



## Title of report:

# Children's Improvement Plan Phase 3

**Meeting:** Cabinet

**Meeting date:** Thursday 17 July 2025

**Cabinet member:** Cllr Powell, Children and Young People

**Report by:** Corporate Director Children and Young people

**Report author:** Corporate Director Children and Young people

### Classification

Open

### Decision type

Non-key

### Wards affected

(All Wards);

### Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present cabinet with the Phase 3 Children's Services Improvement Plan for endorsement. The plan agreed by the multi-agency improvement board May 25. Amends have been made following that board meeting.

### Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) Cabinet endorse the Phase 3 Improvement Plan outlined in Appendix A
- b) Cabinet authorises the Corporate Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the council's Corporate Leadership Team to lead this improvement plan on behalf of the Council and to send it to Ofsted as part of the ongoing children's services monitoring.

## Alternative options

1. To not endorse the plan and to send to Ofsted – this is not an option as it would put the council at significant risk by not having a plan to deliver the necessary improvements following the Ofsted judgement of inadequate in all areas of Children's Services.

## Key considerations

### Background

2. Children's Services was inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.
3. The inspection report was published on 21 September 2022 and is available [here](#).
4. The Secretary of State issued a [Statutory Direction](#) to Herefordshire Council on 21 September 2022, and appointed a Commissioner for Children's Services.
5. The overall judgement was that Herefordshire Children's Service is 'inadequate'. The judgements contributing to this outcome are as follows:

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

6. Six Ofsted monitoring visits have taken place to date, this will be seven by the time this report goes to Cabinet 17<sup>th</sup> July. The last two monitoring visits November 24 and February 25 found that the Phase 2 plan was having impact and services were improving as evidenced in the areas of inspection; Extra Familial Abuse/ Exploitation and Social Work Assessments. (see background papers)
7. An interim DCS remain in post having extend their fixed term contract to 31.12.25. The advert for the new and permanent DCS post went live May 25 with a target date for appointment July 25.
8. Once in post the plan is for the new DCS to be supported by the outgoing interim DCS to the end of the year covering the ILACS and post ILACS planning as Herefordshire respond to the outcome of that inspection.
9. Herefordshire are expecting their full Inspection of Children's Services (ILACS) by the end of 2025.

## Current Situation

### Development of the plan

10. This Phase 3 Improvement Plan (Appendix A), hereinafter referred to as the Plan, has been developed to bring continuity and continued focus, pace and measures to the improvement journey.

11. Phase 2 has seen much progress, as plan was received well for its clarity of approach and measure and has achieved positive results. See Appendix B
12. The Phase 3 plan continues the approach and has re-set actions for improvement and development against each of the Ofsted recommendations.
13. Phase 3 also sets out our National engagement with the Families First Program. The Families First has a separate detailed quarterly implementation plan that will reports to the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership.
14. The plan confirms Herefordshire engagement in the regional work and the improvement alliance which ensure Herefordshire's voice, needs and our opportunity for learning are embedded within our work.
15. The Quality Assurance framework of measures to enable us to monitor progress are re-set under the range of Key Performance Indicators', Service User feedback and Audit. These are set out within the Phase 3 document.
16. The Children's Improvement Board is independently chaired by the Department of Education Commissioner Deborah McMillan and meetings are held on a six-weekly basis.

### **Community impact**

17. The Ofsted inspection judgement of 'Inadequate' has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
18. Ensuring co-ordination and golden thread the County Plan and delivery plan 2025/26 includes the Children Services improvement plan as one element of the Children Services contributions to the ambition to '*to do everything we do, well*', as the council aims to:
  - a) Ensure all children are healthy, safe, and inspired to achieve.
  - b) Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices.

### **Environmental Impact**

19. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.
20. The transformation activity will be undertaken with consideration to minimise waste and resource in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

### **Equality duty**

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

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

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

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

In particular, the council must have due regard to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

23. Children and young people who are assessed to be ‘in need’ of support, protection and care are additionally vulnerable, often as a result of abuse, neglect, exploitation and a range of personal and family circumstances.
24. As individual improvement projects and service delivery progresses, and changes are designed, equality impact assessments will be undertaken, as necessary and appropriate.

### **Resource implications**

25. There are no resourcing implications to this decision report. Performance against the agreed revenue budget for the Children & Young People Directorate is reported quarterly to Cabinet.
26. The resource implications of the transformation programme have been outlined in separate reports to Cabinet.

### **Legal implications**

27. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **Risk management**

28. The following risks have been considered.

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

## Appendices

Appendix A – Phase 3 Improvement Plan Report

Appendix B – Phase 2 Outcomes Report

Appendix C – Improvement Board Terms of Reference and Membership

## Background papers

A -Ofsted's Publication - [Ofsted Inspection Report July 22](#)

[June 2023 Monitoring Visit](#)

[September 2023 Monitoring Visit](#)

[February 2024 Monitoring Visit](#)

[October 2024 Monitoring Visit](#) (Phase 2)

[February 2025 Monitoring Visit](#) (Phase 2)

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**