

**Work proposal:  
an independent, self-directed, evidence based, review of  
Herefordshire Children's Social Care services**

**Requested by Catherine Knowles  
Interim Director of Children's Services  
Herefordshire County Council  
14 April 2021**

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**Job outline**

This is a twenty-day, independent, self-directed, evidence-based review of Herefordshire Children Social Care services - undertaken by two experienced former HMI Marie McGuinness and Gary Lamb (20 April to 13 May 2021).

**\*Aim of review... to explore the extent to which:**

- the looked after children service works effectively and supports the “welfare of the child’ principal (Children’s Act 1989) in permanency decision-making
- the child in need, child protection and public law outline service works effectively to protect and promote the rights and well-being of children, young people, and families including how well the support provided to children and families leads to effective change. Can we demonstrate we are improving outcomes for children, evidence of quality practice, use of single practice approach.
- senior leaders and all managers support and promote the consistency of practice through either their direct line management with staff, and/or understanding knowledge of case decision making/causing concern within their service area
- services support a learning approach – balancing accountability and learning.

**Reviewers will identify:**

- what would need to change to improve services for children and families
- if this is about practice, policy, or systems
- where possible identify if there is a better way of doing this
- through the next steps discussion what needs to be done to implement any proposed changes
- what the challenges are to help senior managers find solutions
- any element of the review that needs immediate action.

**The scope of review**

- This review is organised using the four areas of Children’s Social Care business operation identified in the \*Terms of Reference (TOR).
  1. Strategic and operational leadership and management
  2. Children in Need (CiN), Child Protection (CP) and Public Law Outline (PLO)
  3. Children in Care Service including the Independent Review Service, Fostering and Adoption and Care Leavers
  4. Family Support, Edge of Care, Independent Advocacy and Family Group Conferencing service offer.

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## Methodology

### Evaluation criteria

- Findings made by the Reviewers are underpinned by the ILACS Framework (Ofsted 2019).

### Fieldwork

- **Document reading, analysis and evaluation... x2 days.**
- Read the Local Authority SEF to provide context. Examine the most recent performance data set used by managers. Examine the most recent performance report considered by the Senior Management Team. Examine the most recent QA summary report.
- Evaluate x3 audits completed in the last six months, chosen at random from across the Children's Social business operation... Family Support, Child in Need/Child Protection and Children in Care... to include x1 judged inadequate, x1 requires improvement and x1 judged good.

### Interviews with Social Workers and their managers... case tracking and case sampling x16 days

- This work is conducted remotely with the Reviewers using MS Teams to interview SWs, TMs and Heads of Service... looking at case records using the share screen facility.
- Fieldwork activity is designed to meet the specific needs of the Local Authority based on the \*TOR. The constructs pulled through from the \*TOR will be considered by the Reviewers for each area investigation as set out below.

### The constructs for the investigation

#### 1 Strategic and operational leadership and management... judged inadequate (Ofsted June 2018)

- Consider... organisation structure... lines of decisions making and forums for management oversight to demonstrate grip... outputs on Key Performance Indicators (KPI)... performance management including data capture, retrieval, reporting, scrutiny, challenge and steer... quality assurance, audit arrangements and reporting including the timeliness of actions taken to address identified deficit areas... stability and capacity of the workforce... induction and support for ASYEs, managers span of control and caseloads... supervision including case management oversight and steer on cases... staff survey and management response... the progress of service improvements measured against Ofsted findings in the last full inspection for CiN and CP.

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## **2 Children in Need, Child Protection and Public Law Outline... judged Requires Improvement (Ofsted June 2018)**

- Consider... discussion with service manager and case sampling alongside SWs... workforce, welfare and performance... quality of assessments, analysis including capturing history to inform future risk to underpin effective plans for children... threshold... voice of the child... timeliness of PLO, parallel planning, the quality of letters before proceedings... the quality of CP plans so it is made clear to parents how their behaviour is adversely impacting on their child/ren... the effectiveness of direct Social Work practice and decisions for escalation or step down of CiN and CP cases... case recording... core groups including effective partnership working... CiN meetings including effective partnership working... the progress of CiN and CP plans... the frequency and quality of supervision offered to staff including a steer on what needs to be done by when and contingency... the arrangements for case transfer from one worker to another... lessons learned and support for young people experiencing teenage pregnancy.

## **3 Children in Care Service including the Independent Review Service, Fostering and Adoption and Care Leavers... judged Requires Improvement (Ofsted June 2018)**

- Consider... discussion with service manager and case sampling alongside SWs... workforce, welfare and performance... threshold... timeliness... visits... support for young mums including provision and take-up of advocacy and Independent Visitors... Care Plans including 'contact' with parents and extended family... placement matching including placement with siblings... professional curiosity to underpin practice, Social Worker challenge and management oversight on case decisions... drift and delay in permanence planning... case recording including the Social Work rationale for permanence plan decisions through the use of Long Term Fostering, Adoption, Kinship and/or Special Guardianship Orders... the quality of direct work with children including Life Story work... statutory reviews including the voice of the child... the role of the IRO to support effective plans, provide challenge and escalate concerns... use of Section 20 including Children with Disability... the role of the Fostering Service Supervising Social Worker in supporting effective plans for children... the frequency and quality of supervision offered to staff including a steer on what needs to be done by when and contingency... the arrangements for case transfer from one worker to another

## **4 Family Support, Edge of Care, Independent Advocacy and Family Group Conferencing service offer... judged Requires Improvement (Ofsted June 2018)**

- Consider... discussion with service manager and case sampling alongside workers... workforce, welfare and performance... threshold... timeliness... visits... direct work... voice of the child... progress of assessments, plans, reviews... partnership work and management footprint... access to Family Support... provision for the support of young mums... the frequency and quality

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of supervision offered to staff... the prioritisation of Family Support work including management oversight of cases subject to step-up to Children's Social Care (repeat referrals) and those stepped down from Children's Social Care (drift and delay engaging families)... use of screening tools... the effectiveness of edge of care services.

### Report of findings and feedback presentation x2 days

- The Reviewers keep and maintain an electronic record of their interviews gathered as part of the fieldwork so there is an audit trail of evidence to support the evaluation of findings. The record of evidence belongs to the Interim Director of Children's Services.
- The report of findings sets out the headlines including any aspects of practice that are considered to be below the line, practice strengths, areas for development and recommendations and/or must do's.
- This underpins a feedback presentation leading to a roundtable next steps discussion to help senior managers update the Local Authority improvement plan.

### Programme

Date	Activity Week One	
	Strategic and operational leadership and management	
	Gary	Marie
15/04/21	Half day preparation + half day reading and evaluation to shape the week four programme once the Court Judgement is published (to be confirmed).	Half day reading and evaluation to shape the week four programme once the Court Judgement is published (to be confirmed).
19/04/21	Herefordshire forward documents to Gary (password protected) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation structure including lines of authority for decision making.</li> <li>• Workforce data... most recent reported staff turnover rate, vacancy rate, use of agency staff and the gap, sickness rate, ASYE rate.</li> <li>• Most recent performance data and management summary report.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• x3 audits completed in the last six months chosen at random... x1 good, x1 RI and x1 inadequate.</li> <li>• The most recent QA audit summary report.</li> <li>• Staff survey... report and outcomes.</li> <li>• The most recent improvement plan which stems from Ofsted inspections.</li> </ul>	
20/04/21	<p>Gary completes document reading... x2 days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 Evaluate organisation structure, workforce data, performance data and audit.</li> <li>• 17.00 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence and develops KLOE for case tracking.</li> </ul>	
21/04/21	<p>Gary completes document reading... x2 days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 Evaluate organisation structure, workforce data, performance data and audit.</li> <li>• 15.30 Interview with Heads of Service to discuss progress of the improvement plan.</li> <li>• 17.00 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence and develops KLOE for case tracking.</li> </ul>	
22/04/21	<p>Gary case tracking...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting with Catherine et-al</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with SW case judged good (1hr).</li> <li>• 11.30 Interview with SW case judged RI (1hr)</li> <li>• 13.00 Lunch</li> <li>• 14.00 Interview with SW case judged Inadequate (1hr)</li> <li>• 15.15 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> <li>• 16.00 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17.00 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>	
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Date	Activity Week Two	
	Family Support, Edge of Care, Independent Advocacy and Family Group Conferencing service offer	
	Gary	Marie
27/04/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with Head of Service (Gary we don't have service managers) to explore workforce, welfare and performance including random case sampling.</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch.</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview with SW Edge of Care... most recent child under 8yrs admitted into foster care (ICO).</li> <li>• 14.45 Interview with SW Edge of Care... most recent child under 8yrs admitted into care placed at home or with extended family (ICO).</li> <li>• 17.00 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.30 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>	
28/04/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with worker Family Support... low level risk of CSE (CiN).</li> <li>• 11.15 Interview with worker Family Support... low level risk of CSE (CiN).</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch.</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview with worker Family Support... child reported missing from home for the first time in the month of February 2021.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14.45 Interview with worker Family Support... child reported missing from home 'the child with the most episodes in February 2021.</li> </ul>	
29/04/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with SW... use of S20 placed in unregulated provision 'the YP accommodated first in January 2021.</li> <li>• 11.15 Interview with SW... use of S20 placed in unregulated provision 'the YP accommodated first in February 2021</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview with SW... mop-up.</li> <li>• 14.45 Interview with SW... mop-up.</li> <li>• 17.00 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.30 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>	

Date	Activity Week Three	
	Children in Need, Child Protection and Public Law Outline	
	Gary	Marie
04/05/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with Service Manager to explore workforce, welfare and performance including random case sampling.</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch.</li> <li>• 13.30 PLO case sampling interview with worker responsible for the maintenance of the PLO Tracker.</li> <li>• 16.30 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with SW... case sampling (CiN).</li> <li>• 11.15 Interview with SW... case sampling (CP).</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch.</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview with SW... case sampling (PLO).</li> <li>• 14.45 Random case sampling using LA laptop (PLO parallel planning).</li> <li>• 16.30 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.00 Marie keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17.00 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>	
05/05/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT Catherine et-al</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with SW case sampling letter before proceedings.</li> <li>• 11.15 Interview with SW CP/CiN case sampling step-up/step-down... assessments, plans and progress.</li> <li>• Lunch 12.30</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview with SW CP/CiN case sampling step-up/step-down... assessments, plans and progress.</li> <li>• 14.45 Interview with SW CP/CiN case sampling partnership work Focus Groups/CiN Meetings</li> <li>• 16.00 Interview with SW case sampling focus on direct work.</li> <li>• 17.15 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.30 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT Catherine et-al</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with SW case sampling letter before proceedings.</li> <li>• 11.15 Interview with SW CP/CiN case sampling step-up/step-down... assessments, plans and progress.</li> <li>• Lunch 12.30</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview with SW case sampling CP/CiN step-up/step-down... assessments, plans and progress.</li> <li>• 14.45 Interview with SW CP/CiN case sampling partnership work Focus Groups/CiN Meetings.</li> <li>• 16.00 Random sample cases using LA laptop (direct work)</li> <li>• 17.15 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.30 Marie keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>
06/05/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT Catherine et-al</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with SW case sampling Teenage pregnancy</li> <li>• 11.15 Interview with SW case sampling to mop-up.</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview with SW case sampling to mop-up.</li> <li>• 15.30 Evaluate the evidence and discuss findings with Marie to draw out learning from this part of the investigation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT Catherine et-al</li> <li>• 10.00 Random sample cases using LA laptop to mop-up.</li> <li>• 12.30 lunch</li> <li>• 13.30 Random sample cases using LA laptop to mop-up.</li> <li>• 15.30 Evaluate the evidence and discuss findings with Gary to draw out learning from this part of the investigation.</li> <li>• 16.30 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16.30 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> </ul>
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Date	<b>Activity Week Four Children in Care Service including the Independent Review Service, Fostering, Adoption and Care Leavers</b>	
	Gary	Marie
11/05/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with Service Manager to explore workforce, welfare and performance including random case sampling.</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch.</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview IRO case sampling (ICO).</li> <li>• 14.45 Interview IRO case sampling (ICO).</li> <li>• 17.00 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.30 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with IRO service Manager to explore workforce, welfare and performance including random case sampling.</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch.</li> <li>• 13.30 Random sample cases using LA laptop (ICO).</li> <li>• 17.00 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.30 Marie keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>
12/05/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with SW case sampling support for young mums in care and plans for their child.</li> <li>• 11.15 Interview with SW case sampling Permanence planning Fostering/Adoption/SGO.</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview with SW case sampling Permanence planning Fostering/Adoption/SGO.</li> <li>• 14.45 Interview with SW case sampling Permanence planning Fostering/Adoption/SGO.</li> <li>• 16.00 Interview with SW case sampling Permanence planning Fostering/Adoption/SGO.</li> <li>• 17.15 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with SW case sampling support for young mums in care and plans for their child.</li> <li>• 11.15 Interview with SW case sampling Permanence planning Fostering/Adoption/SGO.</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch</li> <li>• 13.30 Random sample cases using LA laptop (Quality of direct work including Life Story work).</li> <li>• 17.15 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.30 Marie keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17.30 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>	
13/05/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with SW case sampling CWD Team use of S20.</li> <li>• 11.15 Interview with SW case sampling to mop-up.</li> <li>• 12.30 Lunch</li> <li>• 13.30 Interview with SW case sampling to mop-up.</li> <li>• 15.30 Evaluate the evidence and discuss findings with Marie to draw out learning from this part of the investigation.</li> <li>• 16.30 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.00 Gary keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 KIT meeting Catherine et-al.</li> <li>• 10.00 Interview with Fostering Supervising SW case sampling joint work with Field SW to support effective permanence plans S20.</li> <li>• 11.15 Random sample cases using LA laptop to mop-up.</li> <li>• 12.30 lunch</li> <li>• 13.30 Random sample cases using LA laptop to mop-up.</li> <li>• 15.30 Evaluate the evidence and discuss findings with Gary to draw out learning from this part of the investigation.</li> <li>• 16.30 Heads-up meeting with Service Manager.</li> <li>• 17.00 Marie keeps and maintains the electronic record of evidence.</li> </ul>
14/05/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 Individual work to evaluate the evidence and produce the written report.</li> <li>• 11.00 Joint work with Marie to finalise the report ready for the oral feedback presentation.</li> <li>• 13.00 Lunch.</li> <li>• 14.00 Oral presentation of the report leading to next steps discussion.</li> <li>• 16.00 Finished.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 09.00 Individual work to evaluate the evidence and produce the written report.</li> <li>• 11.00 Joint work with Gary to finalise the report ready for the oral feedback presentation.</li> <li>• 13.00 Lunch.</li> <li>• 14.00 Oral presentation of the report leading to next steps discussion.</li> <li>• 16.00 Finished.</li> </ul>

Gary Lamb and on-behalf of Marie McGuinness  
15 April 2021

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