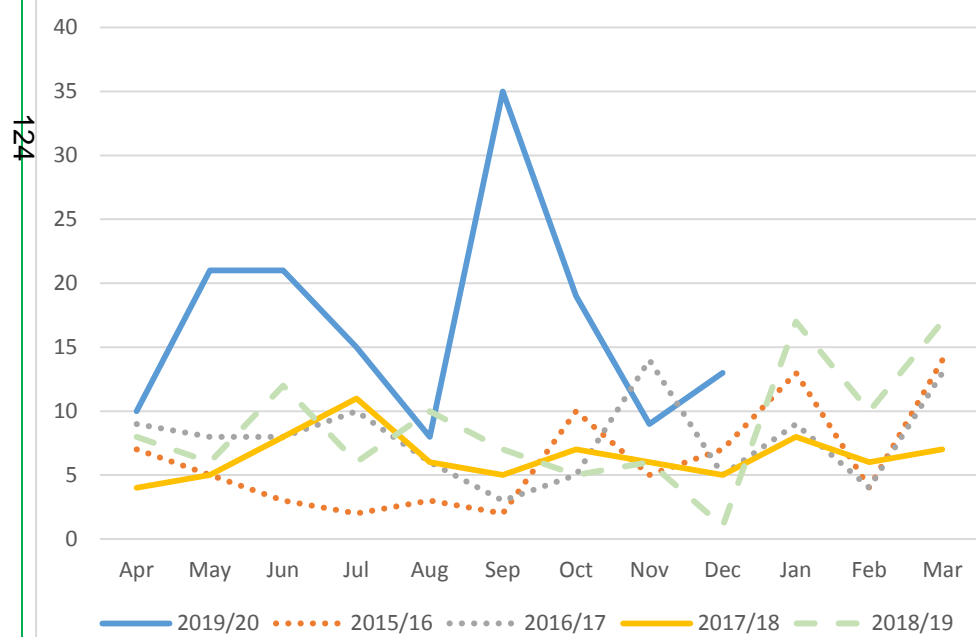
Outcomes of Child & Family Assessment: The following shows the outcomes from the C&F assessments completed during the month. Typically, a strategy meeting is called from the contact/referral, rather than the end of the assessment.

| Referral Outcome | Assessment Outcome | |
|---------------------|------------------------|----|
| Strategy Meeting | CIN Plan | 9 |
| | Review Assessment Only | 3 |
| | Close Case | 24 |
| No-Strategy Meeting | CIN Plan | 13 |
| | Strat | 2 |
| | Review Assessment Only | 3 |
| | Close Case | 97 |

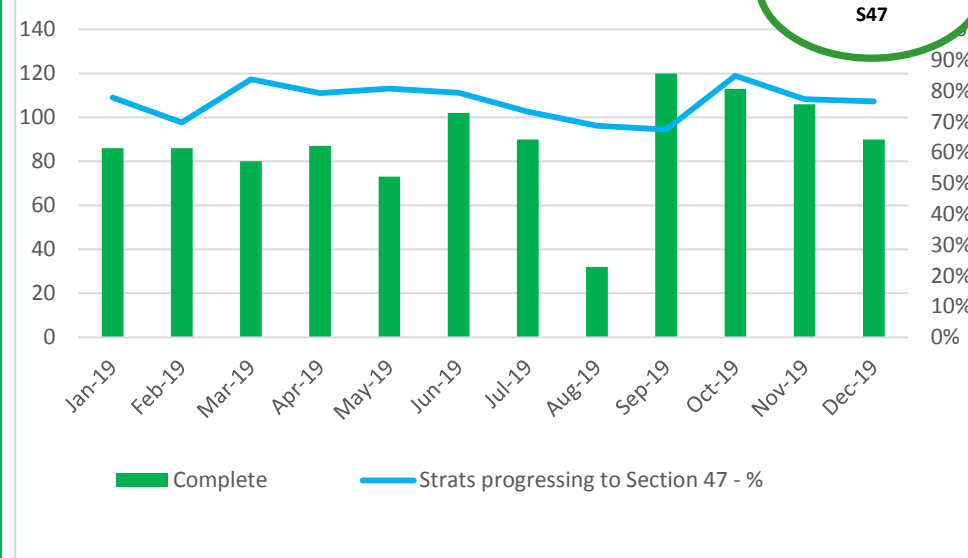
Of the assessments completed in December, it was identified that 71% of cases reported seeing the child within 3 days. This is a decrease in the level of performance from last month, November which was 80%.

| Team | Total Number completed (December) | Percentage in timescale | Percentage seen in 3 days |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Assessment 1 | 70 | 73% | 54% |
| Assessment 2 | 69 | 65% | 87% |
| CP & Court 1 | 2 | 0% | 100% |
| CP & Court 2 | 2 | 50% | 100% |
| CP & Court 3 | - | - | - |
| CWD | 5 | 0% | 80% |
| 16+ | - | - | - |
| Total all teams | | 66% | 71% |

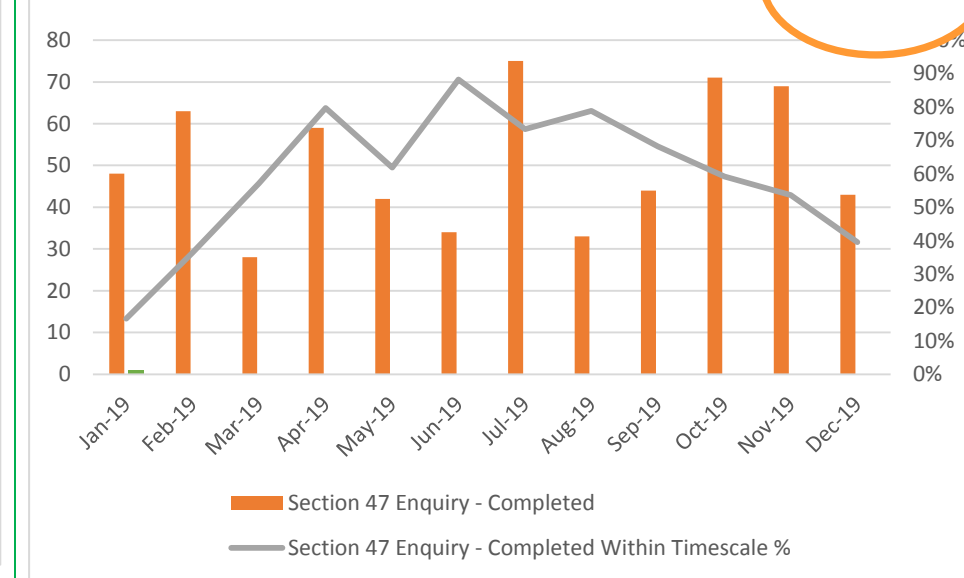
Number of CE/CSE Assessments



Strategy discussions and % Progression to S47



Number of Section 47s undertaken



CE/CSE Assessments: During December, there were 13 CSE/CE assessments completed. The data for September, October, November and December is taken from both the old CSE step and the new CE step.

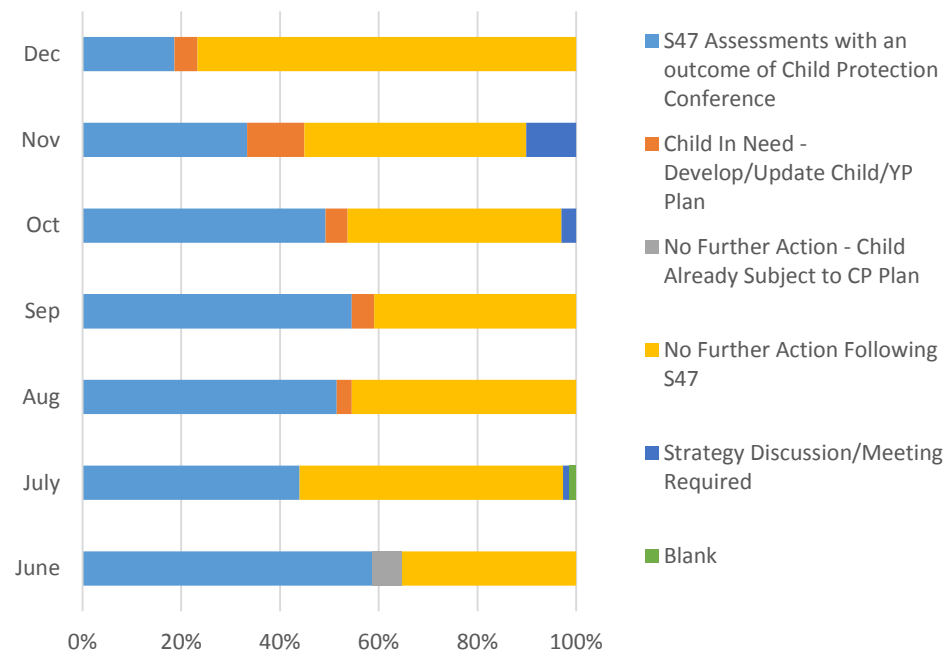
Strategy Discussions: During December, there was a decrease in the number of Strategy Meetings undertaken. The progression of cases to Section 47 during the month was the same as November at 77%.

Year to date figure is 77% progressing to Section 47.

Section 47s: There was a large decrease in the number of Section 47s completed in December, with 43 being completed.

Last year, we had a very high rate of Section 47's compared to national averages, and were also above the WM average, albeit WM authorities had some significant outliers (both high and low).

Outcomes of S47s



Section 47 Outcomes:

The graph to the left shows the outcome of those Section 47s started in the period. In December, 77% of Section 47s were NFA'd. 19% were progressed to ICPC.

For the whole year to date 2019/2020, 51% have been NFA'd, 40% progressed to ICPC.

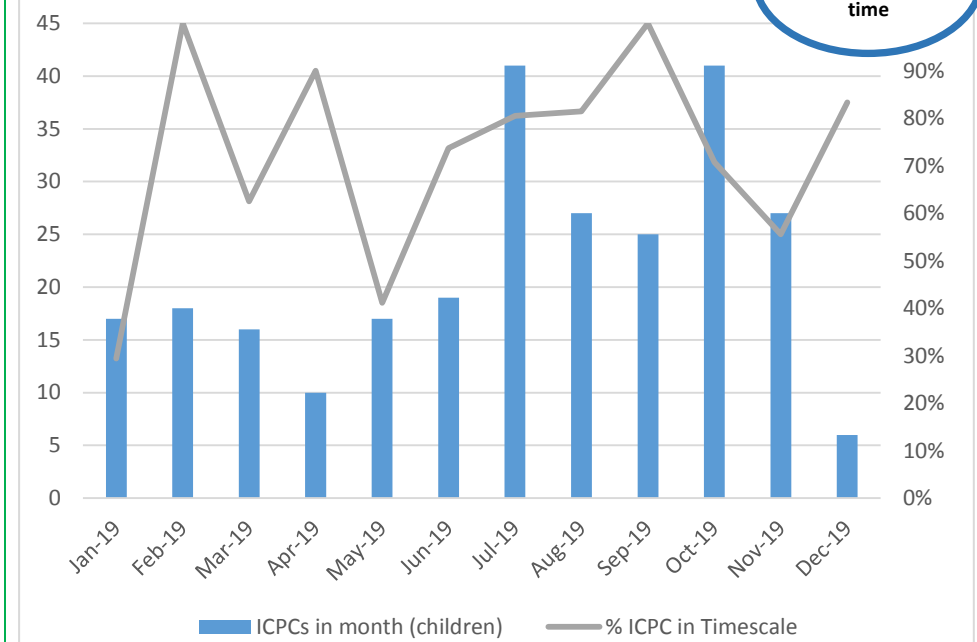
Initial Child Protection Conferences: In December, performance around ICPC timescales improved. There were 6 ICPCs this month and 83% were held in timescale compared to 56% last month.

The year to date figure is 75% ICPC in timescale.

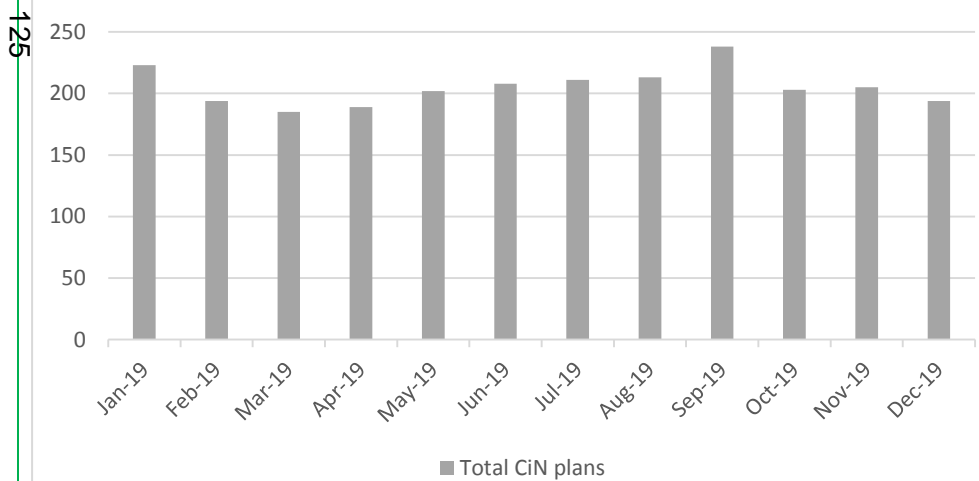
| ICPCs in timescale % comparison | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Hfd Dec | Hfd YTD | Eng* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | Ofsted Good* | Ofsted Out'ing * |
| 83% | 75% | 77% | 79% | 77% | | 82% | 76% |

*2017/18 figures used for comparison (England, statistical neighbours, West Midlands & Ofsted).

Number of ICPC and Timescales



Number of children on a CIN plan



Number of children on a CIN Plan: The graph to the left shows the number of children on a CIN Plan

There has been a small decrease in the numbers of children on a CIN plan during the last month from 205 in November to 194 in December.

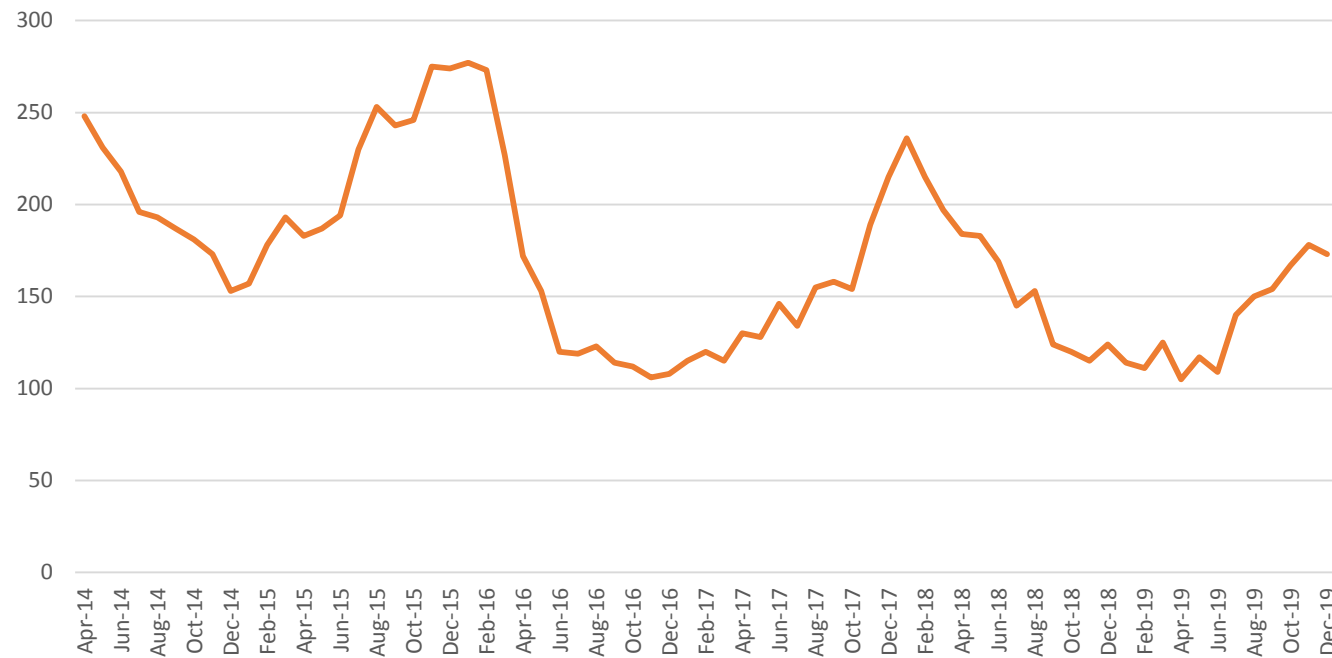
The table to the right splits the current number of children identified as CIN, between those with an incoming plan and those with an incomplete plan.

The current numbers at the end of December of CIN are broken down as follows

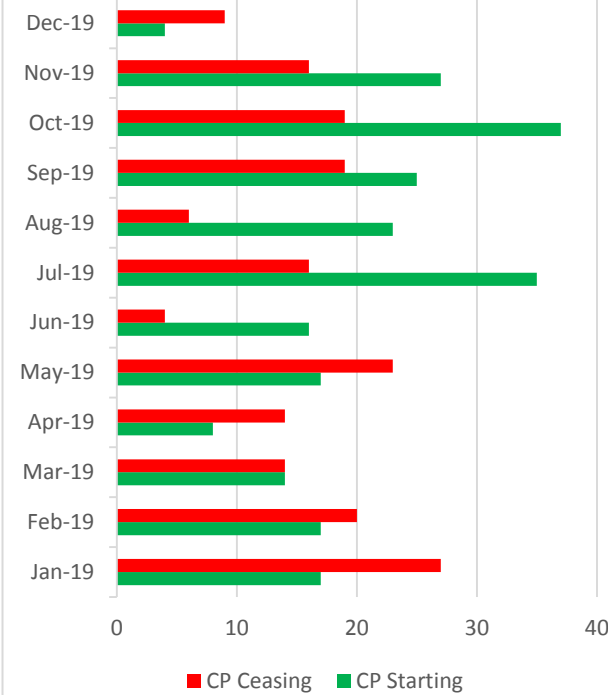
| | CIN Plans | | Total known CIN |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | Incoming/Proposed | Started/Complete | |
| Total | 38 | 152 | 206 |
| Assessment 1 | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| Assessment 2 | 11 | 12 | 23 |
| CP & Court 1 | 2 | 36 | 38 |
| CP & Court 2 | 4 | 14 | 18 |
| CP & Court 3 | 2 | 26 | 28 |
| LAC Team 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| CWD | 11 | 51 | 62 |
| 16+ | 1 | 7 | 8 |
| Unallocated | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Child Protection Plans

Number CPP in period



CP Starting & Ceasing in month



Current CP at Month End:

173

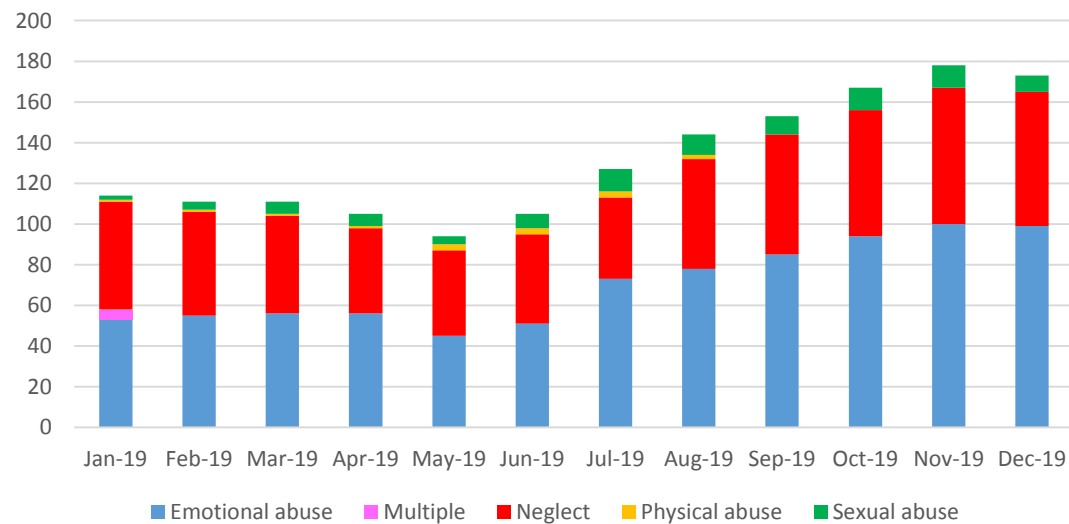
Number of children subject to Child Protection Plans: The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan during December has fallen compared to the last month. 7 CP plans ceased in December due to no longer meeting thresholds, 1 became LAC and 1 turned 18.

The graph to the immediate left illustrates the numbers of children starting and ceasing CP plans in each month. The age and gender profile is on the graph below.

| CP Rate (per 10,000) | | | | | | |
|----------------------|------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Hfdshire current | Eng* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 48 | 45 | 38 | 50 | 54 | 33 | 34 |

*2017/18 figures used for comparison (England, statistical neighbours, West Midlands & OfSted).

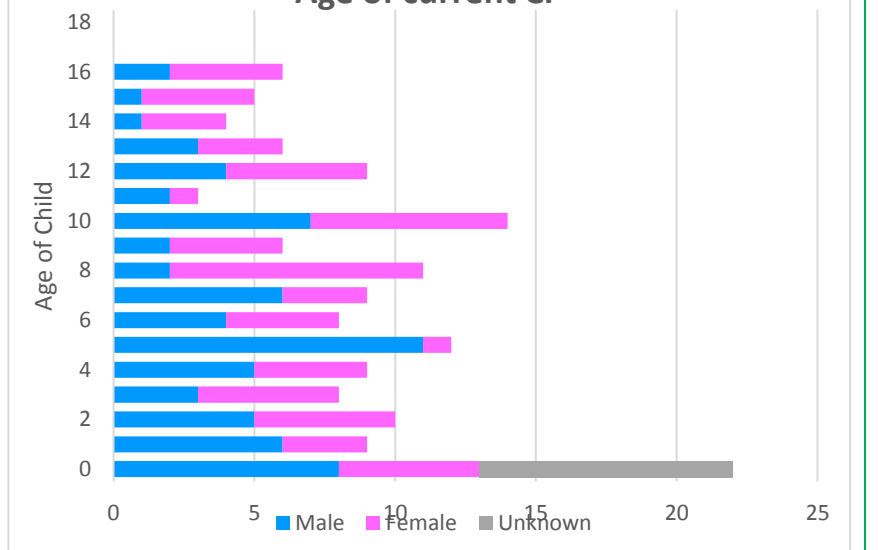
CP Plan Category



| | July 19 | Aug 19 | Sep 19 | Oct 19 | Nov 19 | Dec 19 |
|------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Emotional | 73(57%) | 78 (54%) | 85 (56%) | 94 (56%) | 100 (56%) | 99 (57%) |
| Multiple | 0(0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| Neglect | 40(31%) | 54 (38%) | 59 (39%) | 62 (37%) | 67 (38%) | 66 (38%) |
| Physical | 3(2%) | 2 (1%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| Sexual | 11(9%) | 10 (7%) | 9 (6%) | 11 (7%) | 11 (6%) | 8 (5%) |

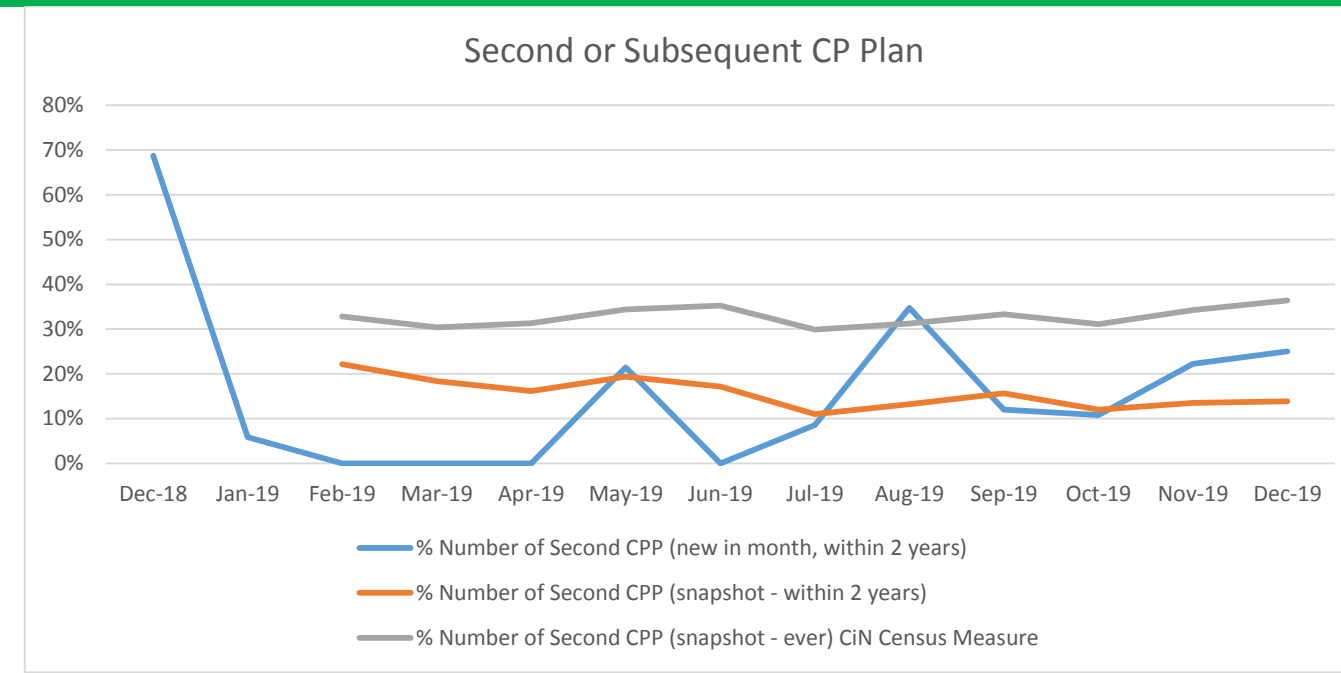
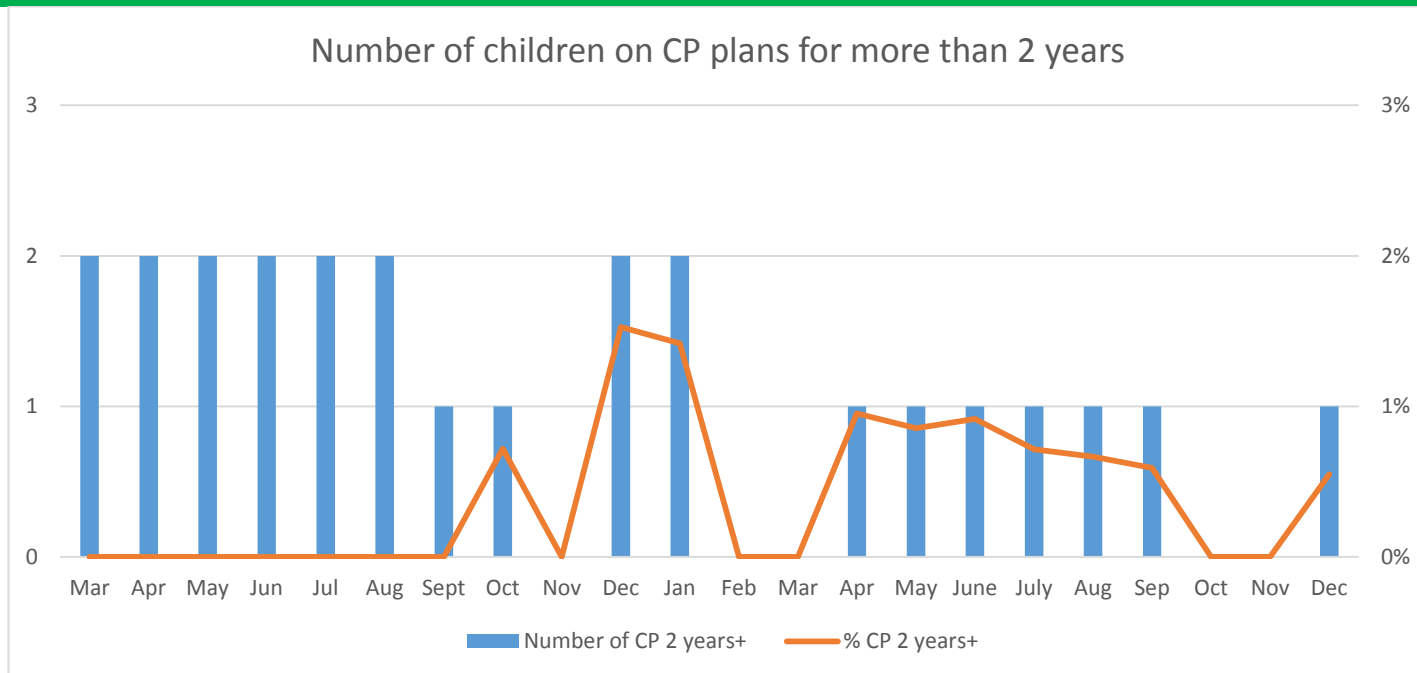
The above table gives the categories of CP plans as at the last day of the month

Age of current CP



Reason for Child Protection Plans: During December, 99 children were identified as having a plan in relation to emotional abuse, 66 for neglect, 8 for sexual abuse and 0 for physical abuse.

Child Protection Plans



Child Protection Plans open for 2 or more years: In December, there was 1 child that had been on a plan for over 2 years.

| CP 2+ years (for those currently CP) | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|----------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Hfd December | Hfd YTD | England* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | | | |

*2017/18 figures used for comparison (England, statistical neighbours, West Midlands & OfSted).

Second and Subsequent Child Protection Plan: Of the 4 children becoming CP during December, 1 of these had been subject to a plan in the last 2 years. Of the 182 children that had a CP plan during December, 24 (14%) had been subject to a plan within 2 years of the start of their current plan (36% had been on a plan at any stage prior to the current plan)

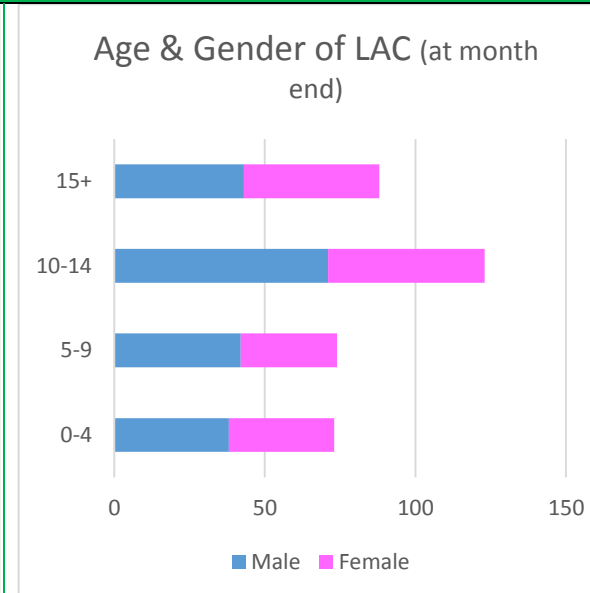
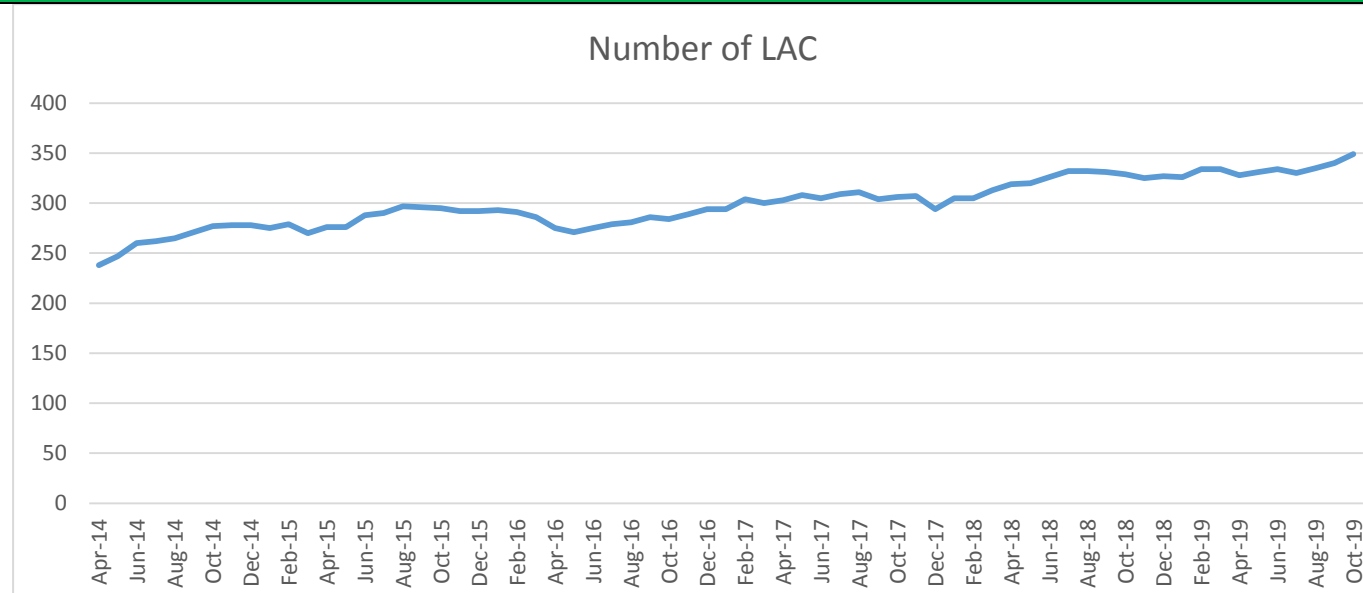
The graph above has now been changed to give the percentage of cases which become CP in month which have previously been subject to a plan in the previous 2 years (blue line) and the percentage of cases that were CP at the end of the month that had been subject to a plan within 2 years of the start of their current plan.

| CP 2 nd and subsequent | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Hfd December | England | Stat Neigh | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 14% | - | - | 11% | | | |

*2017/18 figures used for comparison (England, statistical neighbours, West Midlands & OfSted).

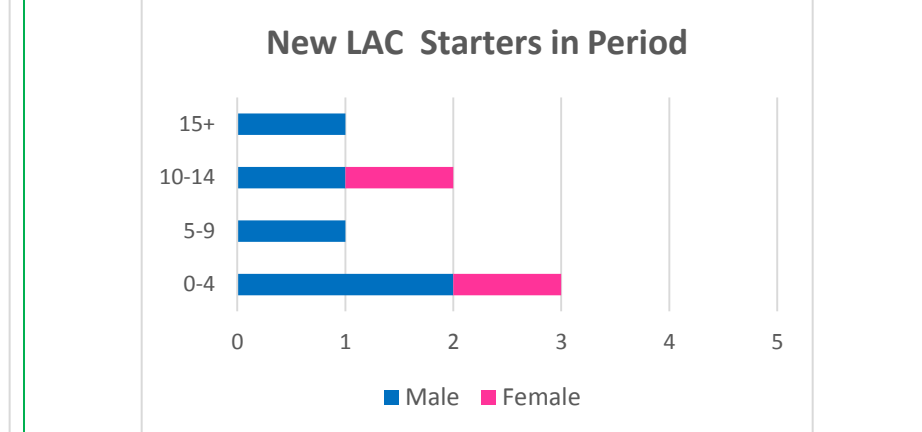
Female Genital Mutilation: In December 2019 no cases of FGM have been identified.

Looked After Children



Current LAC at Month End:

358



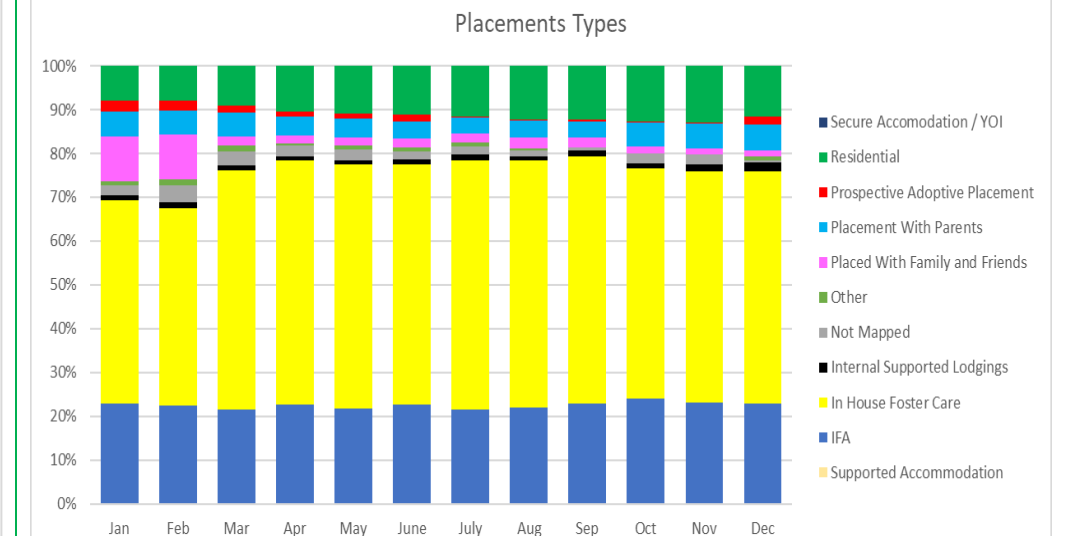
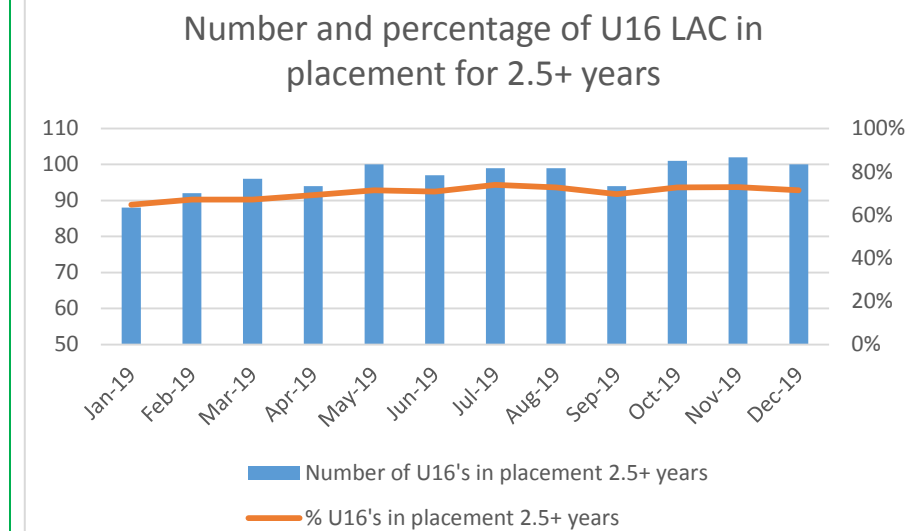
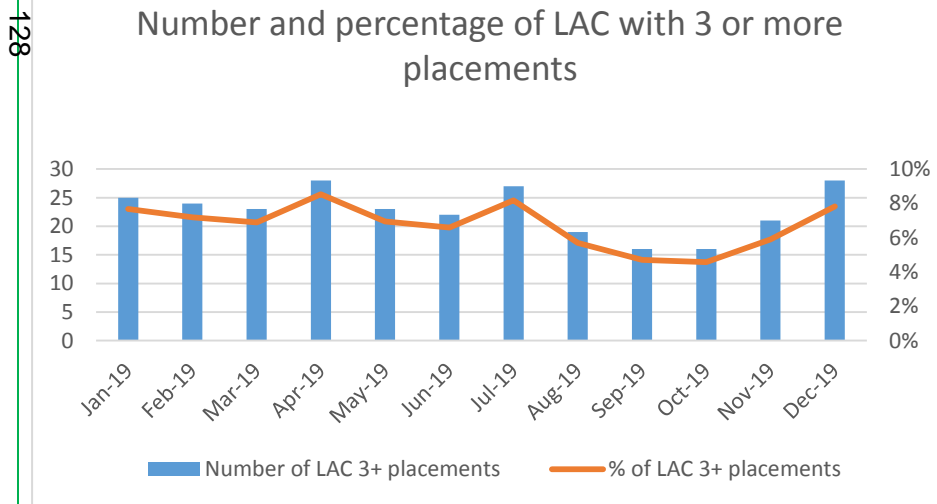
LAC Numbers: As at the end of December, the number of Looked After Children was 358.

| LAC Rate (per 10,000) | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Herefordshire December | England* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 99 | 64 | 53 | 78 | 50 | 52 | 46 |

*2017/18 figures used for comparison (England, statistical neighbours, West Midlands & OfSted).

New LAC in Period: During December 5 children became LAC, four aged 4 or younger and one aged 15+.

LAC Cessations: Three children ceased LAC in December: One because they had moved into independent/supported living, one to return home and one for another reason.



Number of LACs with 3 or more placements: The number of children who have been subject to 3 or more placements has seen small fluctuations over the last few months. December has risen since November which was at 6%.

LACs in the same placement for 2.5+ years: The number of children who have remained in placement for 2.5+ years has been reasonably constant over the last 6 months.

Current LAC Placements: Distribution of LAC placement types had shifted a little during the last 6 months, with an increasing proportion of children placed with family and friends which was balanced by an overall reduction in in-house foster care. However, March - December shows that there has been a reduction in the proportion of placements with family and friends and an increase of in-house placement. There is still a small number of unmapped placements this month.

| % LAC with 3 or more placements in last 12 months | | | | | | |
|---|------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Hfdshire current | Eng* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 8% | 10% | 11% | 11% | 10% | 11% | 11% |

| % LAC 2.5+ yrs in same placement | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Hfdshire current | Eng* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 71% | 70% | 71% | 68% | 67% | 72% | 72% |

*2017/18 figures used for comparison (England, statistical neighbours, West Midlands & OfSted).

Care Leavers

| | Aged 19 | Aged 20 | Aged 21 | Total |
|---|-------------|-----------|----------------|------------|
| Cohort | 40 (down 1) | 36 (up 2) | 34 (no change) | 110 (up 1) |
| LA in Touch | 85% | 83% | 68% | 79% |
| In Suitable Accommodation | 75% | 83% | 64% | 77% |
| In Education, Employment or Training | 48% | 50% | 24% | 42% |

The information shows the proportion of Care Leavers, between 19 and 21 that are in touch in EET or in suitable accommodation.

| % Care Leavers aged 19-21 In Touch | | | | | | |
|--|------|-------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Hfdshire current | Eng* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 79% | 88% | 88% | 90% | 84% | 91% | 86% |
| % Care Leavers aged 19-21 In Suitable Accommodation | | | | | | |
| Hfdshire current | Eng* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 77% | 84% | 86% | 84% | 83% | 89% | 81% |
| % Care Leavers aged 19-21 in Employment, Education or Training | | | | | | |
| Hfdshire current | Eng* | Stat Neigh* | West Mids* | Good Stat Neigh* | OfSted Good* | OfSted Out'ing* |
| 42% | 51% | 52% | 50% | 50% | 61% | 56% |

*2017/18 figures used for comparison (England, statistical neighbours West Midlands & OfSted).

Fostering & Adoption

Fostering

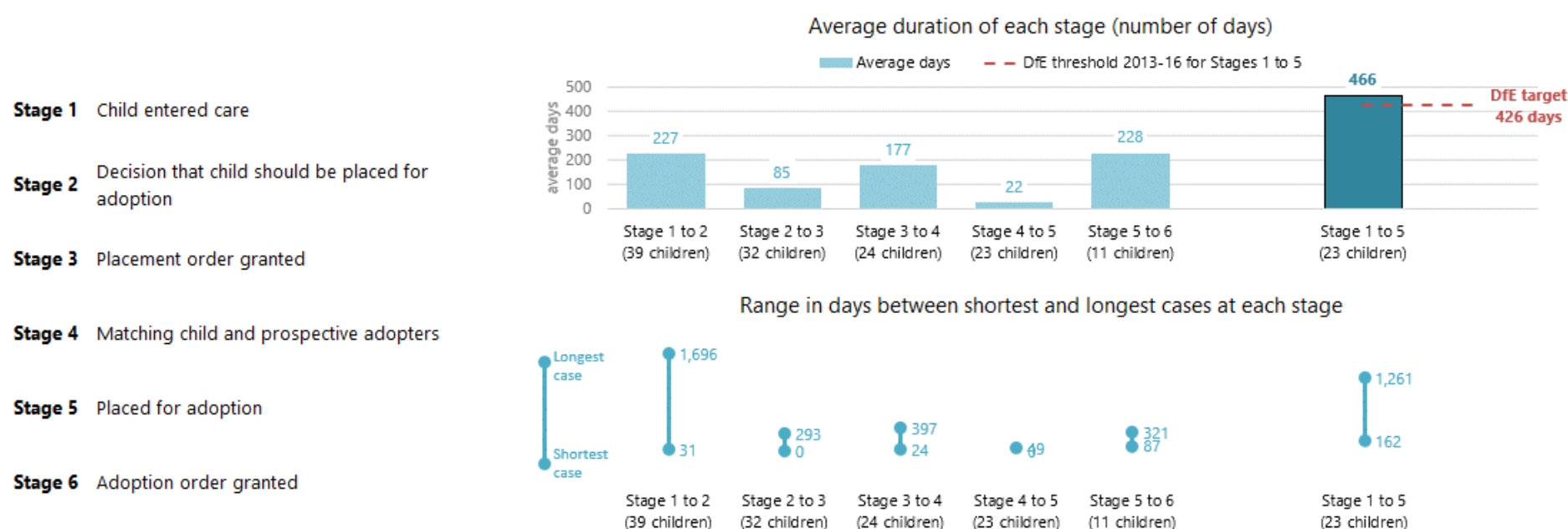
This remains an early view of the data, which needs further cleansing work.

| | June 2019 | | July 2019 | | August 2019 | | September 2019 | | October 2019 | | November 2019 | | December 2019 | |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|----------------|------------|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| | Nights | Percentage | Nights | Percentage | Nights | Percentage | Nights | Percentage | Nights | Percentage | Nights | Percentage | Nights | Percentage |
| In-House | 5522 | 71% | 5731 | 56% | 5750 | 56% | 5620 | 56% | 5674 | 53% | 5495 | 51% | 5754 | 54% |
| IFA | 2070 | 27% | 2070 | 21% | 2183 | 21% | 2222 | 22% | 2459 | 23% | 2365 | 22% | 2393 | 22% |
| Residential | 62 | 1% | 1036 | 10% | 1055 | 10% | 1084 | 11% | 1159 | 11% | 1186 | 11% | 1194 | 11% |
| Other | 0 | 0% | 1357 | 13% | 1315 | 13% | 1315 | 12% | 1481 | 14% | 1621 | 14% | 1642 | 13% |

Adoption

The following information is lifted from Annex A, based on children adopted, waiting to be adopted, or having an adoption decision reversed in the last 12 months. There has been next to no change in the reported average times in the graph below compared to last month.

Timeliness of each stage of the adoption process



Weekly Action Plan Metrics:

The following information is taken from the most recent weekly metrics.

Case Supervisions @ 06/01/2020

| Row Labels | Within 3 Months | 4 - 6 Months | More than 6 Months | No Complete Supervision Step | No Complete Supervision Step - New in last 30 days | Grand Total | Within 3 Months |
|--|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------------|--|-------------|-----------------|
| 16+ Team | 42 | 19 | 5 | | | 66 | 64% |
| Assessment Team 1 | 14 | | | 3 | 3 | 20 | 70% |
| Assessment Team 2 | 26 | | | 1 | 3 | 30 | 87% |
| Child Protection & Court Team 1 | 100 | | | 5 | | 105 | 95% |
| Child Protection & Court Team 2 | 82 | 3 | 1 | 14 | | 100 | 82% |
| Child Protection & Court Team 3 | 87 | 1 | 11 | 1 | | 100 | 87% |
| Children and Young People's LAC Team 1 | 99 | 7 | | | | 106 | 93% |
| Children and Young People's LAC Team 2 | 91 | 1 | 1 | | | 93 | 98% |
| Children with Disabilities | 96 | 3 | | 2 | 1 | 102 | 94% |
| Grand Total | 637 | 34 | 18 | 26 | 7 | 722 | 88% |

92% of CIN cases have supervisions within the last 3 months.

86% of CP cases have supervisions within the last 3 months.

87% of LAC cases have supervisions within the last 3 months.

| Row Labels | Within 3 Months | 4 - 6 Months | More than 6 Months | No Complete Supervision Step | No Complete Supervision Step - New in last 30 days | Grand Total | Within 3 Months |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------------|--|-------------|-----------------|
| CIN | 179 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 194 | 92% |
| CPP | 147 | 2 | 2 | 18 | 1 | 170 | 86% |
| LAC | 309 | 28 | 15 | 2 | 2 | 356 | 87% |
| LAC & CPP | 2 | | | | | 2 | 100% |
| Grand Total | 637 | 34 | 18 | 26 | 7 | 722 | 88% |

88% of cases have a supervision within the last 3 months.

Worker Supervision

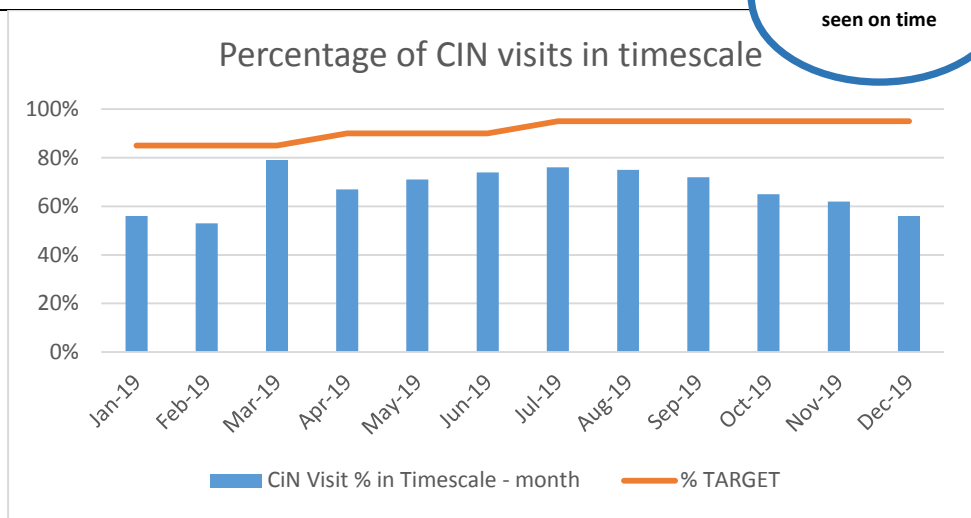
| Operational Teams | % completed in month (target 90%+) (10% below target is Amber) | % completed in month (target 90%+) (10% below target is Amber) | % completed in month (target 90%+) (10% below target is Amber) |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | October | November | December |
| | End Month | End Month | End Month |
| LAC2 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Head of LAC | 83 | 100 | 100 |
| Early Help (Nicky Turvey) | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| LAC1 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Assessment 2 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Head of Additional Needs | 0 | 100 | 100 |
| LAC Support | 50 | 94 | 100 |
| MASH | 0 | 80 | 100 |
| Head of S&R | 60 | 75 | 100 |
| Principal Social Worker | 0 | 75 | 100 |
| CP/Court 3 | 86 | 100 | 83 |
| CP/Court 1 | 100 | 100 | 83 |
| Assessment 1 | 20 | 50 | 71 |
| CP/Court 2 | 100 | 83 | 71 |
| Social Care Family Support | 100 | 80 | 63 |
| Principal IRO | 100 | 100 | 50 |
| 16+ | 31 | 50 | 46 |
| Head of Fieldwork | 80 | 100 | 40 |
| Fostering | 74 | 84 | 33 |
| CWD | 92 | 83 | 0 |
| Early Permanence | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| HOS (MASH, Assessment Teams) | 33 | 100 | 0 |

During December, 69% of operational staff's supervision was undertaken (86% end November) and 33% of the business support staff was undertaken (67% end November) – this gives an overall position of 62%, which was an increase from November (52%).

| Business Support Teams | % completed in month (target 90%+) (10% below target is Amber) | % completed in month (target 90%+) (10% below target is Amber) | % completed in month (target 90%+) (10% below target is Amber) |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | October | November | December |
| | End Month | End Month | End Month |
| Head of Business Support | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Business Support Team Leaders | 100 | 63 | 32 |
| Business Support 1 | 100 | 50 | 0 |
| Placements | 80 | 80 | 0 |

CP, LAC, and CIN Visits

79 children out of 140 were seen on time



The above chart shows CIN Visits completed in timescale as at the last week of each month.

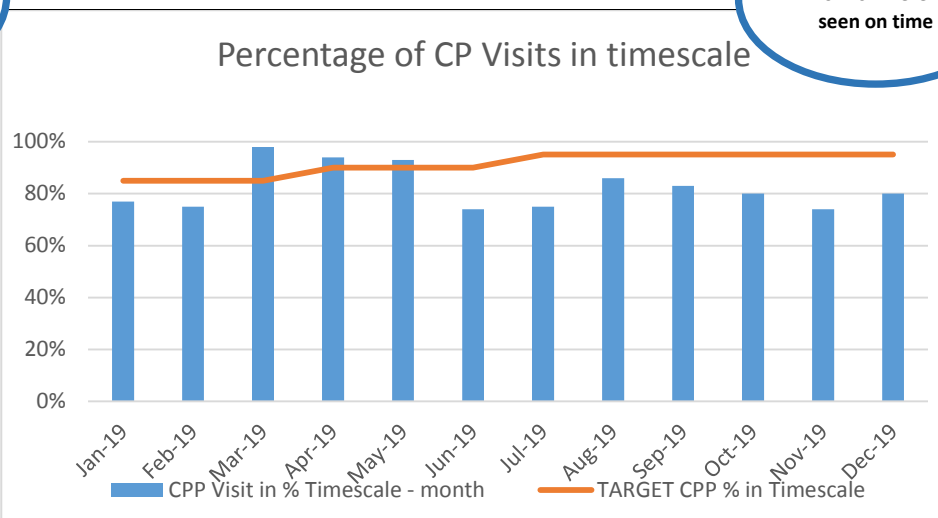
At the end of December 56% of CIN Visits were completed in timescale. Year to date is 69% and is below 95% target.

The following table gives a summarised team position at the end of December.

| Team | Allocated CIN Cases | % in timescale |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Assessment 1 | 0 | - |
| Assessment 2 | 11 | 36% |
| CP Court 1 | 28 | 57% |
| CP Court 2 | 15 | 73% |
| CP Court 3 | 26 | 50% |
| CWD | 52 | 60% |
| 16 + | 8 | 50% |
| TOTAL | 140 | 56% |

*This data has come from 6th January Weekly Visits Report

133 children out of 167 were seen on time



The above chart shows CP Visits completed in timescale as at the last week of each month

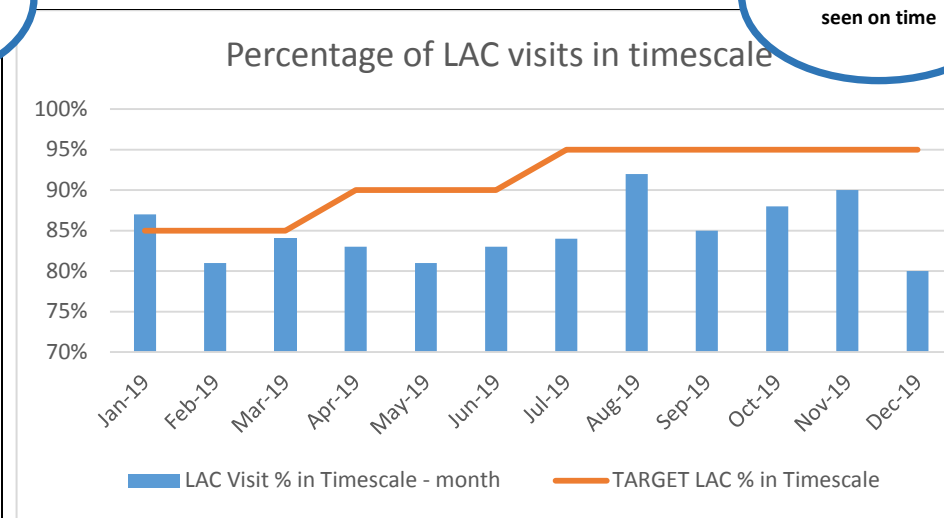
At the end of December, 80% of CP Visits were completed in timescale. Year to date is 82% and is below 95% target.

The following table gives a summarised team position at the end of December.

| Team | Allocated CP Cases | % in timescale |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------|
| CP Court 1 | 47 | 85% |
| CP Court 2 | 70 | 86% |
| CP Court 3 | 43 | 63% |
| LAC 2 | 1 | 100% |
| CWD | 1 | 100% |
| 16 + | 2 | 50% |
| TOTAL | 167 | 80% |

*This data has come from 6th January Weekly Visits Report

287 children out of 358 were seen on time



The above chart shows LAC Visits completed in timescale as at the last week of each month

At the end of December, 80% of LAC Visits were completed in timescale. Year to date is 85% and is below 95% target.

The following table gives a summarised team position at the end of December.

| Team | Allocated LAC Cases | % in timescale |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Assessment Team 1 | 1 | 100% |
| CP Court 1 | 18 | 84% |
| CP Court 2 | 13 | 62% |
| CP Court 3 | 29 | 41% |
| LAC 1 | 106 | 93% |
| LAC 2 | 91 | 89% |
| 16 + | 56 | 71% |
| CWD | 39 | 69% |
| TOTAL | 358 | 90% |

*This data has come from 6th January Weekly Visits Report

Caseload and Worker Allocations

| 07/01/2020 | Team | Number of All Workers Holding Cases in Team | Team Workers as per Establishment (FTE) (Only Caseholders) | Number of Cases by team | Average Caseload per team based on workers holding cases | Average Caseload Per Team - based on all FTE of the team | Number of SW Worker Role Holding Cases in Team | Number of SW Worker Role holding more than 20 Cases for pro rata | Percentage of qualified social workers holding more than 20 cases (SW on zero caseload not included in) | Maximum cases held by qualified social worker (workers with 0 caseload are not included in) |
|------------|--|---|--|-------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|---|
| | 16+ Team | 5 | 5 | 71 | 14 | 14 | 4 | 0 | 0% | 19 |
| | 16+ Team PA | 9 | 8 | 162 | 18 | 20 | n/a | n/a | n/a | |
| | 16+ Virtual Worker | n/a | n/a | 137 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | |
| | Assessment Team 1 | 7 | 7.18 | 105 | 15 | 15 | 5 | 1 | 20% | 20 |
| | Assessment Team 2 | 6 | 5 | 131 | 22 | 26 | 5 | 5 | 100% | 25 |
| | Child Protection & Court Team 1 | 6 | 6 | 114 | 19 | 19 | 5 | 1 | 20% | 27 |
| | Child Protection & Court Team 2 | 6 | 6 | 111 | 19 | 19 | 5 | 1 | 20% | 22 |
| | Child Protection & Court Team 3 | 5 | 6 | 106 | 21 | 18 | 5 | 3 | 60% | 25 |
| | Children With Disabilities (CSW only) | 7 | 6.1 | 108 | 15 | 15 | 6 | 3 | 50% | 22 |
| | Children and Young People's LAC Team 1 | 7 | 7 | 110 | 16 | 16 | 5 | 2 | 40% | 24 |
| | Children and Young People's LAC Team 2 | 5 | 4 | 92 | 18 | 18 | 3 | 0 | 0% | 20 |

The table to the left reflects the number of qualified social workers within each team which are holding *more than* 20 cases. Also provided is the maximum number of cases held by a worker in the teams.

At the end of December: 16+ Team and LAC Team 2 have no SW holding more than 20 cases. Assessment Team 1, CP Court Teams 1 and CP Court Team 2 have 20%. Children With Disabilities Team have 50%. CP Court Team 3 has 60% and Assessment Team 1 has 100% of their SW holding more than 20 cases.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

16 March 2020

Work Programme 2020/21

| Meeting date: 2 June 2020 – 1.00 p.m. | | Despatch: 25 May | |
|--|--|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Item | Description | Report Author | Form of Scrutiny* |
| Review of performance and progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan. | To review progress against the improvement plan produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan. | Liz Elgar | Performance Review |
| Youth Justice Plan | To endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2020/21 for approval by full Council and consider whether there are any comments the committee would wish to make that would inform the production of the Plan for 2021/22. | Keith Barham | Performance Review |
| Decision on framework for young people’s accommodation | To conduct pre-decision scrutiny on developing proposals for a local contract framework for purchasing accommodation based services for care leavers and other vulnerable young people ahead of an intended key decision for in March/April 2020. | Ewen Archibald | Pre-decision call-in |
| Child Exploitation task and finish group – outcomes and recommendations | To receive the outcomes and recommendations of the child exploitation task and finish group. | Matthew Evans | Policy review and development |
| Meeting date: 28 July 2020 – 1.00 p.m. | | Despatch: 20 July | |
| Oral Health Needs Assessment | To provide a report on the high-level action plan for improving oral health in Herefordshire and details of any progress against the recommendations in the oral health needs assessment. | Emma Booth | Performance Review |

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|---|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Corporate Parenting Strategy – annual report | To consider the updated action plan to the corporate parenting strategy and receive a performance report against the objectives. | Gill Cox | Performance review |
| Adoption Service and Fostering Service annual reports | To receive the annual reports from the adoption and fostering services and consider the outcomes and recommendations. To make recommendations to the cabinet member on the operation of the services during 2020/21. | Gill Cox | Performance review |
| Meeting date: 15 September 2020 – 1.00 p.m. | | Despatch: 7 September | |
| Review of performance and progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan | To review progress against the improvement plan produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan. | Liz Elgar | Performance Review |
| Meeting date: 1 December 2020 – 1.00 p.m. <i>Date subject to change in accordance with the budget 2021/22 timetable</i> | | Despatch: 23 November | |
| Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) | To seek the views of the committee on the draft medium term financial strategy (MTFS), the budget proposals for 2020-21 relating to Children and Families. | Andrew Lovegrove, Josie Rushgrove | Pre-decision call-in/Policy review and development |
| Update on reducing the number of looked after children (LAC) | Updates concerning efforts to reduce the number of looked after children (LAC). To include an update on the 49 cases presented to the meeting on 25 November 2019 that had been identified for Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) or reunification. | Liz Elgar | Performance Review |
| Review of performance and progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan | To review progress against the improvement plan produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan. | Liz Elgar | Performance Review |
| Meeting date: 2 February 2021 – 1.00 p.m. <i>Date subject to change in accordance with the budget 2021/22 timetable</i> | | Despatch: 25 January | |

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|---|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) | To seek the views of the committee on the draft medium term financial strategy (MTFS), the budget proposals for 2020-21 relating to Children and Families. | Andrew Lovegrove, Josie Rushgrove | Pre-decision call-in/Policy review and development |
| Meeting date: 23 March 2021 – 1.00 p.m. | | Despatch: 15 March | |
| School Examination Performance | To consider school performance of summer 2020 and make recommendations to cabinet on how the effectiveness of the school improvement framework and strategy could be enhanced. | Alison Naylor | Performance review |
| Review of performance and progress against the Safeguarding and Family Support improvement plan | To review progress against the improvement plan produced in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection judgement of June 2018 and the subsequent Safeguarding and Family Support division improvement plan. | Liz Elgar | Performance Review |

Business to allocate in 2020/21

- Early Help Strategy – policy review and development item – scrutiny panel - **Proposed**
- Access to Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) – **Proposed**
- Speech and Language Therapy – task and finish group – **Proposed**

* *Pre-decision call-in, Performance review, Policy review and development*

Schedule of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee recommendations made and actions in response

| Meeting | item | Recommendations | Action | Status |
|--------------|---|--|---|-----------|
| 15 July 2019 | Corporate Parenting Annual Update – 2018/2019 | <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A briefing note is provided concerning the multiagency panel relating to looked after children mental health services; • A briefing note is provided on the introduction of the care leavers covenant; • A response is provided to the question relating to the implications of the national funding changes on A Levels undertaken by looked after children; • A letter is sent to Herefordshire clinical commissioning group to seek clarification regarding the resourcing of the looked after children health team; and • A briefing note is provided on SHYPP referral levels. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulated on 3 October 2019 • Circulated on 3 October 2019 • Response circulated on 31 July 2019 • Letter sent to CCG on 31 July 2019 • Circulated on 3 October 2019 | Completed |
| | Fostering and adoption service annual reports 2018/19 | <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The achievements in the adoption annual report and the compliments in the fostering report are recognised and the officers working in those | | Completed |

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|-------------------|--|---|---|-----------|
| | | <p>teams and carers of the council's looked after children are commended;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A briefing note on proposals to increase the retention of foster carers and details of the training provided be provided; • A letter is sent to the Wye Valley Trust (WVT) to request details of the provision of occupational therapists in Herefordshire; and • A session is organised to look at case samples of how appropriate forms of care are determined for looked after children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster carers training programme circulated on 31 July. • Letter sent to WVT on 31 July. • Included in safeguarding training delivered to members of the Council. | |
| 16 September 2019 | Accommodation based support service for care leavers | <p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports the introduction of the accommodation based support service for care leavers; • supports an ongoing review of the service to determine its effectiveness and possible replication in future; and • requests that a site visit to the facility is arranged once completed. | Approved at cabinet on 26 September | Completed |
| | Youth Justice Plan 2019-2020 | <p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorses the Youth Justice Plan for presentation to full Council; and • Asks that an addendum is added to the report, in forthcoming years, providing up-to-date statistics. | Approved at full Council on 11 October | Completed |

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|------------------|---|---|--|-----------|
| 25 November 2019 | Review of budget and corporate plan proposals for 2020/21 relating to the remit of the children and young people scrutiny committee | <p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the planned investments for looked after children, edge of care and improving social care services and requests further information is submitted to the committee regarding proposals for these services; and • Asks that a report concerning the dental health initiatives is provided to the committee setting out key performance indicators for the proposals. | | Completed |
| | Update on reducing the number of looked after children | <p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises the work that has been undertaken and the progress made in implementing systems to reduce the numbers of looked after children; and • Asks that a report is submitted to a meeting in 12 months times which provides a breakdown of the progress made in regard of the 49 children identified for SGOs or reunification. | | Completed |
| | Review of performance and progress against the safeguarding and family support improvement plan | RESOLVED: That the committee notes the report and the improvements made since the previous quarter. | | Completed |

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|-----------------------|---|---|--|-----------|
| | 2019 / 2020 | | | |
| 14 January 2020 | Review of budget and corporate plan proposals for 2020/21 relating to the remit of the children and young people scrutiny committee | <p>RESOLVED: That the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the additional areas of investment identified in the budget; • Writes to the local MPs to request details of actions to lobby central government to improve oral health in Herefordshire; and • Requests a report to a forthcoming meeting of the committee containing the high-level action plan for improving oral health in Herefordshire and details of any progress against the recommendations in the oral health needs assessment. | | Completed |
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