

Agenda

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Tuesday 17 September 2024**

Time: **2.00 pm**

Place: **Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough
Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

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

For any further information please contact:

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Agenda for the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Chairperson	Councillor Toni Fagan
Vice-chairperson	Councillor Liz Harvey
	Councillor Clare Davies
	Councillor Robert Highfield
	Councillor Ben Proctor
	Councillor Rob Williams

Co-opted Members	Sylvia Cockroft	Archdiocese of Cardiff
	Jan Frances	Families' Representative
	Stuart Mitchell	Parent Governor Secondary
	Sam Pratley	Hereford Diocese

Agenda

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the committee.	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive declarations of interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.	
4. MINUTES To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2024.	9 - 24
HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS	
The deadline for the submission of questions for this meeting is 5pm on Wednesday 11 September 2024.	
Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk .	
Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.	
Accepted questions and the responses will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved	
5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC To receive any written questions from members of the public.	
6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL To receive any written questions from members of the council.	
7. QUALITY ASSURANCE To brief the committee on the Quality Assurance Framework for Herefordshire Children's Services, including the values and principles underpinning this. Also to describe the means by which quality assurance activity is undertaken, the outcomes from quality assurance activity in the last year and the impact of the quality assurance activity in the Herefordshire Children's Services improvement journey.	25 - 50
8. IMPROVEMENT PLAN To scrutinise the Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan Phase 2.	51 - 76
9. WORK PROGRAMME To consider the committee's work programme.	77 - 110

- 10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**
Tuesday 26 November 2024 2pm



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www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services-

The seven principles of public life

(Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Tuesday 30 July 2024 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor Toni Fagan (chairperson)
Councillor Liz Harvey (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Clare Davies, Dave Davies, Robert Highfield and Ben Proctor
Co-opted Member: Sam Pratley (Diocese of Hereford)

In attendance: Simon Cann (Committee Clerk) Steve Eccleston (Safeguarding Partnerships Business Manager) Tilly Page (Complaints and Children's Rights Manager) Alfie Rees-Glinos (Democratic Services Support) Tina Russell (Corporate Director Children and Young People) Danial Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Frank Cornthwaite, Councillor Rob Williams and Jan Frances (co-opted member families' representative).

11. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meetings were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings held on 7 May and 13 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

14. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A document containing questions received from members of the public and the responses given, plus supplementary questions and responses given, is attached at Appendix 1 to the minutes.

15. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions had been received from members of the council.

16. CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMPLAINTS

The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager introduced and gave an overview of the report. The key points covered included:

- The report focused on the municipal year from April 2023 to March 2024
- It looked at corporate complaints and statutory children's complaints representations that were made to the local authority.
- The report showed an increase in complaints, but also an increase in responses and improvement in response times to complaints.
- The report showed a decrease in escalations to stage a two and stage three of the statutory procedure.
- An error was corrected to reflect that 77% of complaints were resolved at stage one of the process and not 81% as was shown in the report itself.
- The report showed the number of referrals that were submitted by the Local Government Ombudsmen in the last year and compared that against data from the previous five years (since children's complaints were moved into corporate services).
- The report showed that 56 complaints across the whole council were submitted to the ombudsmen, 12 of those related to children services and 7 of those were fully investigated.
- The report included a breakdown of the types of complaints received. Clarity was provided on service failure complaints, which in some instances could simply relate to a follow up phone call not being made or email not being, so these were not necessarily major complaints.
- Common reasons for complaint escalation were included.
- It was highlighted that there was a persistent increase in complaints, but both the complaints and children's services were continuing to work on improving with ongoing improvements to the procedure.
- Responding to complaints within timescales had improved significantly over the last 12 months.

The Chair invited comments and discussion from the committee in relation to the report. The key points of the discussion are detailed below:

1. The committee enquired about how the service and users would know that complaints being received were actually informing and improving practice.
 - The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager explained that when a complaint was assigned to an investigating officer they would complete a lessons learned template, which was fed back to and collated by the complaints service. The responsibility of learning from complaints fell to the service area the complaint was made about.
 - When a complaint was escalated to stage two or three of the statutory process, independent investigating officers would make recommendations that would relate to both the complaints service and children's services, and these recommendations would be taken forward to improve the practice, with any recommended changes being embedded in the practice of social workers, team managers and everybody involved.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People emphasised the importance of collating the learning logs, as these helped in developing new practice standards and changes in policy that could be implemented across the service. Learning issues relating to individuals and teams could be addressed via training or management intervention within the service.

- The Corporate Director Children and Young People emphasised the importance of recording and sharing data relating to compliments received about the service. The director provided examples of 'Shout outs', whereby compliments and praise received from the public and workers for staff and teams within the service could be highlighted and learned from.
2. The committee asked if complainants were notified of changes to the service/actions taken as a result of their complaints.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that complainants would be notified of recommendations for actions to be taken forward as part of their complaint outcome.
 3. A committee member pointed out that the report only provided statistical data on complaints rather than actual examples of complaints.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that the report was intended to give an overview of the complaints service, but stated that providing example of complaints would not be problematic.
 - As part of Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan and working with partners in Leeds, the intention was to make the complaints process even more robust, by ensuring the complainants were spoken with at the beginning of the complaint process and that audits were in place to check this was taking place.
 - Using independent people to undertake investigations at stage one of the process was another improvement being considered.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People suggested that the committee may want to revisit progress being made through the Improvement Plan at the end of the year.
 4. The committee enquired if it might be possible to arrange an informal session with families and get feedback from them about the process. The importance of obtaining input from young people and families was stressed.
 5. The Committee asked what was being to remedy the culture of failing to address the central core of complaint.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that at the beginning of the process the complaints team would record and establish the accuracy of what the parent or young person wished to complain about.
 - It was explained that the additional value of an investigator meeting at the outset, was that they could provide their understanding of the complaint and then agree, in writing, with the complainant what the scope and anticipated outcomes of the complaint were. Holding a conversation at the outset about what could and couldn't be achieved through the process was extremely important.
 - It was important that right at the start of the process complainants understood and were shown how to access each stage of the complaints procedure and what could and couldn't be achieved through the process.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People stressed that there was a desire to bring complaint levels down, but suggested it was important to maintain a sense of perspective when considering the number of complaints

received in relation to the number of families and young people the service was working with.

6. A committee member asked if there was a mechanism in place for adoptive parents to input feedback or make complaints about the service.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that when an individual had adopted a child they had the same rights to make a complaint or offer feedback as anybody else. The complaints process was there for everybody to use. The Director also pointed out that Herefordshire Council worked within ACE (Adoption Central England), which ran support and information groups for all adoptive parents.
7. The committee asked what could be expected if the authority was operating at an outstanding level, such as Leeds was, and how would it be possible to measure and establish the impact the complaints service was having.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People stated that one of the best ways of understanding whether a complaints process was working, was if complaints were reducing. A reduction and stabilising of the level of complaints would be in evidence, but there would still be a level of complaints in evidence.
 - There were breakdowns that could be done of specific service areas to establish if complaints were coming in from a particular part of the service and compliments would also highlight and provide feedback as to where the service was having a positive impact.
 - The service didn't currently formally ask parents and children whether they felt that a complaint had been dealt with in a satisfactory manner, but this could be incorporated in future. It was suggested that if complainants didn't progress to stage two of the process then that was an indicator that they were satisfied with the outcome at stage one of the investigation.
8. The committee suggested that people not moving on to stage two of the process did not necessarily mean they were satisfied with the outcome of stage one and that there were other factors that may have influenced their decision not to pursue the complaint any further - they may simply have felt that there was no point.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People acknowledged that some people might not move to stage two because they felt there was no point or, through communication with the service, understood that stage two would and could not achieve the outcome they desired.
 - The Director believed that in many cases the core of the original complaint was dealt with at stage one and complainants were happy that their issue had been resolved,
 - The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager pointed out that complaints weren't closed without having any correspondence with the complainant, and phone calls and emails were used to follow up and establish if complainants were satisfied with the process and response. Complaints were only closed after a defined period of time.

9. The committee enquired what mechanisms were in place to demonstrate that changes, such as restorative practice training, were actually impacting practice and culture within the service.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that they felt the culture of an organisation was the people. A training course would not necessarily develop a culture, and that culture was defined by the way people spoke and interacted with one another.

10. The committee enquired as to whether or not a rising numbers of complaints should be seen as a positive or negative development.
 - The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager suggested that rising numbers of complaints could be an indication that the work done over the last 18 months, in embedding an effective complaints procedure, had resulted in a higher level of complaints flowing through.
 - The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager stated they were under no illusion that the service was perfect, but felt that the increase perhaps indicated that some, but not all families, felt they could come and make a complaint and that the service would: listen to them, hear their concerns and work with them to seek resolution whether that was at a stage one or two of the process.
 - The service was keen to reassure people that complaints were being taken very seriously by the council and the increase may have been the product of making the complaints process more accessible. Feedback to the service indicated some families were encouraging other disillusioned families to try using the complaints process, because the system had changed.
 - The complaints website page and contact details had been streamlined for ease of use, there was a permanent team of staff in place and the complaints service had been separated from the freedom of information service.

11. The committee asked for an update on historic complaints and a timescale for when a line would be drawn under those complaints.
 - The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager explained that rather than having the service manage existing concerns, the previous Corporate Director had agreed that families should be offered the option to go through the complaints procedure again. Not all families had chosen to do this, as they were disillusioned with the process, but the service was offering reassurance that the procedure was different and that the statutory guidance was now being followed.
 - The service had been able to resolve many of the historic complaints, and those that remained outstanding were often the result of to people not wishing to utilise the complaints procedure. Efforts were being made to encourage people to use the improved process, but the service did not wish to push anybody into using a procedure they did not feel comfortable with.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that in terms of drawing a line under historic cases there was not an open door for people to come in with complaints that dated back years and years, partly because investigating such cases would not likely result in an historic outcome/decision being overturned or add value.
 - Historic cases in the system would be completed where possible, but staff and resources now had to be concentrated on dealing with peoples' current experiences.

12. The committee asked if the service was satisfied with the speed and manner in which complaints were being processed and dealt with.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People stated that there was room for improvement, but the timeliness of completing complaint investigations had improved.
13. The committee enquired if personality clashes were considered as complaints.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People stated that personality clashed were not a category as such, but where a complaint or concern was raised about a member of staff, then that worker and the manager would have a conversation about the complaint and reflect on what had happened.
14. The committee asked about the process of requesting a change of social worker.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained it was important to listen to the voice of and recognise the needs of the child rather than the parent in certain instances where a change of social worker was being requested. Building good relations was paramount to achieving positive outcomes, but where a relationship between a social worker and family was not working well there were mechanisms for adjustment.
15. A member of the committee asked how they could check that what they were being told by officers was the same as what the public would reflect, especially in instances where questions being asked by committee members on behalf of members of the public were met with data protection restricted responses.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that the reason the service would not go into detail about issues members of the public raised with committee members was that it would result in a duplication for the service. Members of the public were advised on and had access to the complaints process, which they could use themselves. Using scrutiny to discuss a complaint that was going through the stages of the process would essentially result in unwanted duplication of work, which was a drain on time and resources. Scrutiny was about looking at the big processes rather than focusing on individual cases.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People stated that one of the key elements of Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan would be reaching out to more children, young people and their parents to obtain proactive feedback on the service rather than waiting for complaints to come in. Comments gathered at the end of assessments, interventions, conferences and child protection meetings would provide the service with opportunities to obtain 'here and now' feedback on how users were finding the service.
16. The committee enquired as to what data the service had in relation to people who weren't complaining, and whether people from certain ethnic backgrounds or particular parts of the system were less likely to complain.
17. The committee considered whether groups were not complaining because the system was working well or because the mechanisms for them to complain weren't in place.

- The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that any questions asked about the complainant were voluntary.
 - The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager stated that the only information available about the complainant was what the complainant was willing to provide, and that information requested by the service related to what their involvement with the child was. There were no request for gender, ethnic background and other such information.
 - The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager had discussed the issue with the Equality Officer, who had concluded that if complainants wished to provide additional personal information they could.
 - The service did not wish to deter people from complaining by asking them to complete a form at the same time as they were making a complaint.
18. The committee acknowledged the rationale behind the approach, but were concerned that it meant the service didn't know if there were particular groups shut out of the complaints process.
19. The committee suggested that such knowledge gaps could potentially be filled through the use of occasional surveys.
- The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager stated they were happy to take the suggestion regarding surveys forward as a recommendation.
20. The committee asked how the corporate director intended to stop the process of duplication and resulting trauma caused by certain families having to go through and repeat the complaints process again and again with no satisfactory resolution.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that they were not going to repeat what their predecessors had done. The key issue was to find out what the outcome the complainants - be they historic or otherwise - wanted to achieve and then to have an honest conversation with them about whether that was an achievable outcome or not. It was noted that anybody anticipating that there would be a satisfactory outcome reported by every individual parent that had made a historic complaint, would likely be disappointed, because not all cases would necessarily be resolved with the desired outcome.
 - The service was not intending to duplicate or ask families to duplicate what they had been doing, but would instead focus attention on what it was families were seeking as an outcome and to make sure that there was due process.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People hoped to have the historic cases completed by March 2025, but if this was not the case, then any successor would be given very clear guidelines about what was outstanding, so that there was no further duplication.
21. The committee requested a description of how the complaint had been dealt with historically.
- The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager provided an overview of the operation of the service and noted that one of the biggest changes and improvements in the new operation was in the way that complaints were being dealt with through the statutory process rather than corporately.

- The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager stated that all complainants were advised that they could contact the Ombudsmen about their complaint at any time throughout the process.
 - The expectations of complainants were managed by explaining that in many instances the Ombudsmen would conclude that the complainant had approached them prematurely and return the case back to the local authority until earlier stages in the process had been completed/exhausted.
22. The committee enquired about the rise in complaints that the Ombudsmen had deemed to be premature and returned to the authority.
- The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager suspected it was about educating and sharing information with families to make sure that families understood the local authority's complaints procedure and when would be advisable to approach the Ombudsmen. This could potentially be communicated effectively via the Council's website.
23. The committee raised concerns about two similar complaints to the Ombudsmen – regarding correct process not being followed and applied - being upheld within a six month period and what action had been taken to avoid this occurring again.
- The Complaints and Children's Rights Manager explained the process could be difficult to follow and was currently being looked at by the NCMG (National Complaints Manager Group) and hopefully the review would result in clearer guidance, which would make it easier to determine which process should be followed.
24. The committee suggested that it should have more frequent sight of the complaint pipeline and information about resolved complaints.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People stated they would be happy to provide the committee with a quarterly report on the data the service was receiving, although there would need to be guidance from the committee to officers regarding whether the reports were being requested as information only documents or for use as substantive agenda item reports.
 - The Cabinet Member Children and Young People, stressed the most significant issue as being the need to rebuild trust and confidence in the service. There was still a significant way to go, but it was reassuring to see that certain families had gained confidence in the service to such an extent that they had stepped forward to become part of the improvement journey.

At the conclusion of the debate, the committee discussed potential recommendations and the following resolutions were agreed.

Resolved that:

- 1. That Herefordshire Council review and revise the information on its website concerning complaints, to include information on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman process, and information on where to seek assistance.**
- 2. For the children and young people service to report to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee within six months on the demand, flow, and timeliness of complaints. The report should include an analysis of those complaints and the ongoing development of the complaints process.**

3. **That scrutiny recognises the work undertaken in partnership with Leeds City Council around complaints and asks that consideration be given to**
 - i. **having an independent professional investigate and document the complaint and desired outcome**
 - ii. **understanding the demographics and protected characteristics of people making complaints and**
 - iii. **ensuring that children's young people's and families' views are incorporated into that review.**

17. FAMILIES' COMMISSION UPDATE

The Corporate Director Children and Young People introduced the report and provided an overview of the background, purpose and output of the Families Commission. The Director detailed that in September 2023 the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee had discussed the Families Commission report and received an update on progress being made by the service.

The Director explained that Herefordshire Children's Services had continued to undertake work around the outputs of the Families Commission. Phase 2 of its Improvement Plan included a range of opportunities for children, families and the public to continue to feedback on their experiences of Herefordshire Children's Services and to engage in the development of the service.

It was explained that the Improvement Board was due to share the Phase 2 Improvement Plan with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 17 September 2024 and Cabinet on 26 September 2024.

The Corporate Director drew the committee's attention to a specific number of areas covered in the update report detailing ongoing work that would be incorporated into Phase 2 of the improvement plan, including:

- Early help activity and projects relating to the Community Safety Fund and, My Family, My School, My Community
- The strategic review of Peopletoo and the locality model.
- Continuation of the delivery of restorative practice, particularly in relation to new staff and throughout the partnership.
- Engagement and participation of children, young people, parents and carers
- The SafeLives review of domestic abuse responses in Herefordshire and domestic abuse training
- Complaints (which had been covered previous in item 7)

The Chair invited comments and discussion from the committee in relation to the report. The key points discussed are detailed below:

1. The committee enquired as to what the Safeguarding Partnership was doing to ensure that complaints procedures in every agency across the partnership were: accessible to families, working well and recording findings.
2. The committee asked if there was a need for a portal on the partnership web page that could provide people with access to the different partner complaints procedures.

- The Safeguarding Partnerships Business Manager explained there was a complaint tile on the Safeguarding Partnership website, which guided people through to the relevant partner website - where they could access the appropriate complaints procedure.
 - The Safeguarding Partnerships Business Manager referred to the Section 11 Audit Process as contained within the Children Act 2024, which required individual agencies to have robust child safeguarding practices in place. It was explained that partners would respond to an audit, which would then be checked and challenged by the Independent Scrutineer to establish what had been done to address issues in areas that had been identified as being inadequate or needing improvement. This information would then go onto an audit portal where partners were required to detail how they had addressed issues, what lessons had been learned and how processes or culture had changed as a result of a complaint being made.
3. The committee enquired about the roll-out of restorative and relational practice to partners and if/how this would be done at pace.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained partners were keen to receive the training, but capacity issues had slowed the pace of roll-out. Social workers and social carers were filtering the themes of the practice through to partners informally, but it was a priority of the Leeds partners to ensure that formal training sessions were rolled-out across the partnership as soon as possible.
 - The Safeguarding Partnerships Business Manager pointed out of the importance of distinguishing between how the term 'restorative practice' could take on a different meaning depending on context. As an example it was pointed out that restorative practice could relate to working with families to restore damaged relationships, but could also be used to describe a means of early resolution of an issue when used in the context of the complaints process.

4. The committee referred to paragraph 8.E in the main report:

"How will Herefordshire Children's Services support social workers to establish and maintain the trust and confidence of parents and families and enable their participation in planning to keep their children safe and promote their wellbeing?"

The committee enquired how the service would support social workers especially in relation to ensuring caseloads were manageable.

- The Corporate Director Children and Young People, explained that the work being done around the workload focused on 'good conditions for practice', which aimed to ensure that the conditions were right to enable staff to deliver good practice. Factors including; manageable caseloads, access to managers, regular supervision, good (and clear) practice standards, along with a robust and easy to use IT system, were all being focused on to ensure that social workers and all staff were supported in delivering good practice.
- The Corporate Director Children and Young People stated that caseloads, particularly within children in care teams had been stable recently. However, there had been some challenge in the assessment teams and the service had been keeping a close eye on this to ensure they could react to caseload spikes in a swift and effective manner. In some instances, agency workers could be used to help manage situations, but ensuring the conditions of

practice were right was key to maintaining long-term and continued stability, which in turn would ensure Herefordshire Council was an employer of choice.

5. The committee referred to the cultural friction described in the report and enquired why certain partners had not always been supportive of the restorative approach.
6. The committee asked how it would be possible to determine if restorative approaches were being taken forward and if improvements were being made as result.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People stated that they had not personally encountered any resistance to the restorative training from partners, but described situations where there had been confusion between restorative practice and management of risk. It was hoped that this would come to light, in a helpful way, once the training was delivered to partners.
 - The Corporate Director noted that from experience it appeared that partners were very keen to adopt ways of working that included: 'Think Family, engagement of the wider family and strength-based approaches.
7. The committee enquired how the service would know that practice was changing within partnerships.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People identified two areas that could be used to determine if the practice was working. Firstly asking children, young people and parents about how they felt the partnership was working together, whether they felt the right professionals had been involved and, if not, which professionals they thought should have been involved. Secondly key performance indicator data could provide some headline around quality; repeat assessments and repeat child protection plans were good indicators of whether the service and what had been achieved was allowing families to step down and sustain.
8. The committee asked for further detail about the 'Think Family' approach.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that Think Family was a term applied to an existing practice, which involved widening focus from, for example, just a parent and their child, to bringing in the wider extended relatives and considering the impact they had on an individual's life. It involved using knowledge of an individual's wider family/network to be able to link them up with appropriate services that could help them. Think Family tied in with and would be bolstered by effective locality working and locality models. The Director confirmed that the Think Family approach would be embedded as a way of working across the partnership.
9. A committee member suggested that the layout of the report and its content made it difficult to gain a sense of how much progress had been made in addressing the questions that had emerged from the Families Commission.
10. A committee member requested assurance that recommendations from the Fostering Panel would be given weight and sufficient attention.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People gave the committee an assurance that they would check where recommendations from the panel -

relating to general service development - went and ensure that responses and feedback were looped back to the panel. An assurance was also given that recommendations relating to specific children would be incorporated into the child's case.

11. The committee enquired as to what a 'child friendly Herefordshire' would look like.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People suggested that a child friendly Herefordshire would involve people being able to see the importance of children in all of the council's policies and procedures. The Director felt that local politicians/councillors - as elected representatives of the public - should also play a key role in providing feedback from the public and support in shaping Hereford into becoming a child friendly place to live.
12. The committee suggested that the idea of child friendly Hereford should be included as part of the discussion in the 'Including children's voices in council policy' item scheduled for the committee's November meeting.
 - The Cabinet Member Children and Young People gave examples of child friendly activity carried out at Leeds, and suggested that achieving child friendly status wasn't a destination, but a concept and a way to exist, which needed to be embraced by the council, its partners and communities.
13. The committee enquired about the long-term sustainability of early help and families and community support projects that were being funded through the Police and Crime Commissioner and My Family, My School, My Community.
 - The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained that they had one eye on what would happen when the funding for those services ended, as it would not be a simple case of the council taking over future funding for those projects.
 - The Corporate Director explained they had taken on the role of Senior Responsible Officer and together with the Head of Service for Early Help were working closely with content providers to make sure that the added value the projects were bringing to families was understood. When what had and hadn't worked was understood, it would be possible to establish where future funding income for growth and alternative services might come from - to ensure that there was no 'cliff edge' for the families that had been worked with through the projects.
14. The committee highlighted instances where information about available funding for groups such as youth clubs had come through late and noted that in some instances when funding was approved it was processed too late to be used properly. The committee suggested that when funding for projects was available and approved, it needed to be processed swiftly.
15. The committee noted that every family that had participated in the Families Commission had expressed a desire to ensure that their painful experiences should be used to improve the service, so that others didn't have go through what they had. The committee asked if the service was 'getting there' in terms of improvement or whether there was still work to be done.

- The Corporate Director Children and Young People explained there was still much work to do, but was pleased with Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan. There would be a refocusing of the Improvement Board with the quality assurance framework, which would triangulate around the key performance indicators, the audit and the service user feedback about whether or not the service was improving.

At the conclusion of the debate, the committee discussed potential recommendations and the following resolutions were agreed.

Resolved that:

1. **That Herefordshire Council provide analysis of funding provided through the Police and Crime Commissioner and My Family, My School, My Community to demonstrate that funding and resources are focused on delivering sustained early help and support for families and communities.**
2. **The funding available to support development of a child-friendly Herefordshire is distributed as rapidly as possible.**

18. WORK PROGRAMME

Due to time limitations the committee agreed to refer the work programme item until the next scheduled meeting.

19. CHAIR UPDATE

No updates were provided.

20. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 17 September 2pm

21. APPENDIX 1 - PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Questions from members of the public were published as a supplement to the agenda here:

[\(Public Pack\)SUPPLEMENT - Item 5 Questions from members of the public Agenda Supplement for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, 30/07/2024 14:00 \(herefordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Responses to supplementary questions are detailed below:

Supplementary questions from members of the public – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, 30 July

Question Number	Questioner	Supplementary question	Question to
PQ 1	Ms. Hannah Currie Hereford	Given the issues raised historically about inaccurate and false data being processed and shared with third parties and in the past few days Paul Walker has written personally to me to apologise for again incorrect processing of personal information in just the past 10 days. Do you not	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

		think it is time to accept that the case of ' BT & GT (Children : twins – adoption) ' was not an isolated incident of a "deliberate act to mislead" and either support a call for a public inquiry or agree that the time and resources need to be made available for the independent reviews the families were promised?	
<p>Response by Cabinet Member Children and Young People</p> <p>As reported to scrutiny in the Families Commission update report “<i>alongside the work of the service to address the key consideration coming from the panel report, there have been further follow up meetings with families who attended the Commission to further address questions that related directly to the families. For those families where additional questions were raised by the chair of the independent panel directly to the local authority, further meetings were offered to families by the Leader of the Council, The Lead Member for Children’s Services, the Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council and the Corporate Director for Children and Young people. A number of families attended further meetings represented by the Service Director for Improvement, the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Children’s Services. Each meeting clarified a number of issues, concerns and ‘bottom lines’ which were subsequently followed up to resolve relevant matters for individual families</i>”</p> <p>This work has been an independent review and the experiences of those families has been heard and have or are being addressed on an individual basis as necessary.</p> <p>As a council, we are committed to delivering the best for our children and families and this commitment is set out as a priority in our Council Plan. The inspection by OFSTED of Children’s Services in June 22 has provided a comprehensive review of concerns relating to practice that requires improvement. We have accepted the findings of that inspection and this has been the basis for the children’s improvement plan. A phase two of this plan was agreed at the Improvement Board on 17th July 24. Herefordshire children services improvement remains under the scrutiny of Ofsted through regular monitoring visits and the DfE through the Commissioner with additional support from Leeds as a sector led improvement partner and the scrutiny of the multi-agency improvement board. The decision for any public inquiry rests with the secretary of state and not with the LA, our priority is to ensure our financial and staffing resources are focused on making the improvement required.</p>			
Question Number	Questioner	Supplementary question	Question to
PQ 2	Mr. James McGeown Weobley	<p>Thank you for most useful answer, you state:</p> <p>“Parental views should be recorded within an assessment or written as a separate document and placed on file and referenced within the case file to ensure they are linked to the appropriate assessment.”</p> <p>This is exactly what I wanted and have been trying to achieve through my understanding of your “Children’s Representations and Complaints” procedure.</p> <p>Since 20th June I have submitted nine formal</p>	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

		<p>complaints. All on different dates. All raising new issues. All Royal Mail, Plough Lane, delivery confirmation. Not a single acknowledgement and reference have I received.</p> <p>I have now followed your suggestion:</p> <p>“If you would like to provide detail to the DCS” and have sent “Tina Russell DCS”, package of everything including “Notice of Intent” to seek help from Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.</p> <p>Will this ensure everything’s reviewed?</p>	
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Response by Corporate Director Children and Young People

A written response from the Corporate Director Children and Young People was sent directly to Mr and Mrs McGeown addressing the issues raised in this question.

Question Number	Questioner	Supplementary question	Question to
PQ3	<p>Mrs. Megan McGeown</p> <p>Weobley</p>	<p>I believe you have misunderstood the question.</p> <p>It is about inappropriate use of MARF which was why NFA recording commenced October 2018. Therefore you have not answered the question:</p> <p>“Is it still an ongoing intention and desire of Herefordshire Council to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals and NFA’s”?</p> <p>If yes and in 2023 alone there were 884 not progressed, including a significant number of loving families of good standing who didn’t want interference in their lives from Local Authority.</p> <p>To help reduce this number would it be a good idea to formally make Social Workers of all ranks aware of:</p> <p>“Right Help Right Time” guidance from “Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership”. This contains statutory guidance for Local Authority intervention and based on experience there appears some lack of knowledge of its existence or understanding of its contents?</p>	<p>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</p>

Response by Cabinet Member Children and Young People

There will always be a number of “contacts” received in MASH that need social work oversight to make a decision based on what that appropriate pathway to a service that best meets the child’s needs is. We support all members of the public to refer any concern they have for the welfare or protection of a child through to MASH. Our partners understand that where they make referrals into MASH, parental consent must be sought, unless the referred concern relates to a child protection issue. We do not seek to get involved in families lives

where they do not want us to and we balance this with ensuring we are acting on our legal duty to investigate concerns regarding significant harm that are reported to us.

We are continuing our work with partners to ensure they have the knowledge, and a system that supports them, to send requests for support services direct to services so families can receive the right help in a timely way. Importantly this will also reduce any unnecessary workload within the MASH system. We have recently developed the process between Early Help and MASH for professionals and we are in the process of developing a “locality model” for our children services, so we can promote closer connectivity with the early help offer and between partners working as a multi-agency team alongside children, young people and their families.

The Herefordshire Children Safeguarding Partnership is leading work to implement the new Working Together 2023 and we are now delivering against our Improvement plan Phase 2. Within that work, we are developing our “Think Family” approach, providing training to partners on Restorative Practice and are rolling out multi-agency training to ensure, as a multi-agency group, we understand how best “restorative practice” works in practice with children and families. All these activities will give us opportunities to ensure our staff and our partners are well cited on our threshold guidance “Right Help Right Time”

Question Number	Questioner	Supplementary question	Question to
PQ 4	Ms. Maggie Steel Hereford	My question is this, how will you engage with the public, so that you can properly scrutinize what officers are writing and distinguish between what is written to assuage you and what is really happening on the ground?	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Response by Cabinet Member Children and Young People

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee recognise the vital importance of hearing the voices of children, families and members of the public.

It is important to note that the cabinet member(s), officers and multi-agency partners who present their reports to scrutiny are also engaged, in various ways, with members of the public and those who have been, or continue to use the Childrens Services. Scrutiny takes how children, young people and families have been engaged and how their experiences have influenced work into account as it scrutinises presentations made. It is not appropriate in many instances to require members of the public to explain their own very personal circumstances during committee proceedings

It is important to contextualise, the principal role of scrutiny is to influence the policies and decisions made by the council and other organisations involved within local multi-agency working. Scrutiny is a formal meeting convened in public to enable locally elected members to transact local authority business with the object of scrutinising and reaching decisions – or formulating recommendations as a basis for those decisions for how it believe services can be improved.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Chairperson

Title of report: Children and Young People's Quality Assurance Briefing

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 17 September 2024

Report by: Head of Service Safeguarding and Review

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To brief the Children and Young Scrutiny on the Quality Assurance Framework for Herefordshire Children's Services, including the values and principles underpinning this. Also to describe the means by which quality assurance activity is undertaken, the outcomes from quality assurance activity in the last year and the impact of the quality assurance activity in the Herefordshire Children's Services improvement journey.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) That the Committee notes the content of the report.
- b) For the Committee to make any recommendations as to how quality assurance activity within Children's Services could be enhanced.

Alternative options

1. The Committee may choose the option not to review the report, however this is not recommended as the report is provided to inform the Committee of current quality

assurance activity in supporting improvement work within the Children's Services Department

Key Considerations

2. Quality assurance activity monitors and evaluates our social work practice so that we understand our practice strengths and also our development needs. In line with the Improvement Plan the Children's Services Department aims to improve our services to achieve our services priorities of keeping our children and young people safe and giving them a great start in life.
3. Our restorative practice model is that we work openly alongside children, young people and families in a strengths based way. We aim to demonstrate that our work with children, young people and their families places their needs and wishes at the heart of everything we do.
4. Quality assurance activity is our focused activity to measure the effectiveness of the work we do and to support the wider service to improve service delivery to ensure we have a positive impact.
5. Quality assurance provides a mechanism to provide robust scrutiny and challenge at levels of our social work practice. We are committed to achieving excellence in service delivery through the continuous improvement of our practice. We aim to foster a departmental culture of 'high support and high challenge', to demonstrate that we understand our practice and that we are can show progress on our improvement journey, tackling issues that arise openly and honestly.
6. Quality assurance is at the heart of the Children's Services Improvement Plan. Our Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is made up on three equal and complementary components:
 - Hearing the voice of children, young people and parents and carers;
 - Audit activity and
 - Key Performance Indicators.
7. It is through a combination of these three mechanisms we can understand the impact of what we do, understand the quality of our practice and understand our service performance against statutory and internal indicators such as timeliness of work efficiency of workflows.
8. Our Improvement Plan Phase 2 identifies a wide range of Quality Assurance measures and can be read as measures against each of the Ofsted Recommendation in the plan on a page. (Appendix B)
9. A foundation to the audit work is Case file Audits. Monthly case file audits are completed by managers in the department. The quality and effectiveness of our work is measured against six individual domains. These are:
 - Voice of the child, how well can we understand the child's story, current situation and wishes and feeling from the evidence on the file.
 - Assessment, in relation to the concerns that exist how good is the assessment of the strengths and challenges for the family?

- Quality of Plans, how understandable and effective is the current plan in meeting the safeguarding concerns?
- Effectiveness of partnership working, how well is Children's Services and other partner organisations working alongside the child and family to meet their needs?
- Supervision and management oversight, is the worker receiving good quality, reflective supervision and is there evidence that the manager is providing clear direction and decision making in the child's file?
- Embracing diversity, does the work evident on the file take account account of the child and family's social, cultural and other needs such as disability etc?

10. A guide to audit grade descriptors supports the auditors and within each of the domains there are a range of quality indicators that support the auditors to form a judgement as to whether the evidence found on the file demonstrates that the quality of the work meets the standard required for Outstanding or Good work, or whether it shows that the work is of Requires Improvement or Inadequate standard. The QA team are currently updating the grade descriptors in line with our restorative practice model and to complement the revised case audit template. This work will be completed by the end of September 2024.

It is important to note that work graded as Inadequate means that whilst there be urgent and significant work to be completed it does not mean that a child is unsafe.

11. Between April 2023 and June 2024 307 case file audits have been completed. This scale of work has enabled the Quality Assurance team to inform children's services of a detailed inventory of what the strengths of our work with families is and also areas in need of development.
12. The Quality Assurance team also oversees the audit moderation process whereby senior managers validate the judgements and grades given by auditors. Moderators can change audit grades, however for the period April – June 2024 only 13 audits were moderated demonstrating that our auditing judgements are robust.
13. Our departmental case audit activity is now showing that Social Work practice is beginning to improve. The data from audits show that quality of practice continues to need support and development. There are areas of good practice such as the 'consideration of the impact of diversity' and improving practice in the areas of 'decision making and management oversight' and 'supervision'. There remain a number of areas that require further development, seeing and hearing the child', 'assessments', 'plans' and 'meetings and reviews'. Given the priority given in the Phase 2 Improvement Plan to listening to families and especially to children and young people it is really important that we see rapid improvement in the 'seeing and hearing the child' domain. It seems likely that improvement here will also improve the quality of 'assessments' and 'plans'. It is encouraging that there were no audits graded Inadequate in June and that June also had the highest number of audits graded Good (43.75%) over the last 6 months.
14. Family feedback is an integral part of the auditing process and should be used to support service design and delivery. We need to increase the numbers of feedback gained through monthly audits and other methods and ensure that the findings contribute to all service improvement activity and ultimately positive outcomes for children.

15. Overall we continue to have work to do to improve our practice in specific areas of practice and to ensure this is consistent improvement across the service. From September 2024, a new audit process including a revised audit template will be used and will consider practice across the whole service on a monthly basis. This will offer more opportunity to compare monthly data and identify areas of practice that are improving and those that need further focus across the different service areas.

Community impact

16. A robust and reliable Quality Assurance Framework for Children's Services will support the improvement in the practice of the Department. Quality assurance activity underpins the work detailed in the recently developed Phase 2 Improvement Plan which drives our continued improvement activity alongside our staff, partners and most importantly the children, young people and families that we work alongside in our community. This is vital in meeting our aims to keep our children and young people safe and to give them a great start in life.

Environmental Impact

17. Whilst the work detailed in this report will have minimal environmental impact, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's environmental policy.

Equality duty

18. 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.
19. 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. As this is a decision on back office functions, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.
 20. The Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework pays full regard to the Council's responsibilities as set out in the public sector equality duty.

Resource implications

21. There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

Legal implications

22. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Risk management

23. There are no specific risks arising from this report.

Consultees

24. Not applicable

Appendices

Appendix A: Quality Assurance and Learning Framework, February 2024

Appendix B: Phase 2 Improvement plan on a page – Ofsted Recommendations and Measures

Background papers

None identified

Quality Assurance and Learning Framework

Herefordshire Council
Children and Young People Services

31
February 2024



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Foreword

Dear colleagues,

Working with children and young people and their families is complex, and all of us whom work in this world know that their needs are multi- faceted, and that we need to take a whole system approach towards helping them to live safely at home. When we work with and alongside people, there is strong evidence to say that outcomes for children and their families are improved.

We are committed to working with families restoratively, to establish positive relationships that constantly explore and build on areas of existing strength, and agree with families effective plans for improvement where risks are identified, acknowledged and addressed. Similarly we need to constantly explore and build on areas of strength in the quality of services we deliver to children and young people and their families, and agree effective plans for continual improvement.

Fundamental to our improvement journey over the next two years, we are working with Leeds City Council's Relational Practice Centre as part of our long term improvement partnership which is being supported by the DfE.

This quality assurance framework sets out the principles and standards of practice expected from all of us in Children's Services. It also sets out the mechanisms we will use to assess the quality of our practice, systems and processes, and use the learning to make improvements in outcomes for children, young people and families.

All of us are undertaking important work, and want to do the best we can in our respective roles. I hope you will find this guidance both interesting and helpful in ensuring good practice from us and good outcomes for the children and young people we work with.

Darryl Freeman,
Director of Children and Young People Services
Herefordshire Council.



Darryl Freeman
Director of Children and Young
People Services

Our standards, values and principles

The Council's Values

At Herefordshire Council, our PEOPLE values shape our future culture and underpin all of our work:

People – Targeting people fairly, with compassion, respect and dignity.

Excellence – Striving for excellence, and the appropriate quality of service, care and life in Herefordshire.

Openness – Being open, transparent and accountable.

Partnership – Working in partnership and with all our diverse communities.

Listening – Actively listening to, understanding and taking into account people's views and needs.

Environment – Protecting and promoting our outstanding natural environment and heritage for the benefit of all.

As an organisation, we are proud to operate against a set of core defined principles:

Partnership – We collaborate to maximise our strengths and resources.

Resilience – We use resources wisely so Herefordshire is fit for future generations.

Integrity – We make decisions based on evidence and work with respect, openness and accountability.

Democracy – We strengthen local democracy, decision making and service delivery and involve more young people.

Engagement – We listen to and learn from our communities and help people connect through culture, creativity and care.

What is quality assurance?

Quality assurance in Herefordshire involves the systematic monitoring and evaluation of practice, policies, and procedures, with the aim of improving our services to achieve better outcomes for children and their families. Our quality assurance activity will demonstrate a consistent focus on our children, their experiences, voice, lived experience and their outcomes. Children and young people are central to all that we do in Herefordshire. We are embedding a culture of focus on IMPACT of all our activity. We are encouraging staff at all levels to identify, measure and analyse the impact for children, to ensure that our improvement activity is consistently leading to better outcomes for children.

Quality assurance is more than routinely counting numbers, meeting targets for performance indicators and periodically carrying out audits.

35 As a learning organisation, quality assurance activity gives us the opportunity to know ourselves well, to shine a light on good practice and to put in place plans to use this good practice to make improvements in other areas. Our quality assurance activity is dynamic and evolving, with a cycle of monitoring, reflection and learning, based on the principle that improvement is a continuous journey.

Improving outcomes for children and delivering good quality support and protection is everybody's business and is owned by us all.

Most importantly, we need to systematically collect accurate data and quantitative information regarding the quality of practice in Herefordshire to enable us to scrutinise performance and robustly analyse to better understand the lived experience and journey of children and families.

Using learning and key messages from QA activity and performance data we are able to better understand and target our improvement

activity at pace.

Herefordshire quality assurance activity is an integral part of everyday practice within our Children and Young People's Directorate.

Measuring the impact of service delivery is central to understanding and achieving improved outcomes for children. This requires a strong quality assurance system to be in place that can evidence services are being delivered effectively and to standards that enable children's welfare to be safeguarded and promoted and their outcomes to be maximised.

Why do we need quality assurance?

Herefordshire Council is committed to achieving excellence through continuous improvement, where children and young people are at the heart of everything we do and have the opportunity to influence and shape the services they receive.

Having in place a robust quality assurance system will help to:

- Ensure and evidence that children are being kept safe from harm and protected.
- Ensure that children's needs are met at the earliest stage.
- Ensure that thresholds are being applied consistently and effectively.
- Improve outcomes for children and families we work with by identifying areas of development within practice and services offered, which can also be addressed through service planning, training and commissioning.
- Identify what support and evidenced based interventions work for children and families and highlight good practice.
- Ensure staff are supported in carrying out their roles both safely and effectively.
- Focus on learning from practice including good practice

Developing a positive quality assurance culture

A key aim within this revision of this Quality Assurance Framework is to better integrate and strengthen the use of both qualitative and quantitative data to support an even more sophisticated and coherent practice story and approach to practice improvement.

The framework seeks to improve the quality of services by:

- Reviewing the quality of practice against standards and expectations regarding performance; data, local and national standards, regulatory requirements to support in getting things “right first time”
- Identifying strengths in practice that can be shared with others and built upon
- Spotting shortfalls in practice that require further work and improvement, including local and whole system action that leads to sustainable improvements and challenging historical custom and practice
- Ensuring that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities regarding quality assurance of practice, and that improving quality of practice is part of “business as usual” for all staff within children and families
- Fostering a culture of “high support, high challenge” that sits within a cycle that drives a culture of continuous improvement, tackling problems openly and honestly and leading to visible change
- Identifying learning and development needs for individuals, teams, practice areas, services and partners
- Embedding the voice of children and young people in practice and improvement activity.

Herefordshire recognise that it is vital that we learn from all our quality assurance activity and from feedback, both positive and challenging.

We strive to develop a culture within the organisation that is one of learning, where staff at all levels feel safe to raise issues and discuss any difficulties, and are confident that their views will be heard and action taken to address the issues raised. In order to achieve this, feedback to staff needs to be positive, celebrating achievements and improvements and challenging in a positive way. We will all ensure colleagues are supported and listened to when raising issues, and informed of actions to be taken. Herefordshire aims to model working with and not for or to behaviours. We want our practitioners to feel and own audit activity.

Audits will be completed with the involvement of the practitioner facilitating a learning opportunity between practitioner and auditor. This will ensure that the practitioner can contribute effectively, learn directly from the process and better understand what good practice looks like, understand decision making and application of audit grades.

To support manager’s confidence and accuracy of audit completion, we are delivering a series of *Best Practice in Auditing* workshops and these will become part of the core training offer from the Academy. Additionally we have developed grade descriptors to ensure accurate and consistent grades are applied. (See appendix)

We have developed Case File Audit Guidance providing clarity on the expectations regarding auditing and our roles and responsibilities following audit completion. (See appendix)

We will develop also implemented a Practitioner’s Feedback Sheet to learn from our staff on their experiences of audit activity and inform future development of QA activity. Within each audit we ask for and record staff feedback on the experience of the audit and to reflect on their achievements and challenges working with the child or young person.

Our Practice Standards

Herefordshire has set out a clear set of practice standards for effective intervention with children, young people and their families. It supports our vision that all children and young people in Herefordshire feel safe, loved, and valued, and grow up with the confidence and skills to be the best they can be.

Keeping children and young people at the centre of all we do. Our Practice Standards are:

Children and families will be placed at the heart of everything we do. Every child will have an assessment of their individual needs which reflects how their life experiences, wishes, feelings and any risks to them are known and understood and will seek to promote family stability and safety.

Every child will have an assessment which reflects the strengths and assets within themselves and their family and community

All children's plans will explain what needs to happen by when and by who

All children's case records will be clear, using language that is easily understood.

All casework will be supported by regular and timely management oversight.

Staff will use strength based approaches to enhance working relationships with families and improve outcomes for children and young people.



Practice Standard	What does 'good' look like?	How will we measure this?
Children and families will be placed at the heart of everything we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-production- Involve children/young people and their parents/ carers in shaping plans and decisions • We will listen to children • We will work with children pro-actively taking account of their needs • We will deliver relationship-based practice with children and families • We will involve them in genuine partnership • Our responses to risk will be timely and proportionate • Reflect historic information, identify risks and protective factors • There will be a clear analysis of the child/young person's situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on timeliness • Team managers' oversight and sign off assessments • Audit activity "external" Audit activity IRO / CP chairs • Audit activity • Feedback from children and families • Scrutiny by DLT and CLT
Every child will have an assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve children/young people and their parents/carers in shaping plans and decisions • Reflect the child's lived experiences • Include partner agencies and family views • Regularly updates to take account of changes • Assessments will be timely and proportionate • Assessments will reflect historic information, identify risks and protective factors • Assessments will result in a clear analysis of the child/young person's situation • Detailed genogram will be included • An up to date chronology will be completed • Assessments will be written in clear and friendly way, using language that is non-victim blaming and non-stigmatising. • Safety plans will be standalone and written in a way the child or young person understands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on timeliness • Managers' oversight and sign off of assessments • Performance reports on timeliness • Audit activity • Feedback from IRO/CP chairs • Feedback from children and families • Feedback from partners
Plans are good quality and SMART	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect assessment findings • Plans are co-produced with the family • Are clear and outcome focussed with attributed actions which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific • Measurable • Achievable • Realistic • Timescales are clear • Other agencies are involved as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service-related audit activity • Multi-agency audit activity • IRO scrutiny at reviews • CP Chair scrutiny • Audit activity • Management sign off/oversight • Children and family feedback

Practice Standard	What does 'good' look like?	How will we measure this?
Children's records will be clear and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recordings will be timely • Recordings will include reflection and analysis • Significant events will be explained and decisions evidenced • There will be explanation as to the purpose and impact of activity e.g. visits • There will be a case summary updated 3 monthly • Child and family views will be clearly recorded and confirmed • Documents will be written in simple, jargon free and child centred language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management supervision/ oversight • Audit activity • Scrutiny from CP chairs/IRO • Children and family feedback
Children's cases evidence regular management oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular, recorded management oversight will be on records • Manager's directions and comments will be clearly recorded • Reflective supervision will be seen on files • Managers follow up of activity agreed will be evident • Evidence of managers reflecting on impact and agreeing next steps • Evidence of appropriate support and challenge • Evidence of managers and CP Chairs/ IROs impacting on case progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management oversight on files • Supervision reports • Audit activity • CP chairs/IRO oversight • Evidence of appropriate CP Chair/ IRO challenge and escalation • Partners feedback • Child and family feedback
Relational and restorative practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths based approached will be used when communication, engaging and supporting children and young people • Our practice with children and their families will be relational and restorative in its approach • Wishes and feelings of children/young people and families are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. visible in assessments 2. visible in notes of meetings 3. reflected in plans • Feedback from Herefordshire Young Voices informs service planning • Safety/ wellbeing plans are evident • Multi agency plans are clear and proactive • Children and families are clear as to the concerns and actions required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit • Service user feedback • Suggestions acted upon from Herefordshire Young Voices and other groups

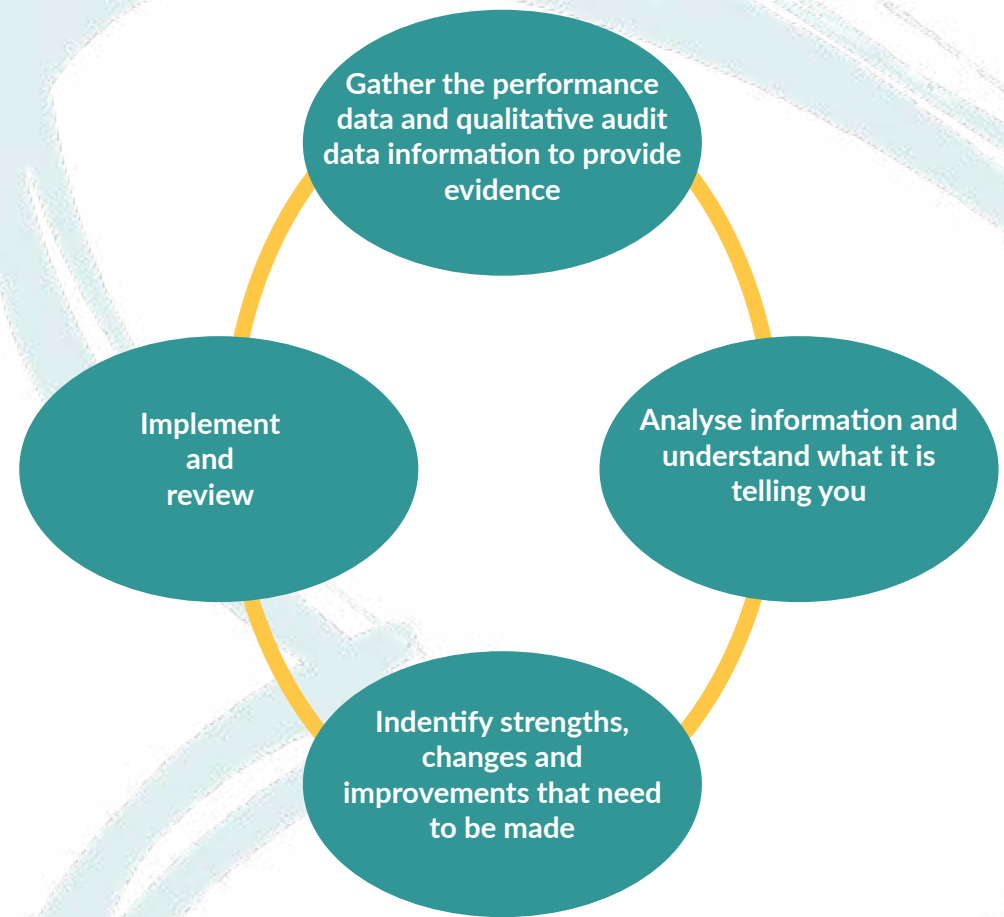
The Continuous Improvement Model

The continuous improvement model enables quality assurance activities to inform action and improve outcomes for children and young people, which is at the heart of our work.

It is expected that this continuous knowledge acquisition will drive evidence-based practice. Social workers need to understand and use research in practice if they are to provide effective help. The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) says that social workers should “make use of research to inform practice” and the Knowledge and Skills Statement for child and family practitioners says they should “make use of the best evidence from research to... support families and protect children”. This learning will be passed on through direct work, training, audit and supervision.

This is evidenced by;

Responsiveness to assessed need and the wishes of children and families.
Being professionally curious to ensure we know and understand the families we work with and their lived experience.
Enabling practitioners to blend personal qualities and creative imagination with practice skills and practice wisdom that underpin quality practice
Practicing “respectful uncertainty” - applying critical evaluation to any information they receive and maintaining an open mind
Reviewed and revised policies and procedures.
Integration of training into practice.
Workforce development strategies – learning, development and recruitment / retention of staff.
Data and performance being used to drive good practice



Implementing the Quality Assurance Framework - Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Independent Conference & Reviewing Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure practice meets statutory, professional and service standards • Ensure practice is child-focused • Ensure recording is kept up to date • Act as 'critical friends' in promoting best practice in services to children and young people • Ensure that Child Protection Plans provide the child with appropriate safety, that they are achievable and are reviewed regularly • Ensure that plans for Children in Care are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs • Monitor on an ongoing basis the quality of service provided to Children in Care and children subject to Child Protection Plans, which also includes monitoring the performance of the wider children's services • Function as a corporate parent, identifying any areas of poor practice whether on an individual basis or establishing collective patterns of concerns.
Team Managers, Early Help Team Leaders	<p>As above, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a 'high support, high challenge' improvement culture within service areas, so staff are aware of the importance of quality assurance and their own role within this • Ensure quality assurance activities are undertaken in the team • Ensure day to day management oversight and authorisation activity considers quality assurance issues throughout the pathway e.g. is the assessment of good quality? Is the plan SMART? Is an external placement fully risk assessed and able to best meet the needs of the child? • Quality Assurance team undertake regular audits as part of supervision and record on feedback template to enable shared learning • Participate in service level file audit activity and ensure feedback on individual audits is provided to practitioners, remedial actions completed and reported back as requested • Ensure supervision audits are undertaken • Participate in quality assurance learning sessions and ensure that learning is cascaded to team members for their information and reflection.

Roles	Responsibilities
Service Managers	<p>As above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a 'high support, high challenge' improvement culture within service areas, so staff are aware of the importance of QA and their own role within this Ensure team managers within their service area are undertaking quality assurance activities • Ensure learning from quality assurance activities is shared and used to inform improvements in practice • • Feed information from the Quality Assurance meetings to team managers and ensure it is disseminated and used to inform reflective discussions • Undertake additional quality assurance activities within service area in response to practice or performance issues and share the learning within own service area and the proposed Quality Assurance and Performance Board (QAPIB)
Head of Service & Above	<p>As above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a 'high support, high challenge' improvement culture within service areas, so staff are aware of the importance of QA and their own role within this Actively promote the importance of quality assurance and engage with quality assurance activities • Ensure all Service Managers are encouraged and supported to participate fully in all quality assurance activities, and hold accountable for quality of services within their area • Provide Service Managers with reflective supervision, and ensure quality assurance activity and learning is discussed. • Participate in service level file audit activity and ensure Service Managers are engaged fully in the process • Reflect on quality assurance reports that are presented, develop and take responsibility for remedial action and report back to SMT and DLT on progress • Feed back to Elected Members, Safeguarding Partnership etc as appropriate.
Directorate Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate Support can help teams with quality assurance They can assist by: • Ensuring their tasks are completed within agreed timescales and to good quality standards • Collect and format data into reportable formats • Entering information onto electronic case recording systems accurately and in a timely manner • Reporting any data quality issues to the relevant practitioners or team managers • Participating in reflective discussions about service improvements by providing their views, observations and suggestions.

What does Quality Assurance activity look like?

We have identified the requirement to develop strong audit capacity as part of the long-term strategy to monitor and assure to ensure a 'high support, high challenge' improvement culture within service areas, so staff are aware of the importance of quality assurance and their own role within this the quality of children's social care practice to drive improved outcomes for children and families in Herefordshire.

Through quality assurance activities we will demonstrate that we understand our own practice and the difference we are making to the lives of children and their families and carers through good use of performance data, audit outcomes, family feedback, partner agency feedback, observations of practice, compliments and complaints - always asking how we can make things better and being curious and innovative in our practice to achieve continuous improvement.

We have developed a team of Quality Assurance Practitioners, a QA Co-ordinator and Service Manager for Quality Assurance as part of service development to ensure capacity to undertake audits, support ongoing training to managers and colleagues in undertaking their audits, moderation processes, closing the loop activity and capacity to undertake thematic audits. The audit team will also provide capacity to support the partnership in undertaking multi agency audits and assurance processes embedding learning into practice.

The programme consists of: -**collaborative audits each month** – these will be led by an auditor with the social worker and/ or manager. The case will be selected at random.

Our Early Help, MASH, Assessment Teams, CP & Court, Children Looked After and Care Leavers Service undertake monthly case file audits. This provides an overview of the quality of case work and supports issue specific analysis. Audits are structured around our Practice Standards which are informed by legislation, regulation and local policies and procedures (See appendix for case audit guidance)

Thematic audits – these will focus on a specific area and the quantity will depend on the area considered, for example the MASH thematic will cover strategy meetings, section 47, decision-making, step-up step down and assessment. This will enable triangulation of findings and an in-depth overview of the process in that area.

There will be some aspects in these processes that are undertaken with partner organisations and/ or staff. The audits will each have templates developed for future use to enable accurate comparisons on performance to be made when audits are repeated.

Other activities and processes supporting our QA framework:

Management information and performance meetings
Monthly performance data and information
Service/ team/ worker level data
Dip sampling activity
Multi agency audits
Audit moderation
Checks and authorisation of a range of activities on the case recording system
Responding to complaints and compliments.
Quarterly Diagnostic / Service audits

45 We will gather the views of practitioners through:

Feedback as part of the audit activity
Feedback to Corporate Leadership Team, Directorate Leadership Team and Councillors
Feedback via the Staff Reference Group
Feedback at Staff Briefing Sessions
Feedback from Team Meetings
Feedback from Practice Week
Feedback from the annual staff health check survey

We will evaluate feedback from children and their families through:

Enabling participation and responding to children, young people and families:
Surveys of children and young people undertaken at service and departmental level.
Complaints and compliments
Feedback from independent advocates
Placement Review Meetings (Disruptions)
Children's feedback from child protection conferences and reviews and child in care reviews
Herefordshire Young Voices Group and activity led by the Participation Officer

We will evaluate qualitative information through:

Case file and thematic audits/ dip sampling
IRO and Child Protection (CP) Chairs reports and challenges
Direct observation of practice
Multi-agency file audits/ reports
Supervision audit
Performance management boards
External audit activity including peer audits, peer challenge activity, Ofsted inspections and Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) multi-agency audit activity
Findings of Rapid Reviews and Children's Safeguarding Practice Reviews
Management oversight on case recordings
Compliments and Complaints

Moderation, Learning and Improvement

Moderation

Moderation guidance has now been implemented (see appendix). Senior Managers will undertake monthly moderation to ensure that the quality and timeliness of audit completion is consistent and of good quality and will enable senior leaders to have robust oversight of the quality of practice in Herefordshire. Auditors of those selected are able to join in the process and the moderated work will be thematically reported to the Children's Improvement Board and shared with colleagues to improve and drive up practice.

Managers will use learning from audit activity within supervision sessions as well as within their team meetings.

Managers will review the impact of learning to ensure they are influencing practitioner's practice. Additionally managers will be using these learning opportunities to identify team training needs and these will be mapped by the Academy to ensure training meets these needs.

Managers will also use learning from quality assurance activity to set team practice priorities, implement priorities from the established Improvement Board and ensure the impact for children is measurable.

Auction action tracking

Actions from audits are recorded on a tracker held by the Quality Assurance Team and Team Managers are responsible for sharing with the team when these have been completed, any additions and the reviewing mechanisms. Service Managers will be responsible for ensuring Team Manager's implement reviewing mechanisms and ensure improving outcomes for children are sustained and reviewed effectively. In this way we now keep a centralised record of all children's cases audits and can ensure oversight of the impact of audit and subsequent remedial actions.

We routinely record all audit grades for subsections and overall use this data in our monthly reporting to demonstrate trajectory of improvement and target areas for development.

Closing the loop

Learning from activity carried out as part of this framework will be used proactively to bring about continuous development and improvement in practice to ensure we improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Audit activity only has value if it leads to improvement in services received by children, young people and their families, which then leads to better outcomes for the child or young person.

We continue to strengthen arrangements to ensure that actions/recommendations from audits are routinely tracked and completed.

A "closing the loop" exercise should be completed by the Team Manager and Service Manager receiving the completed audit. The Team Manager and Service Manager are expected to record manager's oversight on file within 5 working days of receiving all audits graded Requires Improvement and above.

In the case of inadequate audits; this should take place within 1 to 3 days working depending on risk (inadequate audit workflow to be followed see appendix).

Team Managers should ensure there is clear oversight on the child's file.

A further closing the loop exercise will be completed by the quality assurance Team after the original audit was completed. This is in

relation to audits graded Requires Improvement and above. The purpose of this is to ensure the appropriate corrective action has been put in place to improve the quality of practice and ensure the child or young person receives a service that meets their needs.

Children receiving an inadequate service.

Herefordshire has significantly strengthened arrangements to respond to children following an audit judging practice to be inadequate. We have strengthened the workflow and template for actions and review (see appendix) where the Head of Service and Service Manager ensure a reflective practice and action meeting takes place within 1-3 days.

Where risk is identified a visit to the child will also take place by the Social Worker. This action setting meeting will plan actions from the audit and allocate these to Social Worker, Child Protection Chair, and IRO, PA as appropriate.

We use the SMART approach as a basis for creating goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. The plan will show who is involved, the interventions and how change will happen in a timely way to ensure the best chance of success. The clearer we are together about the outcomes we are working towards the more likely that change will happen.

A monthly Confirm and Challenge meeting is chaired by the Service Director for Early Help, Quality Assurance and Partnerships with the Service Director for Safeguarding and Family Support to ensure that actions are being completed in a timely manner. The Confirm and Challenge meeting is an opportunity for reflection with the Head of Service regarding the audit findings, and oversight. The Confirm and Challenge meeting dip samples a proportion of inadequate audits.

For audits graded Inadequate, the Quality Assurance Team will schedule a further review audit 6-8 weeks after the initial audit was completed.

Themes from the quality assurance activity will inform:

Practice briefings and a rolling programme of practice development workshops delivered by the Social Work Academy.

A monthly report will be produced by the quality assurance team to reflect the previous month's case file audit activity. This will include information on compliance, overview of grades, audit themes, good practice and areas for development.

In addition a quarterly quality assurance report will summarise the previous 3 months overall case file audit activity, an overview of learning from complaints, feedback from those using the service, escalations by CP Chairs and IRO's, Rapid Reviews, multi-agency audit and any other quality assurance activity. This will be shared with all managers in the service and the Quality and Effectiveness Sub Group of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

A newsletter will bring together key audit findings, areas for development and impact for children and young people.

Quality Assurance Annual Report.

Child, Young Person and Family Feedback annual report.

Moving forward, the Principal Social Worker will prepare an annual report capturing the views and feedback of those with lived experience of the service.

The Complaints Team will continue to provide quarterly and annual reports to CLT and DLT, however, a summary of the quarterly report will be shared with the quality assurance team in order to incorporate into the quarterly report.

All services are encouraged to share learning opportunities with each other through the Social Work Academy by allowing their presentation and learning materials to be stored and made available.

A library of good practice exemplars will be held and updated by the Social Care Academy.

Best Practice Briefings

The QA team and PSW will develop a one page Best Practice Briefing. These will be mapped against audit findings and will target practice improvement.

These will be used by managers to generate practice discussions in team meetings and supervision and enable a focus on good quality practice.

The Principal Social Worker will utilise the learning from quality assurance activity and the practice reviews to develop procedures, reflective sessions and training opportunities to improve areas of practice in conjunction with the Social Care Academy.

How we will know that we have been successful

It is critical that we forensically track the impact of our improvement activity to ensure that it is leading to better outcomes and experiences for children. We remain vigilant in our scrutiny of QA activity and impact and are flexible and professionally agile in adapting to emerging themes.

Children and their families say they feel more respected and able to make good decisions for their children with the support of professionals

Parents, children and carers say that they were listened to and actively contributed to their children's plans

More children and young people are safely remaining with their families.

Length of time that children require intervention or support is only for as long as it is needed.

Children and young people experience stability and permanence whether at home or in care without delays

Policies, procedures and guidance support best practice and em-

power practitioners to be creative and innovative.

A quality assurance process aligned with the strengths based approach demonstrates that we measure what really matters to children, young people and families, and drives improvements to practice.

Caseloads are manageable and practitioner tools enhance practice, maximising time with families.

All staff are confident using strengths based approach in a consistent manner and case audits show fidelity to the approach.

Feedback from families, practitioners and partners is regularly analysed and informs service development.

Our partners tell us that they have experienced multi-agency collaboration, that strengths based approach is helping them to make a positive difference with families.

Partners tell us they feel confident using the "professional differences" policy when needed.

There is clear evidence of learning from assurance processes both in children's lives and systematically through closing the loop and embedding learning into practice.

Quality Assurance – Hearing the Voice of the Children Young People and Parent / Carers

Understanding the impact of what we do

Quality Assurance – Audit Activity Understanding quality of practice	Quality Assurance – KPIs Timeliness of workload and workflow				
	Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care / care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships	Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the Public law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes	The timely and robust identification of a multi-agency response to children & young people at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care	The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation	The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, sufficient numbers of Foster Carers, so children receive a timely response to having the service
Quality Assurance – Audit Activity Understanding quality of practice	Our corporate responsibility to children will be evident in our council priorities, policies and development plans	Our care proceedings will be completed in 26 weeks or we will know why not achieved	Our contacts, referrals, strategy and assessments will be completed in timescales with full partnership contributions	Our children in care will have up-to-date Health Assessments and Dental Checks	Our workforce data will show an improving picture on permanency and stability in agency staff
	Children and Families will tell us that they believe Herefordshire is a good place to live	We will visit children in care in timescales to meet need and see how they live. They will tell us they feel happy and safe with carers		They will tell us they have support with their emotional well being	Children will have fewer changes in social workers
		We will have timely and robust managerial oversight and clear best interest decision making for children subject to DoLS and those in unregistered placements.		Audit will show we have good quality life story work and letters in place	More children will be in family care and their placements stable
		Children subject to SGO will have good support to promote long term permanence		CYP will tell us they know why they are in care and that they have contributed and understand their plans	Children will tell us they feel happy and safe in care and that they know how to raise their worries and make complaints
Quality Assurance – Audit Activity Understanding quality of practice	Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision	Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements ensuring children are protected receive care if required	The partnership will ensure early sharing of information on unborns in need/at risk and assessments and appropriate plans will be in place by birth. Those in care proceedings will have timely progression to permanency, including foster to adopt placements	The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need	Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.
	Audits will show an improving picture on the quality and timeliness of managerial decisions	Repeat Social Work Assessments, children on requiring repeat CP plans will be lower than national		Visits & Assessments will be timely and our QA audits will show an increasing positive trend on the quality of visits and plans and evidence appropriate step up and down as plans progress	QA activity embedded across all services areas
	Staff will tell us they benefit from regular and reflective supervision	Our protection and care planning meetings and reviews will show timeliness and good multi-agency attendance		CYP and parents will tell us they can access their workers, have contributed to and understand the plans in place for them or their children	A range of opportunities for Children & Young People and Parents to tell us how they have experienced and benefited from our services will be in place
	Practice standards will be in place to guide best practice within and across the services	Partnership concerns will be addressed through a timely escalation process to resolution			Learning from both shared and developed practices identified

Progress is built on partnerships: partnership activities will be delivered through:

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership: Herefordshire Council Corporate Parenting Board: SEND Partnership

Oversight and coordination of this plan is through the Improvement Board
Evidencing our progress and outcomes will be shared through regular Ofsted monitoring visits



Title of report: Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 17 September 2024

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To scrutinise the Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan Phase 2.

Recommendation

That:

- a) That the committee scrutinise the Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan Phase 2, and make any recommendations to the service that they believe will support the implementation of the plan.

Alternative options

1. The committee agreed to carry out this work at its meeting on 30 July 2024. Therefore no alternative options are presented.

Key considerations

2. Children's Services was inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.

3. The inspection report was published on 21 September 2022 and is available at <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50192875>.
4. The Secretary of State issued a Statutory Direction (<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50192875>) to Herefordshire Council on 21 September 2022, and appointed a Commissioner for Children's Services.
5. The overall judgement was that Herefordshire Children's Service was 'inadequate'. The judgements contributing to this outcome are as follows:

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate

6. Three Ofsted monitoring visits have taken place to date. These monitoring visits found insufficient consistency and pace of progress in the areas of focus.
7. The Director of Children's Services left Herefordshire Council by agreement in March 24. Following this, an interim Director of Children's Services was appointed who started post on 1 July 2024 and is subject to a 9 month fixed term contract to 31 March 2025.

Current Situation

Development of the plan

8. The Phase 2 Improvement Plan (the plan), attached at Appendix 1, has been developed to bring focus, pace and measures to the improvement journey.
9. The plan sets out highlights of what has been achieved in the last two years and importantly introduces a quality assurance framework of measures to enable us to monitor progress. Key Performance Indicators', Service User feedback and Audit, defines measures.
10. The Children's Improvement Board, has reviewed its terms of reference and membership and is independently chaired by the Department of Education Commissioner Eleanor Brazil. Meetings are held on a six weekly basis.
11. Herefordshire Council continues to have a strong commitment to improving performance in children's services. Transformation of the service is now in its third year of a three-year programme that began in October 2021. This phase 2 covers the period 2024/25 and will be refreshed in July 2025.
12. The aims of the transformation plan remain the same which are:
 - a. Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
 - b. Making working in Herefordshire an attractive and rewarding career choice.
 - c. Embedding systemic partnership approaches and exploring alternative models of delivery.

- d. Making the service financially viable for the future across a range of services the council delivers.

All of these are underpinned and driven by improvement across the system of practice, management and leadership.

Community impact

13. The Ofsted inspection judgement of 'Inadequate' has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
14. Effective scrutiny enables the committee to reflect community concern, one of the four purposes of scrutiny as outlined by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Environmental impact

15. There are no direct environmental impacts resulting from scrutinising this report.

Equality duty

16. 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. There are no direct equality impacts in scrutinising this report. However any recommendations made by the committee may have an equalities impact if agreed by Cabinet or the portfolio holder. These risks will need to be evaluated and if necessary mitigated before any recommendation is accepted.

Resource implications

17. This report constitutes part of the typical function of this committee. Similarly, a programme of work undertaken by committee is an integral part of the council's 'business as usual'. There is no therefore no resource implication in setting or agreeing a work programme. However any recommendations made by the committee may have a resource implication if agreed by Cabinet or the portfolio holder. These risks will need to be evaluated and if necessary mitigated before any recommendation is accepted.

Legal implications

18. The remit of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 3 section 4 of the constitution and the role of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 2 article 6 of the constitution.
19. The Local Government Act 2000 requires the council to deliver the scrutiny function.

Risk management

20. In producing the plan, the Director or Children's Services has considered and mitigated the following risks.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Partnership buy in to the plan – recognising a joint responsibility to deliver an improved childrens services.	Extensive partnership engagement activity and involvement, focus groups with children and young people and key stakeholders. Quartely partnership summits.
Plan is not adopted or endorsed.	Continuous engagement throughout the development of the plan and the governance process. Engagement with Corporate Leadership Team, Department Leadership Team, the Improvement Board, the Commissioner and the Department for Education.

Consultees

21. There have no consultations required to produce this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan Phase 2

Appendix 2 Improvement Plan Phase 2 – plan on a page

Background papers

None

Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan Phase 2: July 24

Welcome to Herefordshire's Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan. This plan builds on the developments and progress of the Children's Services Improvement Plan 2022 that responded to the inadequate judgment arising from the Ofsted *Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services* (ILACS) framework in July 2022.

This plan recognises that whilst there have been evidenced signs of improvement in some services there is much more to do to ensure that best practice is our norm and that all children, young people and families receive the help, support and protection they need.

Our Shared Vision

We believe that children and young people thrive best in their **family care**, within **highly effective schools** and in **flourishing communities**. Our initial plan focused on the immediate actions of response to the priorities identified in the ILACS inspection and we have worked to put in place **systems and processes that support staff to deliver good services** and to develop a stronger Quality Assurance and strategic approach to service development to **ensure we understand how our services are experienced and what difference we are making**.

This plan reflects our collective drive and commitment to increase the pace of improvement focussing on four fundamental foundations of good practice that will make a real difference:

1. **Building Relationships** – ensuring children, young people and families have their views heard and taken into account through purposeful visiting
2. **Quality of assessments** – ensuring children, parents, carers and partner agencies contribute to assessments that build on their strengths
3. **Quality of our plans and planning** – ensuring plans are focused with outcomes for children and young people that are clear and measurable and that reduce risk and achieve permanency in safe, stable, loving care arrangements
4. **Supervision and management oversight** – ensuring staff have the right support, guidance, challenge and conditions to provide good quality services to the children and families they work with.

I hope this plan assures our children, young people and families that we remain fully committed to making the improvements required to our services and I want to thank them for their ongoing engagement with our staff and services.

Contents:

- 1) Ofsted Recommendations and Impact 2022 – 2024
 - Children's Services
 - Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board
 - Corporate Parenting Board
- 2) Governance and Monitoring of the improvement plan
- 3) The Plan on a page – Our measures of success – Level 1
- 4) Actions and milestones - How we will achieve improvement and change — Level 2



The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028



Vision

*Delivering the best for Herefordshire
in everything we do.*

Quiet **Healthy** Community Green
Valued Proud City Connected
Well **Safe** Welcome
Hope Vibrant Happy Rural
Content Communal

What Herefordshire will look like in 2028

We asked people to describe the Herefordshire they would like to see in 2028 in three words.
Safe, happy and healthy were the words most commonly used by respondents.

People - Helping the most vulnerable is important - help those who need it

Place - Tackling pollution of the River Wye, making the built environment more attractive

Growth - Road infrastructure needs to happen before employment land is developed to enable growth in a sustainable way

Transformation - Departments working better together, for the customer

Ofsted Recommendations

■ Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care and care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships.

■ The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, including sufficient numbers of Foster Carers, so children receive a timely response to having their needs identified and met across the service.

■ The timely and robust identification and multi-agency response to children and young people who are at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care.

■ The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need.

■ Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements to ensure children are protected and enter care when required.

■ Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the Public law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes.

■ The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation.

■ Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision.

■ Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.

Action and Impact 2022 -2024

Herefordshire Children's Services

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). We have strengthened the arrangements and resources in MASH, introduced a robust triaging system to RAG rate contacts to ensure that contacts are progressed according to need and risk, and increased staffing to ensure that contacts/referrals and assessments are responded to quickly and consistently and that the multi-agency response to risk through strategy meetings is effective.

Impact:

- Contacts progressed within 72hrs: 2022/23: 76% increased to 89% for 2023/24
- Referral decision within 24hrs: 22/23: 79% increased to 89% for 23/24
- Number of Strategy discussions held within 48hrs of the referral – 22/23: 96.51% decreased to 92.5% for 23/24
- Timeliness of SWA with 45days : 22/23: 54% increased to 79% for 23/24

Workforce: We committed to improving our sufficiency and stability of staff:

Impact: 23/24 we have increased our social work establishment by an additional 15 Social Workers and 8 newly qualified Social Workers. The Social Work Academy works in partnership with Coventry University to do the SW apprenticeship. By September 2024; 12 apprentices will have completed their apprenticeship and begun their ASYE with us. Six of these have now completed their ASYE with us. We are currently working in partnership with Coventry University and by September 2024 we will have 9 apprentices undertaking their apprenticeship with Coventry in addition to a further three apprentices finishing their apprenticeship programme with the University of Kent.

In September 2024; a further 5 Herefordshire Council employees will begin their apprenticeships.
The number of **permanent Social Workers has increased from 51/124 (41%) to 74/144 (51%)**

Family Based Care: We have increased the support in place for our Foster Carers to ensure our Children in Care can have family based, best quality care and placement stability.

- **March 2022:** 87 Foster Carers households; 43 Connected Care households
- **March 2023:** 104 Foster Carers households; 49 Connected Care households
- **March 2024:** 87 Foster Carers households; 66 Connected Care households – increasing the number of children we care for through connected persons

Training for Foster Carers: 22/23: 339 online training courses were completed.

23 /24: 612 online training courses were completed. An increase of 80.5% on the last year

Quality Assurance – understanding ourselves and the difference we make. We have developed and implemented our QA and performance management reports to ensure we can know ourselves better, monitor the progress and outcomes we are achieving. We have reviewed and revised our practice standards with increased management oversight of case work to ensure staff are supported and guided to delivering best practice and management grip.

Impact: December 2023 – March 2024, we are seeing a higher number of audits graded Requires Improvement versus Inadequate, indicating a positive trajectory towards improving the quality of practice.

- November 2023; 35% of audits were rated as Inadequate, 38% were rated as Requires Improvement and 22% as Good.
- March 2024; 23% of audits were rated as Inadequate, 50% were rated as Requires Improvement and 27% as Good.

Right services at the right time. Through improving partnership working and better management oversight, we have been able to ensure families are provided with support at the earliest opportunity and are effectively protected from harm without delay.

Impact:

- The proportion of **Early Help Assessment** completed by partner agencies has increased from 49% at 22/23 to 67% 2023/24
- The **Children's Help and Advice Team** (CHAT) opened a telephone help and support line January 2023. Approximately, 50% of the 750 calls to the line in 2023/24 have been from families. They have been supported with signposting or advice and guidance or through an early help assessment being completed or in calls referred to MASH if a safeguarding concern was identified. Receiving the right help at the right time.
- **Supporting Families** in 2022/23 early help achieved 160 payment by results, this is 160 families who achieved all their outcomes and sustained these changes for a minimum of 6 months. In 2023/24 early help supported 225 families to meet their outcomes and sustain them for 6 months, an increase of 65 families
- **Care Proceedings and PLO:** 23/24; 49% of children have concluded PLO in 16 weeks or less compared to 22% during the year 22/23. However our timeliness in Care Proceedings remains a concern with 62 cases in 22/23 with 68% completed in 26 weeks and 50 families in 23/24 where 56% completed in 26 weeks

Practice Model: We have begun our programme of “restorative practice” – this is our chosen model of practice that realises the need to have strong relationships between children, families and practitioners and within families and their networks to bring about change, recognising their strengths and working with them at the lowest level of intervention to safely address need and risk. **To date 500+ staff from across the Children's Services directorate have been trained**

Impact:

- Children with a Child in Need Plan children has reduced from 105 (2022/23) to 88 (2023/24) per 10,000
- S.47 enquiries has reduced from 371 (2022/23) to 269 (2023/24) per 10,000.
- Children subject to a Child Protection Plan reflects a reduction from 66 (2022/23) to 54 (23/24) per 10,000
- Children in Care has reduced from 121 (2022/23) to 112 (2023/24) per 10,000.
- **Phase 2: Training for our workforce and partners will continue so that families receive a consistent approach to our work with them.**

The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP) review has completed setting priorities and aligning the HSCP plan with the Improvement Plan. Key activities completed and Phase 2 progress outlined below:

- A review of **Partnership Professional Differences Escalation process** was completed and new process was successfully used to resolve a number of cases through stages 2/3 and one in stage 4 in year
- A **MASH and multi-agency data set agreed and reports to Quality & Effectives sub group – Phase 2: scrutiny oversight at the Designated Lead Partners forum (Working Together 2024).**

- The **HSCP Child Neglect Strategy** was approved and published May 2024. This strategy strengthens the application of Graded Care Profile 2, and introduces the Understanding Child Neglect training course and additional resources and tools to support practitioners, including a Child Neglect Screening Tool. **Phase 2: we will monitor numbers and outcome for children on children protection due to Neglect**
- The **Get Safe model** for child exploitation and contextual safeguarding was launched on 30 January 2024 and is operational. **Phase 2 will include MA audit of Get Safe identification and outcomes**
- **Trauma-Informed Practice** training was commissioned and will run through 2024. April 2024, 161 learners attended. **Phase 2: target 340 learners will attend the training by the end of 2024.** Roll-out Restorative Practice training to multi-agency professionals, including promotion of Think Family approaches
- **“Section 11” Self-Assessment** was completed in 2023; Check and Challenge sessions with all agencies involved have been completed (Dec 2023 and April 2024). **Phase 2: Tracking of agencies’ actions identified in the self-assessment and check and future challenge sessions.**
- Multi-Agency **Practitioner Forum** April 2024 - attended by 95 delegates. Presentations were on Updates to WT23, learning from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Recognising and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse.
- **Domestic Abuse training** has been a priority and programme of 15 specialist course developed with training 22-24 attended by 1,318 staff across the partnership over the two years and 15 courses
- **Phase 2: Children’s Services and the partnership will be updating procedures to reflect Working Together 2024 Development and Learning**

Corporate Parenting Board

Herefordshire CPB underwent a peer diagnostic and the board completed a self-assessment with support from the LGA during 2022. This was picked up later in 2023 following delays due to key personal changes and two further workshops and observations facilitated.

- Two “All Member” sessions held in 2023 and a session with Corporate Leadership Team in February 24 – focused on Legislation, Roles and Responsibilities of Corporate Parents and the partnership giving a foundation of understanding and bringing commitment alive.
- There is a full Corporate Parenting plan in place – revised for progress April 24 and will continue through 2024/25

Phase 2 will focus on:

- Capturing the voices of children and young people and feeding this into strategic development.
- Empowering members of the Corporate Parenting Board to use their influence in their organisations, wards and communities to improve outcomes for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.
- Complete the re-refresh and develop measures for what good looks like in Corporate Parenting
- Ensure the Corporate Parenting action plan for 24/25 is recognised and coordinated with the Council overall plan and its mission for 2028

Governance and Monitoring

Improvement Board

The Improvement board is the key partnership body with ownership of the improvement plan and responsibility for oversight of its delivery.

The Improvement Board is made up of strategic representation from partner agencies, working together to agreed terms of reference.

The Improvement Board is chaired by the DfE appointed Children's Commissioner.

Progress against the Improvement plan will be reported to the Children's Improvement Board on a six weekly basis.

Reporting will include, reports on the three dimension of our quality assurance programme that tell us, what we are doing, how well we are doing it and what difference it is making. Reports will include:

- A performance DASH board of key indicators linked to the Improvement Plan.
- Audit activity reports including multi-agency audits. Service User feedback reports

The Partnerships

The improvement plan has identified key partnership forums to carry out and oversee aspects of the plan relevant to their forums. These forums are set out below:

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP)

Co-ordinates safeguarding across the partnership through the statutory partners as set out in Working Together 2023

Partnership Executive Group

Created with Senior Leaders membership of the three safeguarding partners, LA, Police and Health for the purpose of ensuring any barriers identified in partnership work are removed to ensure delivery of the improvement plan at pace

Corporate Parenting Board

Statutory responsibility to ensure looked after children and young people grow up having the same opportunities as their peers and to support children leaving care to live successful independent lives.

Children & Young People Strategic Partnership

This multi-agency strategic partnership will oversee the delivery of the Herefordshire CYPP supporting, challenging and resolving partnership barriers to delivering good quality services

SEND Partnership – working specifically to ensure children with additional needs are recognised and engaged in service improvement and development

The Monitoring

Partnership forums that will oversee , monitor and support progress reflecting Childrens Services as a priority

Herefordshire Council Directorate and Political Leadership Teams undertakes shared ownership for the coordination and delivery of the council's plan. The Children's Improvement plan is a HCC priority

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Undertakes the scrutiny of all Children and Young People services in Herefordshire including monitoring and challenging the progress and implementation of the Improvement Plan

Health & well Being Board and Children and Young People Partnership provides leadership across the partnership to the people, communities, cultures and organisations that are delivering Herefordshire's vision of *keeping children and young people safe and giving them a great start in life.*

Childrens Corporate Leadership Board will review the progress against the plan quarterly alongside the wider children's performance and finance monitoring

Quality Assurance – Hearing the Voice of the Children Young People and Parent / Carers
Understanding the impact of what we do

Quality Assurance – Audit Activity
Understanding quality of practice

Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care / care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships.

Our corporate responsibility to children will be evident in our council priorities, policies and development plans

Children and Families will tell us that they believe Herefordshire is a good place to live

Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision.

Audits will show an improving picture on the quality and timeliness of managerial decisions

Staff will tell us they benefit from regular and reflective supervision

Practice standards will be in place to guide best practice within and across the services

Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the Public Law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes

Our care proceedings will be completed in 26 weeks or we will know why not achieved

We will visit children in care in timescales to meet need and see how they live. They will tell us they feel happy and safe with carers

We will have timely and robust managerial oversight and clear best interest decision making for children subject to DoLS and those in unregistered placements.

Children subject to SGO will have good support to promote long term permanence

Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements ensuring children are protected receive care if required.

Repeat Social Work Assessments, children on requiring repeat CP plans will be lower than national

Our protection and care planning meetings and reviews will show timeliness and good multi-agency attendance

Partnership concerns will be addressed through a timely escalation process to resolution

The timely and robust identification of a multi-agency response to children & young people at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care.

Our contacts, referrals, strategy and assessments will be completed in timescales with full partnership contributions

Visits and assessments to 16/17yr will be completed within timelines and they have made informed decisions about their welfare & accommodation

The partnership will ensure early sharing of information on unborns in need/at risk and assessments and appropriate plans will be in place by birth. Those in care proceedings will have timely progression to permanency, including foster to adopt placements

CYP will have told us why they went missing and we will address this in their plans

The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into

Our children in care will have up-to-date Health Assessments and Dental Checks

They will tell us they have support with their emotional well being

Audit will show we have good quality life story work and letters in place

CYP will tell us they know why they are in care and that they have contributed and understand their plans

The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need

Visits & Assessments will be timely and our QA audits will show an increasing positive trend on the quality of visits and plans and evidence appropriate step up and down as plans progress

CYP and parents will tell us they can access their workers, have contributed to and understand the plans in place

The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, sufficient numbers of Foster Carers, so children receive a timely response to having the service.

Our workforce data will show an improving picture on permanency and stability in agency staff

Children will have fewer changes in social workers

More children will be in family care and their placements stable

Children will tell us they feel happy and safe in care and that they know how to raise their worries and make complaints

Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.

QA activity embedded across all services areas

A range of opportunities for Children & Young People and Parents to tell us how they have experienced and benefited from our services will be in place

Learning from both shared and developed practices identified

Quality Assurance – KPIs
Timeliness of workload and workflow

Progress is built on partnerships: partnership activities will be delivered through:

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership: Herefordshire Council Corporate Parenting Board: SEND Partnership: Health and Wellbeing Board: Children's Partnership

Oversight and coordination of this plan is through the Improvement Board
Evidencing our progress and outcomes will be shared through regular Ofsted monitoring visits

Level 2: Actions and Measures of Progress and Success

Ofsted Recommendation 1		
Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care and care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships.		
Measures of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our corporate responsibility to children will be evident in our council priorities, policies and development plans • Children and Families will tell us that they believe Herefordshire is a good place to live 		
Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm appropriate funding to support children services improvement against a three year plan 	Herefordshire Council	April 24 - 27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ways to capture voices of Children and Young people cross services who are subject to children services intervention as Children in Need of Support, Care or Protection and use this to inform future strategic developments for the LA and Partnership 	Corporate Parenting Safeguarding Partnership Integrated Children Partnership (ICB)	Reporting quarterly and annually
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower and challenge members of the Corporate Parenting Board to use their influence in their organisations, wards and communities to improve outcomes for Looked after Children and Care Leavers. 	Cllr Powell/Tori Lynch Corporate Parenting Board	2024 Thereafter qrtly reporting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the apprenticeship programme for Care Leavers within Herefordshire Council – starting within children’s services and extending apprenticeships opportunities in all areas and major contracts. 	Tori Lynch Childrens Directorate Leadership Team	Aug 24 (Childrens) 12 cross council 24/25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Improvement Plan for Children Services and Corporate Parenting plan for 24/25 is recognised, reported on and coordinated within the Council’s overall plan and its mission for 2028 with measures on outcomes forming part of the Council score card 	Herefordshire Council Childrens Directorate Leadership Team	Sept 24 March 25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Child Friendly Herefordshire – learning from the Leeds initiative develop Herefordshire council plan priorities: People/Place/Growth/Transformation for children and young people. 	Council Leader & Lead Member for Childrens / CEO / DCS - Leeds Partner	2024 - 2027
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture the voices of Children and Young people across Herefordshire and use this to inform partnership priorities and strategic development. 	Safeguarding Partnership CYP Strategic Partnership	24/25/26

Ofsted Recommendation 2		
<p>The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, including sufficient numbers of Foster Carers, so children receive a timely response to having their needs identified and met across the service</p>		
<p>Measures of success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our workforce data will show an improving picture on permanency and stability in agency staff • Children will have fewer changes in social workers • More children will be in family care and their placements will be stable • Children will tell us they feel happy and safe in care and that they know how to raise their worries and make complaints 		
Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Undertake a social work voice of the workforce (VoSW) survey – measure progress against 2022/23 feedback through regular surveys and engage in LGA employee standards health check	PSW - Dylan Harrison	Sept /Oct 24
Develop a workforce board and implement the workforce strategy of Children Social Care with a focus on recruitment of social worker and multi - disciplinary roles that can offer relationship based practice	Rachel Gillott Workforce Board	Sept 24
Develop the CSC communication plan to ensure the improvement plan, it's measures, learning and practice developments are understood and owned throughout the workforce	Luenne Featherstone and CSC leadership	Sept 24
Further develop performance reporting from Mosaic to provide both self-service and provided performance reports to individual and managers to enable effective workload management	Jess Karia Claire Peet	2024/25 Reporting qrtly
Complete training across CSC workforce of the Restorative Practice model of intervention and prepare the service for sustainability in mole through train the trainer	John Maynard & CSC leadership	By Dec 24
Complete partnership training in Restorative practice across the partnership and deliver multi agency delivery in practice workshops – use session to promote Think Family approaches	John Maynard - Leeds	Sept – Nov 24 Dec – Mar 25
Review workforce organisational structure and use of the agency staff to ensure we are achieving best value in terms of outcomes for children in quality and stability and best value in financial costs	Tina Russell - DCS	Sept – Dec 24
Deliver against the Fostering Service strategy and improvement plan June 24 – developing the quality assurance programme to ensure we understand the experiences of our children and carers. Implement key recommendations of the Dfe review of fostering and self-assess our systems and process for recruitment and retention of carers - including a pay comparison review	Adele Odili	June 24 – June 25

Ofsted Recommendation 3		
<p>The timely and robust identification and multi-agency response to children and young people who are at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care.</p>		
<p>Measures of success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our contacts, referrals, strategy discussion and assessments will be completed in timescales and have full partnership contributions • Visits and assessments to 16/17yr will be completed within timelines and we will evidence these young people have made informed decisions about their welfare and accommodation • The partnership will ensure early sharing of information on unborn in need/at risk and assessments and appropriate safety plans will be in place by birth of the child. Those subject to PLO and Care Proceedings will have contingency plans and timely progression to permanency, including foster to adopt placements where appropriate • Children missing from care or home will have told us about the “push and pull” factors that led them to go missing and this will be reflected in their plans 		
Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Implement new Working Together arrangements for 2024 including the Engagement and Participation Framework and Think Family Guidance	Safeguarding Partnership (HSCP)	2024/25
Engage the Herefordshire community of families in workshops and surveys to review and update our Safeguarding Threshold of Intervention : Right Help, Right Time	HSCP	Sept- Dec 24
Review the evaluation of Early Help (People Too) and agree plan for the sustainable future of Herefordshire Early Help offer in a “Think Family” model	Nicola Turvey and EH Partnership	July – Sept 24
Complete a review of the targeted audits for SWA undertaken on 16/17yr old presenting as homeless. Add a further audit as necessary to complete learning and ensure compliance and learning is embedded. Seek YP feedback on their assessments and plans	Christine Wellington	July 24
Review practice standards for managing 16/17yrs old homeless presentations and incorporate learning in this area of practice	Christine Wellington	July/Aug 24
Complete a further audit to review impact on practice and compliance against 16/17yrs homelessness standards	Christine Wellington	Dec 24
Complete a review of processes and timeliness for the management and decision making in Private Fostering arrangements.	Jaz McAndrew	Aug 24

Review practice standards to incorporate learning in this area of practice		
Formalise the Early Help offer in schools throughout Herefordshire and co-ordinate development in Supporting Families' to maximise resources for the benefit of families	Nicky Turvey Service Managers	Sept – Dec 24
Complete an audit to review impact on practice and compliance against Private Fostering practice standards	Adele Odili / Debbie Weissang	Jan 25
Develop an annual programme for Private Fostering awareness raising across the partnership	Fostering Comms, Adele Odili	October 24
Undertake a targeted audit of pre-birth cases where parent are care leavers to review quality and timeliness of information sharing, assessment and plans.	Stacie Edwards / Sophie Roberts	Sept 24
Review all cases open to PLO for pre-birth/birth cases from April 24 to review quality and timeliness of PLO proceedings and evaluate the added impact of the pre-birth panel.	Tess Burgess Rachel Gillott	Sept /Oct 24
Develop and disseminate a combined learning review and revised protocol / practice standards as necessary in relation to findings of the PLO case audits. Repeat audit to review impact and compliance	Tess Burgess Rachel Gillott	Oct 24 Feb 25
Review "Push/Pull" factors, patterns, and trends identified from Welfare Return Interviews for children and young people missing from home and care. Develop and disseminate a combined learning review and revise MA protocol / practice standards and consider Welfare Return Interviews (WRI) function/role as necessary.	Holly Powell Amanda Watkins	Sept/Oct 24 Nov/Dec 24
Develop the WRI reporting mechanisms and information / data sharing within services to ensure SW and IRO /CP chairs have and understanding of and can take into account Review data between LA/Police to ensure we have an accurate picture of children and young people missing from home and care	Tori Lynch / C. Wellington Claire Peet	Sept – Dec 24
Cross ref the profile and findings of missing children returns with the Get Safe profiling to identify any support, prevent or disrupt activities the partnership can take fwd. to reduce children going missing from home or care and their exposure to Get Safe vulnerabilities	Holly Powell & Safe /Missing Children Partnerships	Sept/Oct 24
Undertake an annual community launch of Get Safe across Herefordshire to raise awareness amongst children, young people and the community of signs of concern and support services available	Christine Wellington Nicky Turvey Julie Taylor	Annual – March 25

Ofsted Recommendation 4		
The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need.		
Measures of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits, Assessments and planning for all children in need of support, care or protection will be timely against national standards. • Our QA audits will show an increasing positive trend on the quality of visits and plans • Children and Young People will tell us they can access their workers and have contributed to and understand their plans • Parents will tell us they have felt able to share their concerns and views and that they understand the plan in place for their children • Our Targeted QA audit will evidence appropriate thresholds for plans are in place including escalations and step downs 		
Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Complete the development and implementation of the quality assurance framework in each service area ensuring there is a mix of KPI, Audit and service user feedback informing our understanding of quality, timeliness and impact of work	Dylan Harrison CSC Leadership	July – Dec 24
Continue the delivery of learning workshops and briefings on SU feedback, Audit and KPI outcomes to ensure our workforce know what is working well and where developments are needed to improve or services “end to end” through a child’s journey. Understand this from an individual, team and service level to grip improvements	Dylan Harrison CSC Leadership	Monthly
Complete the locality delivery model to ensure the workforce are enabled to maximise time with children and families – reducing travel time and cost and creating a model that promote relational practice amongst professionals	Rachel Gillott	24/25
Develop a range of opportunities to hear the voice of the child in our work and using Surveys, Audit, CYP feedback through compliments and complaints and create a regular Voice of the Child report as a measure of success against the improvement plan	Dylan Harrison CSC Heads of Service	July 24
Continue reporting and analysis on KPI measures on MASH management of contact, referrals and child protection processes to review progress against self, SN and Eng. on demand and outcomes. Include MA attendance at strategy discussions	HSCP Q&E sub group DCS/Leadership	Internal monthly External qrtly reporting
Deliver against the recommendations as set out in the SafeLives Review including evaluation and compliance with DA training for the partnership workforce	Domestic Abuse Partnership	
Deliver against the Leeds improvement programme	John Maynard - Tina Russell - DCS	2024 /25

Ofsted Recommendation 5		
Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements to ensure children are protected and enter care when required.		
Measures of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat Social Work Assessments and children requiring repeat Child Protection plans will reduce and be lower than national averages Our protection and care planning meetings and reviews will show timeliness and good multi-agency attendance Partnership concerns will be addressed through a timely escalation process to resolution 		
Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Engage the Herefordshire community of families in workshops and surveys to review and update our Safeguarding Threshold of Intervention to build a “partnership” foundation for working “with” families and agreeing right level of intervention at the right time	Safeguarding Partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tina Russell Helen Wain Kath Cobain 	Sept- Dec 24
Continuing reporting and analysis on outcome measures at the front door for multi-agency management of contact, referrals and child protection processes to review progress against self/ SN/Eng. In relation to demand and outcomes	Safeguarding Q&E sub group	Internal monthly External qrtly reporting
Auditing to identify patterns and trends that lead to repeat referral/assessment/plans for children and sharing targeted learning to effect change	Dylan Harrison Christine Wellington	Sept – Dec 24
Develop reporting mechanism on Multi Agency contributions to child protection processes and children Strategy discussions through to Child Protection conferences	Claire Peet Amanda Sherrard	24
Monitor use of the new multi-agency Professional Differences Escalation processes for effective and timely outcomes for children	Safeguarding Partnership	24/25 annual reporting
QA Audit programme to include a specific reviews of the multi-agency contribution to assessments and children in need of support protection and care planning	Safeguarding Q&E sub group	Qrtly reporting
Parental feedback systems to be developed to confirm their experiences in working with a multi-agency group of professionals and their engagement in child protection conferences	Dylan Harrison	Qrtly reporting

Ofsted Recommendation 6		
Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the Public law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes.		
Measures of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our care proceedings will be completed in 26 weeks or we will know why this was not achieved and plans will be in place to address delays • Children and young people in care will tell us they feel happy and safe with their carers and are supported in their education and have contact with family in their best interests • We will have timely and robust managerial oversight and clear best interest decision making for children subject to DoLS and those in unregistered placements that have taken the child and young person's views into account. 		
Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Identify and audit cases where PLO timeliness is at risk or not achieved to identify actions to retrieve timeliness or identify patterns and trends for learning and practice improvement. Reporting to LFJB and CSC Exec	LFJB sub grp Tess Burgess Rachel Gillott	Quarterly
Confirm KPI to include identification of children on Child Protection at 15mths - have in place a practice standard for a managerial oversight to address any drift / threshold / direction required to progress the plan and undertake audit of the above as targeted audits for managerial compliance.	Rachel Gillott Catherine Harvey Dylan Harrison	Monthly to service / Qrtly to IP board
A monthly court data report using the Legal Tracker will provide us with outcome and timeliness date for PLO and Care proceedings. This will enable us to identify patterns and trends of concern in practice and or teams	Tess Burgess Rachel Gillott	Monthly data qrtly analysis reports
Liaise regularly with the lead Family Judge to seek proactive feedback on positive and concerning practice in relation to care proceedings including Secure and Dols applications, experienced by the family courts	T. Russell / HHJ Cole Snr Legal/CSC	Qrtly mtgs
Review and develop our practice standards for the management of children in unregistered settings ensuring the wishes and outcomes for the child to inform decisions, managerial decisions on record, snr management notifications made and Ofsted notifications sent in a timely way	Tori Lynch Lisa Dudfield Hayley Doyle	August 24
Review the Dispute Resolution process to ensure it understood by all parties, adding value to identifying and addressing drift and delay where it exists and impacts on outcomes for a child being achieved	Dylan Harrison Debbie Weissang	Sept 24
We will have in place a performance report to support managers to oversee timeliness in visits and planning all cases of YP subject to DOLS.	Rachel Gillott Catherine Harvey	July 24
Develop opportunities to hear the voice of the child and carers to seek their experiences on timeliness of their care and child protection plans - this will be supported by statutory reporting on timeliness of visits/ Conferences and CiC reviews.	Dylan Harrison IRO and CP chairs services	In place by Sept 24
Review Permanence, kinship and reunification process – To include: an LRPC peer review of updated policy and proposals to review process and culture on achieving permanency.	John Maynard CPO Permanency TM	Oct- Dec 24

Ofsted Recommendation 7

The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation.

Measures of success

- Our children in care will have up-to-date Health Assessments and Dental Checks
- They will tell us they have support with their emotional well being
- Audit will show we have good quality life story work and letters in place
- Children and young people will tell us they know why they are in care and that they have contributed and understand their plans
- More children will leave care to permanency via SGO in a timely way

Actions we will take	Person/Forums responsible	Timescales
Deliver and with children and families evaluate the twelve Community Safety funded projects that deliver Early Help and Support to identify those for future long term funding	Nicola Turvey EH partnership & providers	24/25
Evaluate the "My Family, My School, My Community" project to identify long term sustainability of provision in the partnership funding opportunities	Nicola Turvey EH partnership & providers	24/25
Review the pathway and thresholds between Early Help Chat and MASH ensuring they are understood, promote and support partners to gain consent / complete EH interventions, have clear decision making	Nicola Turvey Christine Wellington	August 24
As a local ICB Children partnership we will use our collective data and feedback to understand gaps in services and use this to inform commissioning of early help and emotional health and well-being services at all levels for children in need of support, care or protection	Children's ICB partnership	24/25
Provide training in Life Story work and be skilled to deliver this for children in care. Audit the quality of "Later life letters" to inform practice development – undertake a practice workshop and develop tools for practice	Dylan Harrison L&D and QA	24/25 Sept 24
Confirm the Special Guardianship offer to promote permanency through SGO in a timely way with an offer that provides a strong practical, emotional and financial support in permanency	Nicola Turvey Jaz McAndrew	Oct 24
We will confirm data on our children registered with dental practice and Dental checks and raise findings with ICB and in service to ensure all children have these in place and up to date.	Tori Lynch/Rachel Gillott	By Oct 24
Engage in the regional Care Leavers forums to ensure HCC Care Leavers have best practice in suitable accommodation, access to education/employment, finances and wellbeing support to independence	Tori Lynch & CPB	24/25
Appointment of lead for the Meadows Contract and the 1fte psychologist post for Children in Care and for 0.5fte therapist post for Care Leavers. Advertisement Summer 24 appointed persons in post by Oct 24	Sonia Upton/Rachel Gillott	Oct 24

Ofsted Recommendation 8		
Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision.		
Measures of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our QA audits will show a consistent improving picture on the quality and timeliness of managerial decisions Staff will tell us they benefit from regular and reflective supervision Staff will have processes in place to guide best practice in case management through services and between teams – audit will show compliance 		
Actions we will take	Person/Forums responsible	Timescales
Create a supervision audit programme to assure ourselves on the quality of supervision for case holding social workers and social care workers and family support staff delivering early help	Tori Lynch Christine Wellington Debbie Weissang	Sept 24 Audit Oct/Nov
Develop our practice standards for managers on recording decisions in the interests of children with rationale and reference to threshold and outcomes so these decisions are auditable, provide guidance to staff and accountability for practice decisions.	Tori Lynch Christine Wellington Debbie Weissang	24/25
Complete a review of the Complaints and Compliments policy, process and culture to ensure we are getting the best learning from complaints, we are celebrating our compliments and have processes that provide assurance on quality and timeliness	Tilly Page Rachel Gillott Andy Lloyd (Leeds)	Aug / Sept 24
Deliver the management oversight and supervision and decision making training to all managers	John Maynard - Leeds	Aug/Sept/Oct 24
Ofsted Recommendation 9		
Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.		
Measures of success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> QA activity will be embedded across all services areas – reporting quarterly on progress improvement and impact A range of opportunities for Children, Young People and Parent's to tell us how they have experienced and benefitted from our services in place Learning from these will be shared and used to developed practice for individuals, teams and services through the child's journey 		
Actions we will take	Person/Forums responsible	Timescale

Review the use of Power Bi and the CSC case file system to ensure permanence data is both self-service and pushed out to manager to enable them to have timely performance information on which to manage workflow and timeliness of practice – providing a headline for deep dive	Jessica Karia / Tina Russell	Summer 24
Complete the development and implementation of the quality assurance framework in each service area ensuring there is a mix of KPI, Audit and Children and Young People Service user feedback informing our understanding of quality, timeliness and impact of work	Rachel Gillott and CSC Heads of Service	July – Dec 24
Practice standards will be in place to promote consistency and good practice across the services	Dylan Harrison Rachel Gillott	24/25

Paul Walker

Tina Russell

Paul Walker - Herefordshire Council Chief Executive

Tina Russell – Director of Childrens Services (Interim)

Simon Trickett

Rachel Jones

Simon Trickett – Chief Executive ICB

Rachel Jones – Assistant Chief Constable – West Mercia Constabulary

Quality Assurance – Hearing the Voice of the Children Young People and Parent / Carers

Understanding the impact of what we do

Quality Assurance – Audit Activity
Understanding quality of practice

Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care / care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships

Our corporate responsibility to children will be evident in our council priorities, policies and development plans

Children and Families will tell us that they believe Herefordshire is a good place to live

Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision

Audits will show an improving picture on the quality and timeliness of managerial decisions

Staff will tell us they benefit from regular and reflective supervision

Practice standards will be in place to guide best practice within and across the services

Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the Public law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes

Our care proceedings will be completed in 26 weeks or we will know why not achieved

We will visit children in care in timescales to meet need and see how they live. They will tell us they feel happy and safe with carers

We will have timely and robust managerial oversight and clear best interest decision making for children subject to DoLS and those in unregistered placements.

Children subject to SGO will have good support to promote long term permanence

Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements ensuring children are protected receive care if required

Repeat Social Work Assessments, children on requiring repeat CP plans will be lower than national

Our protection and care planning meetings and reviews will show timeliness and good multi-agency attendance

Partnership concerns will be addressed through a timely escalation process to resolution

The timely and robust identification of a multi-agency response to children & young people at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care

Our contacts, referrals, strategy and assessments will be completed in timescales with full partnership contributions

Visits and assessments to 16/17yr will be completed within timelines and they have made informed decisions about their welfare & accommodation

The partnership will ensure early sharing of information on unborns in need/at risk and assessments and appropriate plans will be in place by birth. Those in care proceedings will have timely progression to permanency, including foster to adopt placements

CYP will have told us why they went missing and we will address this in their plans

The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation

Our children in care will have up-to-date Health Assessments and Dental Checks

They will tell us they have support with their emotional well being

Audit will show we have good quality life story work and letters in place

CYP will tell us they know why they are in care and that they have contributed and understand their plans

The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need

Visits & Assessments will be timely and our QA audits will show an increasing positive trend on the quality of visits and plans and evidence appropriate step up and down as plans progress

CYP and parents will tell us they can access their workers, have contributed to and understand the plans in place for them or their children

The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, sufficient numbers of Foster Carers, so children receive a timely response to having the service

Our workforce data will show an improving picture on permanency and stability in agency staff

Children will have fewer changes in social workers

More children will be in family care and their placements stable

Children will tell us they feel happy and safe in care and that they know how to raise their worries and make complaints

Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.

QA activity embedded across all services areas

A range of opportunities for Children & Young People and Parents to tell us how they have experienced and benefited from our services will be in place

Learning from both shared and developed practices identified

Quality Assurance – KPIs
Timeliness of workload and workflow

Progress is built on partnerships: partnership activities will be delivered through:

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership: Herefordshire Council Corporate Parenting Board: SEND Partnership

Oversight and coordination of this plan is through the Improvement Board
Evidencing our progress and outcomes will be shared through regular Ofsted monitoring visits



Title of report: Work programme 2024/5

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 17 September 2024

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All Wards

Purpose

To consider the draft work programme for Herefordshire Council's scrutiny committees for the municipal year 2024/25.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The committee agree the draft work programme for Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee contained in the work programme report attached as appendix 1, which will be subject to monthly review, as the basis of their primary focus for the remainder of the municipal year.**
- b) **The committee note the work programme for the other scrutiny committees, and identify any opportunities for collaboration or alignment of work.**

Alternative options

1. The committee could decline to agree a work programme for its future committee meetings. This would likely result in unstructured and purposeless meetings.
2. The committee could also decline to identify areas of potential collaboration or alignment of work with other committees. This could result in duplication or overlap of work.

Key considerations

3. A fundamental part of good scrutiny is planning and agreeing a programme of work for the committee to undertake. A well-considered work programme:

- a. identifies priorities for the committee's work that align with corporate and partnership priorities, as well as reflecting community concern;
 - b. ensures that each identified topic has clear objectives that focus the committee's work;
 - c. creates a timetable for the committee's programme of work so that the committee carry out its work at the optimal time; and
 - d. provides officers and partners with requirements for evidence that will support the committee in providing evidence-based scrutiny
4. To prepare this work programme, the committee chairs have met with officers of the council to identify potential priority areas of work for the committee. These priority areas have been scheduled within the work programme to ensure the committee considers topics when it is most useful to do so. A draft of this work programme has then been circulated to the council's corporate leadership team and other key senior directors, alongside committee chairs, for further comment and refinement.
 5. As agreed by members of Scrutiny Management Board, I have replaced individual work programme reports, updated in time for each committee meeting, with a single combined work programme, published at the beginning of each month. This makes it easier for committees to plan work on topics that straddle the remit of more than one committee. It also facilitates planning for specific items on the work programme from corporate directors. The most recent work programme was published on 2 September 2024 and is attached as Appendix 1.
 6. Attached as Appendix 2 to this report is the council's forward plan of key decisions.

Community impact

7. Effective scrutiny enables the committee to reflect community concern, one of the four purposes of scrutiny as outlined by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Environmental impact

8. This report contains no direct environmental impacts. However the work that the committee will undertake resulting from agreeing this work programme may have direct impacts. Reports arising from or supporting this work will outline their potential environmental impact.

Equality duty

9. 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. This report contains no direct equality impacts. However the reports and issues that the committee will consider may have direct impacts. Reports arising from or supporting this work will outline the any associated equality impacts for committee consideration.

Resource implications

10. This report constitutes part of the typical function of this committee. Similarly, a programme of work undertaken by committee is an integral part of the council's 'business as usual'. There is no resource implication in setting or agreeing a work programme. However agreed topics in the work programme, in particular any requests for bespoke research or the involvement of outside experts or community groups, may incur resource costs. These will be contained in any reporting or planning of agreed topics within this work programme.

Legal implications

11. The remit of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 3 section 4 of the constitution and the role of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 2 article 6 of the constitution.
12. The Local Government Act 2000 requires the council to deliver the scrutiny function.

Risk management

13. There are no risks identified in the committee agreeing an effective and timely programme of work. However there is a risk to the council's reputation if committees fail to set a work programme, or set a programme of work that does not address local authority, partnership or community priorities.

Consultees

14. In drafting this work programme, consideration has been given to:
 - a. The previous work of scrutiny committees;
 - b. Priorities suggested by members of the committee; and
 - c. Work with Herefordshire Council officers to develop topics and agree optimum timings to bring items for consideration.
15. This work programme is subject to ongoing review, which may involve additional consultees.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny work programme 2024/25 September 2024
Appendix 2 – Herefordshire Council Forward Plan September 2024

Background papers

None

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

Below are the work programmes of Herefordshire Council's five scrutiny committees.

Work programmes are subject to change, with revised programmes agreed at the end of formal committee meetings.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Briefing

2 September 2024

Auditing and quality assurance

Committee Meeting

17 September 2024 report publication date **9 September 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **6 September 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Quality Assurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise audit work to ensure that its practice is of the highest standard possible. Understand the common weaknesses in practice and how staff are supporting to address them. Analysis of common issues in other local authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of case management activity Briefing on quality assurance from Leeds City Council Quality Assurance Framework Quality Assurance Framework, Leeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director Early Help, Quality Assurance, and Prevention Chair, Safeguarding Children Partnership
Improvement Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny of Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan Phase 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Plan Phase 2 Quality Assurance – Hearing the Voice of the Children Young People and Parent / Carers plan on a page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Director, Children and Young People

Committee Meeting

26 November 2024 **report publication date 18 November 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 15 November 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Including children's voices in council policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the role of the council's children's advocacy team. Scrutinise the council's participation and engagement strategy Scrutinise how the council seeks to understand the priorities of children and young people with regard to council areas of responsibility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area of focus – transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group with children and young people, both within and outside the service Children and Young People quality of life survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints and Children's Rights Manager Tori Lynch, Head of Service for Corporate Parenting Hereford City Youth Council

Committee Meeting

21 January 2025 **report publication date 13 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 10 January 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Ensuring sufficiency for children and young people with a SEND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the level of need for SEND provision in Herefordshire, and how Herefordshire Council and partners meet that need. Understand how Herefordshire Council, the Department for Education and other bodies fund the development of capacity to support children with a SEND. Scrutinise how the council, schools and health partners work together to support children, with or without a statement of need or education, health and care plan (EHCP). Explore the role of short breaks and their commissioning. Measure progress in meeting recommendations following the review by the Local Government Association. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liz Farr Service Director, Education Hilary Jones – Service Manager SEND Jade Brooks – Integrated Care Board Children's Lead Wye Valley Trust

Briefing

February 2025

Update on school attainment

Committee Meeting

18 March 2025 **report publication date 10 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 06 March 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Child exploitation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand different ways children are at risk of exploitation and the factors that contribute to that risk.• Scrutinise how the different agencies work together to tackle exploitation.• Scrutinise the role of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in tackling exploitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Member briefing on child exploitation• Criminal exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults - county lines• Childrens-society-Criminal-Exploitation-Stages-of-Recruitment• Exploitation Safety Plan Practice Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service Director, Safeguarding• West Mercia Police• West Mercia Youth Justice Service• Wye Valley NHS Trust

*The Corporate Director, Children and Young People and Portfolio Holder, Children and Young People, both have a standing invitation to each committee meeting. It is assumed that the portfolio holder will attend each meeting.

Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

Working Group Meeting

8 October 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Public Realm Future Operating Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise proposals for a new operating model for the council's contract for public realm works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of proposed operating model Draft contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director Environment and Highways Programme Director – major contracts

Committee Meeting

15 October 2024 **report publication date 7 October 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 1 October 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Local authority housing delivery models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider commissioned research into housing delivery models in other local authorities Make recommendations to Cabinet on potential operating models in Herefordshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioned research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director, Economy and Growth Head of Service, Housing and Wellbeing Head of Housing Development
Public Realm Future Operating Model Task and Finish Group recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree recommendation from the committee's task and finish group scrutinising proposals for a new operating model for the council's contract for public realm works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task and finish group report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director Environment and Highways Programme Director – major contracts
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

13 November 2024 **report publication date 5 November 2024** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 31 October 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Enterprise Zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise operation of Hereford Enterprise Zone and how learning from the project will be applied to future enterprise zones. Understand the economic and social benefits of enterprise zones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline of the economic and social benefits of enterprise zones. SWOT of enterprise zone proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current and previous chairs of the Hereford Enterprise zone Representative from Ross Enterprise Zone
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

15 January 2025 **report publication date 7 January 2025** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 6 January 2025**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Local Transport Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise findings of public consultation on Local Transport Plan proposals. Review draft plan before Council approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Local Transport Plan Plan consultation findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director Environment and Highways Head of Transport and Access Services Members of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

12 March 2025 **report publication date 4 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 21 February 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Highways Winter Maintenance <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review of winter maintenance of highways following the 2024-25 winter period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overview of winter serviceMap of highways and footpaths gritted during the winter period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Service Director Environment and HighwaysHead of Highways and Traffic
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*The Corporate Director, Economy and Environment, Cabinet Member, Economy and Growth, Cabinet Member, Community Services and Assets, Cabinet Member, Roads and Regulatory Services, and Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure, all have a standing invitation to the meeting.

Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Committee Meeting

23 September 2024 **report publication date 13 September 2024** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 16 September 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Active travel measures including road safety for all users <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the county policy on implementing active travel measures where new road build is being proposed. Explore where the council is on implementation of active travel measures across the county. Explore the benefits and challenges of active travel measures around key buildings such as schools and hospitals and residential roads in Herefordshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Travel policy Appropriate case studies from within the county and other authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herefordshire Council leads on active travel measures Groups representing relevant stakeholders including: pedestrians, walkers, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

18 November 2024 **report publication date 8 November 2024** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 7 November 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Bus service improvement plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise plans to invest the indicative £1,064,000 allocated to Herefordshire Council by the Department for Transport to improve bus services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding allocation and proposed improvements to bus services in Herefordshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Transport and Access Services Bus services user groups
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

20 January 2025 **report publication date 10 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 9 January 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Tree and Hedgerow management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the findings of the recent Defra consultation on hedgerow management. Scrutinise council tree and hedgerow management policy and see whether it is fit for purpose for the county and climate change resistant. To consider the county tree strategy as an enabler for Herefordshire to become a carbon offset trading partner with others. Look at countywide action on ash dieback and replacement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council policy on tree and hedgerow management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Farmers Union CPRE (formerly Council for the Protection of Rural England) Policy leads on tree and hedgerow management
River Lugg water quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate work to improve the water quality of the River Lugg and the prospect of getting some of the £35 million for the River Wye improvement diverted to the River Lugg. Understand the implications of poor water quality on the ability to plan and build new housing. Evaluate the progress on developing new wetland areas on river improvement and their impact on housing development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Years of analysis of water quality data (from Nutrient Management Board or Environment Agency) Evidence from Merry Albright (Home Builders Federation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herefordshire Construction Industry Lobby Group Natural England Environment Agency Natural Resources Wales Defra River Wye champion
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

24 March 2025 **report publication date 14 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 13 March 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Energy Efficiency and Retrofitting <ul style="list-style-type: none">Understand the outcomes of the Building Retrofit and supply chain development funded by Climate Reserve fundEvaluate progress on Keep Herefordshire Warm initiativesConsider whether new houses and self –build properties are ‘zero carbon ready’	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Climate Reserve fund financial reportsStats of surveys undertaken, grants awarded, work completedFuture Homes Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gareth Ellis – Sustainability & Climate Change OfficerAndrew Cooper – LGA, previously Renewable Energy Assoc., Yorkshire Energy ServicesJackie Jones – Building Sense
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*The Corporate Director, Economy and Environment and Cabinet Member, Environment, both have a standing invitation to the meeting.

Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Briefing

20 September 2024

Supporting care leavers

Committee Meeting

3 October 2024 **report publication date 25 September 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 23 September 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Supporting care leavers <ul style="list-style-type: none">How do we identify and meet the housing and support needs of care leavers?How do we ensure that the council's looked-after children leave its care with good life skills?Where needed, how does the council ensure a smooth transition from children's to adult services?		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Head of Service, Corporate ParentingService Director – All Ages CommissioningHead of Service, Living WellHead of Service, Housing
Review of Talk Community <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pre-decision scrutiny of the review of Talk Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review final report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Service Director, Communities
All-age carers' strategy working group <ul style="list-style-type: none">To agree a terms of reference for a working group to scrutinise the council's draft all-age carers' strategy action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Working group terms of reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Working Group Meeting

Date to be confirmed

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
All-age carers' strategy action plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">Scrutiny of all-age carers' strategy action planRecommendations to further develop the action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Commissioning Manager, Community WellbeingChair, Carers' Partnership Group

Committee Meeting

25 November 2024 **report publication date 15 November 2024** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 14 November 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
West Mercia Police "Most Appropriate Agency" policy <ul style="list-style-type: none">Scrutinise the impact of the change in West Mercia policy regarding responses to welfare, mental health incidents and missing persons.Further scrutinise the delivery of the policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">West Mercia Police "Most Appropriate Agency" policyHerefordshire Council policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">West Mercia PoliceDirector of Public Health
Supported housing for working age adults with additional needs <ul style="list-style-type: none">How do we forecast, commission and meet the housing needs of adults with a learning or with a severe and enduring mental health problem?How do we work with developers to provide the required housing?		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Service Director – All Ages CommissioningHead of Housing
All-age carers' strategy action plan – recommendations of the working group <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discuss and agree recommendations of the proposed working group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Working group report and draft recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All-age carers' steering group chairSenior commissioning officer
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

27 January 2025, **report publication date 17 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 16 January 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Health and Wellbeing Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine the objectives of the strategy. To scrutinise delivery plans underpinning key objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. To measure progress in developing Herefordshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Wellbeing strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair, Health and Wellbeing Board Director of Public Health
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

31 March 2025 **report publication date 21 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 20 March 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Topic to be confirmed		
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*The Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing and Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Wellbeing, both have a standing invitation to the meeting.

Scrutiny Management Board

Committee Meeting

10 September 2024 **report publication date 2 September 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 29 October 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Herefordshire Council financial position <ul style="list-style-type: none">Scrutinise:<ul style="list-style-type: none">The 2023-24 budget outturnPreparations for the 2025-26 budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2023-24 budget outturn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Director of Finance (Section 151 officer)
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer

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Committee Meeting

28 October 2024 **report publication date 18 October 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 16 October 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
The management and delivery of capital projects <ul style="list-style-type: none">How does the council approach project manageUnderstand the council's approach to project management overallWhat have been the strengths and areas for improvement of the PMO approach?How does the council ensure that it has the right capability and capacity to deliver projects at the right quality, within budget and to agreed timescales?How does the council ensure value for money through the delivery of capital projects?How does the council understand its performance with regards to the management and delivery of projects, how does it ensure it constantly improves its performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Corporate Director, Economy and Environment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the council ensure that the interactions between capital projects and the revenue budget are effectively managed? What impact has the council had through capital project and how can it have greater impact in the future? 		
Devolution – options for Herefordshire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess prospective options for a submission to Government for devolution powers to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options for partnership arrangements with other local authorities. Understanding the path to a devolution settlement The opportunities and benefits for Herefordshire Communities from devolution The risks and Risks and challenges to Herefordshire from devolution 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Director, Economy and Environment
Herefordshire Council Plan – Delivery Plan Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree terms of reference for a Council Plan Delivery Plan Working Group, to contribute to the development of the delivery plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft working group terms of reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

**Working Group Meeting
November 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Herefordshire Council Plan delivery plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand what actions the Executive is prioritising in the Delivery Plan How will the Executive ensure that they are sufficiently ambitious but also realistic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft delivery plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be confirmed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the council performing in terms of this year's delivery plan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will that impact next year's delivery plan? What will be the impact of the delivery plan on Herefordshire communities? 		
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Committee Meeting

16 December 2024 **report publication date 6 December 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 4 December 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Financial Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of 2024-2025 Quarters 1 and 2 outturn How effective has the executive been in managing the budget for the first 6 months of the year Where has the executive failed to achieve planned savings and what mitigating actions have been taken? Where has the executive seen unplanned growth in budgets and what mitigating actions have been taken? What are the key risks to the delivery of the budget over the remainder of the year? What has been the impact of the executive's work on the communities of Herefordshire? Scrutiny of management action to achieve planned budget outturn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget 2024 Quarter 1 and 2 outturn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance
Workforce planning and strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the council determine its workforce requirements? Where are the gaps in the current council staffing structures and skills, and what work is underway to fill those gaps? What has been the impact of MERS on the council's structure, and how will those impacts be addressed? What programmes are planned and are underway to develop the council's workforce? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce strategy Annual staff survey findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Herefordshire Council Plan – Delivery Plan Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree findings of the delivery plan working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final working group report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

14 and 24 January 2025 **report publication dates 6 and 16 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 3 or 6 January 2025 (date to be confirmed)

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Budget, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise the proposed 2025-26 budget for Herefordshire Council. Evaluate the alignment between the medium term-financial strategy and the Herefordshire Council Plan and its delivery plan. Ensure that the capital priorities in capital programme align with the priorities of the delivery plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft 2025-26 budget Capital Programme Medium-term financial strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance All corporate directors Leader, Council
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

11 March 2025 **report publication date 3 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 28 February 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Financial Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of 2024-2025 quarter 3 outturn. Scrutiny of management action to achieve planned budget outturn. Scrutiny of portfolio holder action to identify risks in delivery of agreed budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarter 3 outturn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance
Digital, Data and Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the council's proposed investments in digital and data technology? How does the council achieve value for money in its investments? What are the gaps in the council's information technology, and how will address them? What staffing, training and corporate restructuring will be required to deliver the proposed investments? What opportunities exist to digitise council services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the council ensure that digitisation does not exclude vulnerable groups? 		
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

May 2025 **report publication date May 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning May 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Hoople <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does our relationship with Hoople deliver value for money for the council? How does our relationship with Hoople deliver value for money for the council? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does Hoople itself deliver value for money? • What are Hoople's areas of competence and expertise? • How does the council balance the friction caused by having a client/supplier relationship with the benefits of having a Tekkal supplier and a specialist? • How does the council capture Hoople's expertise in shaping relevant policies and plans? • What has been in the impact of Hoople on the communities of Herefordshire? • How does Hoople contribute to the priorities in the Council Plan and its annual delivery plan? 		
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*The Director of Finance and all Cabinet portfolio holders have a standing invitation to each committee meeting. Portfolio holder attendance is dependent on the topic being discussed.

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN



This document, known as the Forward Plan, sets out the decisions which are expected to be taken during the period covered by the Plan by either Cabinet as a whole, or by individual Cabinet Members. The Plan is updated regularly and is available on the Herefordshire Council website (www.herefordshire.gov.uk) and from Council Offices. This edition supersedes all previous editions.

The council must give at least 28 days' notice of key decisions to be taken. A key decision is one which results in the council incurring expenditure or making savings of £500,000 or more, and/or is likely to be significant in terms of the strategic nature of the decision or its impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the council to a significant number of people living or working in the locality affected.

Current cabinet members are listed below. For more information and links papers for Cabinet meetings please visit <https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=251>

Councillor Jonathan Lester	Corporate Strategy and Budget (Leader of the Council)
Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst	Environment (Deputy Leader of the Council)
Councillor Carole Gandy	Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Ivan Powell	Children and Young People
Councillor Harry Bramer	Community Services and Assets
Councillor Graham Biggs	Economy and Growth
Councillor Pete Stoddart	Finance and Corporate Services
Councillor Barry Durkin	Roads and Regulatory Services
Councillor Philip Price	Transport and Infrastructure

Documents submitted in relation to each decision will be a formal report, which may include one or more appendices. Reports will usually be made available on the council website at least 5 clear working days before the date of the decision. Occasionally it will be necessary to exempt part or all of a decision report from publication due to the nature of the decision, for example if it relates to the commercial or business affairs of the council. Other documents may be submitted in advance of the decision being taken and will also be published on the website unless exempt.

To request a copy of a decision report or related documents please contact governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk or telephone 01432 261699.

FORWARD PLAN FOR 1 September 2024 ONWARDS

The following information is provided for each entry in the Forward Plan:

Heading	Contains
Report title and purpose	A summary of the proposal
Decision Maker and Due date	Who will take the decision and the date the decision is expected to be made
Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	The cabinet member with responsibility for this decision and the officers producing the decision report.
Directorate	The directorate of the council responsible for the decision.
Date uploaded onto plan	The date the decision was first uploaded and the notice period started for key decisions.
Decision type, exemptions and urgency	Whether the decision is a Key or Non-Key decision, if the report is expected to be fully open, partly exempt or fully exempt and if urgency procedures are being followed.

Decisions to be taken by Cabinet at a formal meeting are listed first, ordered by date, and include both Key and Non-Key decisions. Decisions to be taken by individual Cabinet Members are then listed, grouped by portfolio area and sorted by date. These include Key decisions only.

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
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Cabinet decisions by date (Key and Non-key listed)

Children and Young persons' Improvement Plan – progress update To provide a progress update in respect of the Children and Young persons' Improvement Plan	Cabinet 26 September 2024	Cabinet member children and young people Victoria Gibbs, Service Director Early Help, Quality Assurance and Prevention, Rachel Gillott, Service Director, Safeguarding and Family Support, Bart Popelier, Project Lead <small>victoria.gibbs@herefordshire.gov.uk, Rachel.Gillott@herefordshire.gov.uk, Bart.Popelier@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 261772</small>	Children and Young People	14 August 2024	Non Key Open
Q1 2024/25 Budget Report To report the forecast position for 2024/25, including explanation and analysis of the drivers for the material budget variances.	Cabinet 26 September 2024	Cabinet member finance and corporate services Rachael Sanders, Director of Finance <small>Rachael.sanders@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383775</small>	Corporate Support Centre	9 August 2024	Non Key Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Q1 Performance Report Note and approve the quarterly performance report	Cabinet 26 September 2024	Cabinet member finance and corporate services Jessica Karia, Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence <small>jessica.karia@herefordshire.gov.uk</small> <small>Tel: 01432 260976</small>	Corporate Support Centre	14 August 2024	Non Key Open
To re-commission the Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) in Herefordshire To approve the re-commissioning of the county's Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES), which supports residents to live safely and independently in their own homes and communities for longer	Cabinet 26 September 2024	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Sharon Amery, Senior Commissioning Officer <small>sharon.amery2@herefordshire.gov.uk</small> <small>Tel: 01432 383734</small>	Community Wellbeing	14 August 2024	KEY Open
Corporate Parenting Strategy To approve the corporate parenting strategy	Cabinet 24 October 2024	Cabinet member children and young people Caroline Marshall, Project manager, Julie Mephram <small>caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk,</small> <small>Tel: 01432 260249,</small>	Children and Young People	9 August 2024	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association Ltd (HWGTA) Investment Partnership Model</p> <p>To develop a business case outlining options for a preferred investment model and;</p> <p>to approve the preferred investment model option for the HWGTA Ltd and Herefordshire Council partnership to enable the development of a vocational centre of excellence on Skylon Park.</p>	Cabinet 24 October 2024	<p>Cabinet member community services and assets</p> <p>Joni Hughes, Head of Chief Executive's Office, Gabriela Singh, Project Manager</p> <p>Joni.Hughes@herefordshire.gov.uk, Gabriella.Singh@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260598, Tel: 01432 260375</p>	Corporate Support Centre	9 August 2024	KEY Open
<p>Student Accommodation Update and Recommendations</p> <p>To update Cabinet Member on the progress and budget for the project</p>	Cabinet 24 October 2024	<p>Cabinet member community services and assets</p> <p>Joni Hughes, Head of Chief Executive's Office, Susan White, Programme Manager</p> <p>Joni.Hughes@herefordshire.gov.uk, Susan.White2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260598, Tel: 01432 260070</p>	Economy and Environment	14 August 2024	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
To agree a long term lease with a city centre tenant To agree a long term lease with a city centre tenant	Cabinet 24 October 2024	Cabinet member community services and assets Helen Beale, Senior Estate Manager HBeale@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260688	Corporate Support Centre	9 August 2024	KEY Fully exempt
New care facility To consider and agree the business case to invest in and develop the council's own care facility in Herefordshire to meet future demand	Cabinet 23 January 2025	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Hilary Hall, Corporate Director Community Wellbeing, Hayley Doyle, Service Director - All Age Commissioning Hilary.Hall@herefordshire.gov.uk, Hayley.Doyle@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260832	Community Wellbeing	9 August 2024	KEY
Cabinet Member Decisions (Key decisions only)					
Portfolio: adults, health and wellbeing					

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme To approve the approach for the Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 23 September 2024	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Amy Pitt, Service Director Communities, Community Wellbeing <small>Amy.Pitt@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383758</small>	Community Wellbeing	9 August 2024	KEY Open
To re-commission the technology enabled care and call monitoring service in Herefordshire To approve the re-commissioning of the county's technology enabled care and proactive / reactive call monitoring service, which supports residents to live safely and independently in their own homes and communities for longer	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 26 September 2024	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Sharon Amery, Senior Commissioning Officer <small>sharon.amery2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383734</small>	Community Wellbeing	14 August 2024	KEY Open
Carer Support Service re-procurement To agree the proposal to re-procure Herefordshire Carer Support Service for a period of 2 years with an option to extend for a further 12 months	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 10 October 2024	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing John Burgess, Senior Commissioning Officer <small>John.Burgess3@herefordshire.gov.uk</small>	Community Wellbeing	NEW ITEM	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Portfolio: children and young people					
Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy To approve the children and young people's workforce strategy	Cabinet member children and young people 5 September 2024	Cabinet member children and young people Caroline Marshall, Project manager, Debbie Thompson, HR Business Partner, Danielle Pyemont, Senior Project Manager <small>caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk, debbie.thompson@herefordshire.gov.uk, danielle.pyemont@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260249, ,</small>	Children and Young People	9 August 2024	Non Key Open
Recommissioning of Early Help Family Befriending & Mentoring Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of this document is for the Cabinet Member to be made aware of and agree to the recommissioning recommendation proposed – to tender for new contract/s for the same or redesigned service/s. To delegate future operational decisions to Service Director. 	Cabinet member children and young people 6 September 2024	Cabinet member children and young people Richard Watson, Senior Commissioning Manager - All age disability, Sam Westwood, Commissioning Officer, All Age Disability, Community Wellbeing <small>rwatson@herefordshire.gov.uk, Sam.Westwood@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383047, Tel: 01432 383097</small>	Community Wellbeing	NEW ITEM	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Portfolio: community services and assets					
High Needs Capital Grant: Purchase of a building for Herefordshire's Pupil Referral Unit To approve the spend from the High Needs Grant to purchase a suitable building, to relocate on to one site, Herefordshire's Pupil Referral Unit	Cabinet member community services and assets 26 September 2024	Cabinet member community services and assets Hilary Jones, Virtual headteacher, Caroline Marshall, Project manager, Quentin Mee, Head of Educational Development <small>hjones@herefordshire.gov.uk, caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk, Quentin.Mee@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260579, Tel: 01432 260249,</small>	Children and Young People	14 August 2024	KEY Open
Portfolio: economy and growth					
HBID Third Term Ballot Decision To agree to vote yes in the upcoming BID ballot (October 2024) ahead of the HBID's third term which is due to commence in April 2025	Cabinet member economy and growth 23 September 2024	Cabinet member economy and growth Nadine Kinsey, Economic Development Officer <small>nkinsey@herefordshire.gov.uk</small>	Economy and Environment	14 August 2024	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Merton Meadow Flood Alleviation Scheme To seek approval to spend the £2m Brownfield Land Release Fund grant awarded by government to the council to design and implement the required flood alleviation scheme.	Cabinet member economy and growth 23 September 2024	Cabinet member economy and growth Roger Allonby, Service Director Economy and Growth, Stephen Holland, Interim Head of Housing Development <small>Roger.Allonby@herefordshire.gov.uk, stephen.holland@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260330,</small>	Economy and Environment	9 August 2024	KEY Open
Portfolio: environment					
Portfolio: finance and corporate services					
To approve the Hoople Ltd Service Level Agreement for 2024/25 The report will describe the services that Hoople Ltd are commissioned to deliver with an agreed budget and seek authority to enter into contract with Hoople including authorisation of the SLA for 2024/2025 financial year. It will also authorise a performance framework that will be monitored over the duration of the contract	Cabinet member finance and corporate services 26 September 2024	Cabinet member finance and corporate services Joni Hughes, Head of Chief Executive's Office <small>Joni.Hughes@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260598</small>	Corporate Support Centre	9 August 2024	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Portfolio: roads and regulatory services					
24/25 Winter Service To seek approval for the arrangements being made for the provision of winter service during the period of 2023 through to 2024 season, as set out in the Winter Service Plan. The Winter Service Plan continues to build on existing best practice and the findings of reviews that have taken place both locally and nationally. Herefordshire Council will continue to meet its duties towards the maintenance of the highway network in full and by working in partnership with Herefordshire's communities, wherever practicable, enhance the county's resilience to the impact of prolonged or severe winter weather.	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services 1 October 2024	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services Bruce Evans, Engineering Manager bje@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 07792880548	Economy and Environment	9 August 2024	KEY Open
Portfolio: transport and infrastructure					
Hereford Public Art Strategy To consider and agree the recommendations arising from the Hereford Public Art Strategy developed as part of the Hereford City Centre Improvements (HCCI) public art programme.	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure 6 September 2024	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure Sarah Lee, Culture and Leisure Lead sarah.lee@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260188	Community Wellbeing	9 August 2024	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
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