

Herefordshire Council

Safeguarding Children Peer Review

26 February – 1 March

Summary of feedback

Primary area of focus

Early Help

(partnership working, assessment, step up/down, Domestic Violence (DV) to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Police in MASH)

Operational practice

(clarity of purpose, appropriate and timely response, assessment, decision making and management oversight, recording)

Edge of care, Looked After Children (LAC) and permanency planning, including leaving care

(assessment – risk/resilience/needs, prevention – right response – permanency planning, voice, good outcomes (incl. education and health), management oversight/decision making)

Peer Review

- Peer review is based on the established themes
- Not an inspection – invited in as “critical friends”
- Information is confidential and non attributable
- People to be open and honest

Process

- Case records review
- Document and data review
- Early thoughts workshop
- Interviews and visits
- Feedback Presentation

Your Peer Review Team

Lead Peer Adrian Loades, Corporate Director of People, London Borough of Redbridge

Review Manager John Rylance, Local Government Association

Member Peer Cllr Dick Madden, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Essex County Council

Officer Peer Jackie Clementson, Head of Early Help , Hertfordshire County Council

Officer Peer Andrea Morris, Locality Director, Devon County Council

Specialist Peer Wendy Thorogood, Consultant Nurse & Designated Lead for Safeguarding Children, Dorset CCG

Specialist Peer Viv Murray , Consultant, LGA Associate

Headlines

“We saw good practice and solid signs of improvement in all three areas of focus”

Local Government Association (LGA) provided their assessment on the primary areas of focus and suggestions for Herefordshire to consider. Summary of these contained in the following slides

- Saw progress since LGA carried out the casework review in June 2017
- Impressed with motivation and commitment of staff
- Positive reports on frontline partnership working e.g. in early help, good range of partners at meetings, good working relationships, mutual high regard across frontline professions
- Social workers are passionate and want to improve outcomes for children
- Good practice in LAC teams
- Virtual school is good
- Good arrangements for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families
- Voice and participation of young people evident on case files
- Proportionate responses to MASH enquiries, appropriate consent being sought from parents and signposting to suitable support.
- Significant reduction in agency staff

Headlines

“Herefordshire is a better place to be”

- Strong regard from partners for frontline staff
- There is an enthusiastic, passionate and committed team, you are joining up early help with early years and good frontline partnership working
- Step down process is reported to be working well. Social workers reported 'smooth' stepdown to Early Help due to the regular co-working with the early help co-ordinator and the closure form from social care sets out actions for further support via Early Help
- Parenting Programmes are co – facilitated with schools and also delivered by Health
- Positive feedback from parents particularly through children’s centres - introduced scoring scales in Early Help Assessments

Headlines

- Improvements in casework, evident in files, quality of assessments - “When it’s there it’s accurate, factual and concise”
- Improvements to office/working environment, investment in mobile working, co-location viewed as positive and as working well
- Robust clearly planned and monitored business support arrangements
- Professional development encouraged, good feedback about training
- Financial plans and forecasting in place
- Strengthened and developing approach to the commissioning cycle
- More granular evidence of need is required to inform more targeted commissioning of services

Headlines

- Edge of care LAC permanency - lack of differentiated edge of care service, high numbers of LAC and as a result high demand on resources in the short to medium term.
- Incoming numbers are moving back towards benchmark but there remains a legacy to deal with, work needed on the plan to address this legacy, need to create a culture of permanency
- Evidence of focus on LAC reduction throughout the organisation

Headlines

- All leaders are committed to develop and improve services for children and families
- Not yet an outcome focused and child led authority
- Need to sell yourselves and be positive about your advantages
- Open to outside views
- Good support from elected members
- Clear and agreed sense of key priorities for the next stage of improvement within the Head of Service group
- Good relationships with Health and Police
- Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) is strengthening

Headlines

“Complexity of cases is as much an issue as caseload numbers. Workflows and balance of work, caseloads are monitored but can be high”

“Some of your outstanding issues are as much about ensuring consistently good social work practice as new provision”

- Practice as evidenced in casefiles remains inconsistent
- Files do not routinely evidence the good work social workers articulate in interviews
- Recording of management oversight and supervision is inconsistent
- Team manager workload appeared to be very demanding
- Early Help is not clearly understood by social care - with the exception of the assessment teams
- Staff do not always feel involved, team management profile is welcomed but staff feel their ideas are not always listened to, sense of too much going on

Headlines – Health Summary Findings

- Very good general awareness of safeguarding, good system with integrated leads
- Good leadership within health driving internal safeguarding procedures and examples of integration between police, health and social care on the front line and with wider partners
- Good level of supervision and development across the health service
- Examples shared of young people informing areas of transformation in health
- Looked after children team - tight and efficient system to deliver LAC health assessments - timely and robust up to 16 years
- Six week waiting times met for children to gain access for mental health assessment's
- Good examples of strong links with the army families, good leadership/planning around families with concerns about Fabricated or induced illnesses (FII)

Summary for suggested actions going forward

- Early Help needs investment if it is going to help manage demand into social work services - there needs to be a whole system approach to investment and impact across Early Help, Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP)/LAC
- There needs to be a bespoke Outcome Framework for Early Help, designed with partners, that also incorporates the Troubled Families Plan. Cycle of audits instituted, monthly quarterly reports evidence outcomes
- MASH processes for step down to Early Help and step up need review and further work

Summary for suggested actions going forward

- MASH and Early Help (EH) interface - strengthen and develop more integrated work flows and remits, processes require further development (in conjunction with your partners and the safeguarding board) to ensure effective Working Together arrangements and appropriate referral through to either EH, CIN or CP
- Approach to CIN under developed and unclear. Should be a specific focus for next 6 months.
 - review CIN work being undertaken, develop a narrative of what CIN is for, review policies and practice guidance on CIN cases, review guidance on timescales and trust professional judgement more, review where CIN cases are best held, direct audit capacity to CIN Plans and step downs from CIN, introduce management and performance information on CIN.
- Get on with adopting a social work model; don't underestimate the task
- Focus on retention, career development opportunities – make Herefordshire “the right place for me”
- Social workers looking for thoughtful fixes
- Prioritise and put in place realistic timescales for what you want to move towards

Health summary – some of the points to consider

- Lack of provision for 16 + service in health
- HSCB - ‘felt things were done to you rather than with partners’
- Audits were completed but felt they lacked evidence of change “the so what question or seeing improvements embedded“
- Therapeutic Intensive Support Service(TISS) 3 year project ended leaving a gap in service provision for early intervention for complex children, young people and families
- In patient stays for children with mental health on acute setting is not a national recognised route can be a significant risk at peak time of pressure

Next Steps

- LGA to produce a draft letter, to be finalised with the local authority and then issued (usually takes c5 weeks)
- Children's Wellbeing Senior Management Team (SMT) has begun to review initial feedback alongside our current improvement plans.
- We will develop and set out actions with colleagues across the council and partners - what we will do within 3, 6, 12 months building on our current improvement plan.
- Share letter and proposals with partners, including the HSCB, to develop our approach, confirm actions and get on with them
- Communicate what we are doing and update on progress over the next 6 months.