

Overview

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Areas of strength, evidence	Areas for development, intended impact, timescales
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying and assessing families in need of Early Help by partner agencies is well established. 500 cases in January 2018 and over 1200 in December 2019. 2. Children Centre Services became integrated into Early Help and the EHA is used to access the service in 2019. They now supporting the most vulnerable families with children 0-5 years. The measure will be through Troubled Families payment by results. 3. Two primary schools are paying for the 'added value' of having an EH FSW linked to their school as they see the benefit of the work they do. 4. All three specialist family support services are trialing the closure of cases with a 'Family Wellbeing Plan' This leaves the family with a plan of who to go to within their own network of family, friends and the community before requiring any specialist services, leaving them stronger. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To further develop the Early Help work in MASH through a single front door. October 2020. 2. To develop a strength based approach within Early Help – Signs of Safety to be rolled out over the next three years. 3. To develop the use of Mosaic as a database for all Early Help partners. It is used as a caseload management system by internal council teams which allows information to be shared easily when cases are stepped up or down. The development will be through a portal - Finestre with controlled access for partners but allowing information to flow both ways. March 2021. 4. To improve the knowledge of Herefordshire's community assets available to families and share this knowledge on WISH (Wellbeing, Information & Signposting for Herefordshire) and with partner agencies. Phase 1 completed. Regular checking of information and sharing at Family Network Meetings.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quantitative information

In October 2019 a manual review of performance information indicated that the number of young people and care leavers assessed as being at risk of exploitation and subject to RMMs was 55. 31 of these were assessed at moderate risk and 24 were assessed at significant risk or actual exploitation. Performance reporting continues to be developed and therefore no further performance information was available at the end of Q3.
No complex strategy meetings held in Q3.

Qualitative information

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

Positive feedback from attendees at the Contextual Safeguarding training

Areas of strength, evidence	Areas for development, intended impact, timescales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expertise provided by Exploitation Coordinators in chairing RMMs and developing robust Safety Plans. 2. Ability to provide advice and support to social work teams and partner agencies, skilling them up to more effectively recognise and respond to exploitation. 3. Detailed knowledge of every young person subject to RMMs within a contextual framework means we can quickly identify links between victims, perpetrators and locations. 4. Providing the same level of service to care leavers at risk of exploitation – not many local authorities appear to be doing this. 5. Resources pack available to all social work teams to share with other professionals, young people, parents and carers. 6. Multi-agency Contextual Safeguarding training embedded with good attendance and feedback. 7. Effective joint working with Police including weekly briefings, 2 days co-location and revised Prevent & Disrupt arrangements including significant risk case reviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revise arrangements to ensure that looked after children placed out of county who go missing have robust return home interviews and information is shared in a timely way – 31 December 2019 – this is in progress and requires further discussion with Placements Team. 2. Draw upon what we know about the services young people need and receive to influence commissioning – 31 March 2020 – achieved through information presented to Scrutiny task and finish group for Exploitation. 3. Effective and supportive transitions for young people at risk of exploitation when they become adults – this work is being led by the Community Safety Partnership in conjunction with HSAB and SCYPH. 4. Working with Public Health to develop a bespoke website for exploitation in Herefordshire and to raise awareness in local communities, possibly including through parish councils – an initial meeting has taken place however progress is slow. 5. Develop a clear pathway with YOS and Vennture for younger siblings of young people at risk of exploitation to receive preventative direct work – 31 December 2019 – pathway developed and children have been identified, social workers are currently in the process of gaining parental consent. 6. Increase understanding of the NRM criteria, process and its benefits across the professional network and provide training to first responders – 31 March 2019. 7. Strengthen multi-agency arrangements (Prevent & Disrupt) to i) ensure all agencies and professionals can recognise exploitation and know how to raise their concerns; and ii) more effectively respond to identified themes and links, particularly regarding locations – 31 December 2019 – achieved. 8. Weekly and monthly performance information to be implemented in order to effectively manage the RMM process and understand the

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



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

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

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

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

IRO Service:

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

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

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

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

Child Protection Conference Service:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IRO Dispute Resolutions:

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

IRO access to Independent Legal Advice:

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

CP Conference Chair / Independent Chair activity:

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

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

Learning Activity

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

Learning from Complaints and Compliments:

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

Areas of strength, evidence	Areas for development, intended impact, timescales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IRO Oversight of children’s cases evidences the ‘IRO footprint’ in progressing care planning in between LAC Reviews. 2. Recent improvements in communicating with and involving parents within their child’s Lac Reviews to support parental contributions to care planning for their child. More Lac Reviews are undertaken as a series of meetings to enable input from parents and parents receive an introduction letter from their child’s IRO outlining the Lac Review process, how to make compliment or complaint and the IRO contact details to enable feedback on the service and any issues parents wish to raise regarding the welfare of their children. 3. Formal dispute resolutions continue to be escalated, with improved response rates to reduce time taken to achieve resolutions. 4. New duty system developed for chairs to be available for ICPCs and 1st Lac Reviews one day each week. This enables availability for Conferences as well as allowing IROs to structure their diaries to be able to undertake their IRO duties of Lac Reviews and consultations with children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CP plans to focus on outcomes for the child and link these to the actions tasked to parents as the reasons for achieving change, as identified within the Ofsted focused visit in December. This has been addressed with Conference Chairs in the January S & R Team Meeting and one CP plan will be reviewed with each Conference Chair in each monthly supervision to develop practice. 2. Graded Care Profiles should be part of all CP plans with the category of neglect. Currently this appears only on 79% of plans. Use of the profile provides evidence of the child’s daily lived experiences and measures progress over time, so contributes to action point 1. Supervision to review neglect CP plans in February 2020 to reinforce this directly with Conference Chairs. Observations of Conferences by the Principal IRO and Head of Service will be booked in with all Chairs and completed by 30.04.2020, with subsequent observations of Lac Reviews and Conferences with feedback sessions booked in on a quarterly basis. 3. Compliance with statutory timescales for Lac Reviews and completion of minutes has dipped. A standard tracker will be drawn up for the completion of work for each IRO to use and be viewed at each supervision from 20.02.2020.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

December 2019 data

Visits – target 95% - not met

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

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

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

Personal supervision – target 95% - not met

Team 1 83%

Team 2 71%

Team 3 83%

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

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

Team 1 95%

Team 2 80%

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

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

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

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

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

Areas of strength, evidence

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

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Placement stability for children in care is good with the numbers experiencing more than 3 placements in the last 12 months at 7.8% at the end of December, which is below the rate nationally and for statistical neighbours. The service is not complacent though and we continue to work to reduce this further by improving the quality of support, supervision, and training provided to our foster carers. 71% of children have been in the same placement for over 2½ years which is in line with national indicators although this will be affected by our high numbers of children in care and so is likely to reduce as our plans to reduce the numbers of children in care are progressed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Virtual School](#)

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

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

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

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

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

Health

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

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

Corporate Parenting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

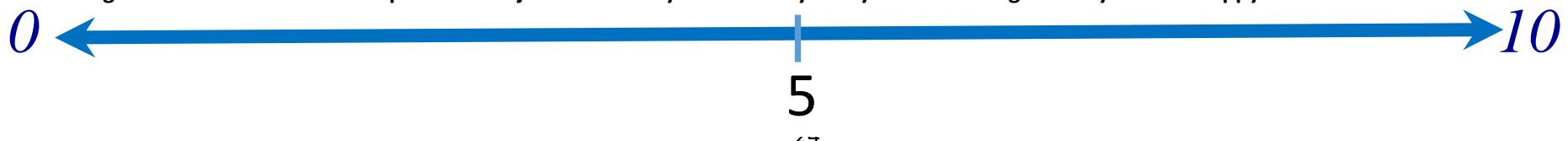
Areas of strength, evidence

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

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Areas of strength, evidence

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

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All Staff are supervised in line with the corporate supervision timescales

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

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

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

Areas of strength, evidence	Areas for development, intended impact, timescales
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The safeguarding of children with disabilities is a strength with timely and planned responses to individual cases. Regular supervision and the trackers used across children's social care ensures that cases do not drift. 2. The use of short breaks and direct payments has developed with families reporting that this is no longer an area of concern. The graduated use of short breaks supports families in a timely way and ultimately prevents some families breaking down. 3. An experienced team of specialist disability support workers deliver a proportionate response to families with lower levels of need. The use of S2 CSDA 1970 allows support to be delivered without the need for a social worker being involved. Reviewing of these cases is via the EHCP Review offering a family a 'single plan' and review mechanism. 4. Staffing stability and a strong team ethos supports team members to deliver a good service to clients. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing much greater consistency and focus around performance measures, e.g. visits within timescale. 2. Further work on the criteria and internal thresholds for the team (particularly around autism and mental health) to achieve clarity for referrers. 3. The development of a 'CWD Specific' training programme in conjunction with the principal Social Worker and the Social Work Academy. 4. Developing a greater understanding of the Mental Capacity, DOLs and LPS across all social workers in the team. 5. To further develop 'working together' arrangements through the HSCB in order to improve improved understanding of roles and responsibilities within the system.

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



Summary: Children and Families Performance team

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

Quality

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

Impact

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

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

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

Impact

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

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

Areas of strength, evidence	Areas for development, intended impact, timescales
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to meet core business requirement of producing clear accurate reports (we know this as the visit to Doncaster evidenced Herefordshire data reporting similar to their more established performance reporting) 2. Reporting and outcomes is online with a number of West Midlands colleagues (know this by attendance at West Midlands regional forums) 3. Skilled, stable team (no turnover, proficient SQL programming) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To integrate more fully into the service generally; team managers, social workers. This will give a greater understanding of social work practice/challenges (timescale: April 2020) 2. Establish performance reports for areas of service not yet supplied e.g. family support, child exploitation/missing. (separate improvement plan with detail of all areas for reporting developments and timescales) 3. Develop team and team culture from reactive to proactive. Identify areas of reporting that could be developed to support the service (timescale: January 2020), create a system for reporting requests that encourages dialogue and collaborative planning of reporting (timescale: January 2020) 4. Integrate more into Children and Families Directorate ethos (e.g. pictures in reports to embed Herefordshire aims/values) 5. Establish a pre-emptive self-service approach to performance indicators to support team managers in managing workers performance improvement of the key areas (e.g. visits due, timeliness of activities). 6. Create a 'Performance Team Improvement Plan' to structure the progress and goals of the team in a way that has rigor, challenge and evidence of progress.

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



7

Summary: Quality assurance and Practice Development (Maia Whitelegg – Principal Social Worker) – update to be provided in Q4

What do you know about the contribution of quality assurance activity and the impact on practice in Herefordshire? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Areas of strength, evidence	Areas for development, intended impact, timescales
1. The Principle Social Work post has been established at Head of Service level and was recruited to in September 2019. The PSW is a	1. A collective commitment to learning and development needs to be strengthened across the service. This is a key area for development. A cross-representative group of practitioners and managers is being

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Areas of strength, evidence

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

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

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

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">3. A board meets on a monthly basis to review activity and assess further opportunities. These are tracked via a regularly updated plan.4. Recruitment is a standing item on management agendas | <ul style="list-style-type: none">3. Further work is required to develop the practice educator network across the service. Timescales to be delivered in November 2019.4. Further work is required to engage with universities early and ensure the right number and quality of student placements.5. A 'health check' is to be carried out in January 2020 following the all council's employee opinion survey in October 2019. |
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being workforce development practice has just lost its way and everyone is working makes you so unhappy.

