



Herefordshire Council

Agenda

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Tuesday 13 December 2022**

Time: **2.00 pm**

Place: **Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

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

For any further information please contact:

Simon Cann Democratic Services Officer.

Tel: 01432 260667

Email: simon.cann@herefordshire.gov.uk

If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Simon Cann on 01432 260667 or e-mail simon.cann@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

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

Membership

Chairperson **Councillor Phillip Howells**
Vice- **Councillor Jennie Hewitt**
chairperson

Councillor Graham Andrews
Councillor Toni Fagan
Councillor Helen L'Anson
Councillor Mike Jones
Councillor John Stone

Andy James

Parent governor representative for the
special school sector

Agenda

		Pages
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>To receive apologies for absence.</p>	
2.	<p>NAMED SUBSTITUTES</p> <p>To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the committee.</p>	
3.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>To receive declarations of interests in respect of Schedule 1, Schedule 2 or Other Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.</p>	
4.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022.</p>	9 - 20
<p>HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS</p> <p>The deadline for the submission of questions for this meeting is 9.30am on Thursday 8 December 2022.</p> <p>Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.</p> <p>Accepted questions and the responses will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved</p>		
5.	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the public.</p>	21 - 26
6.	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the council.</p>	
7.	<p>CORPORATE PARENTING</p> <p>To consider the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy.</p>	27 - 34
8.	<p>CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN</p> <p>To consider the revised Draft Children's Services Improvement Plan.</p>	35 - 82
9.	<p>HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (HSCP) ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22</p> <p>To consider the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Annual Report 2021-22.</p>	83 - 134

10. PROGRESS REPORT

135 - 144

This report provides a brief summary update on issues previously considered by the committee.

11. WORK PROGRAMME

145 - 150

To consider the work programme for the committee.

12. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the committee.

The public's rights to information and attendance at meetings

In view of the continued prevalence of Covid, we have introduced changes to our usual procedures for accessing public meetings. These will help to keep our councillors, staff and members of the public safe.

Please take time to read the latest guidance on the council website by following the link at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings and support us in promoting a safe environment for everyone. If you have any queries please contact the governance support team on 01432 261699 or at governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

We will review and update this guidance in line with Government advice and restrictions.

Thank you for your help in keeping Herefordshire Council meetings safe.

You have a right to:

- Attend all council, cabinet, committee and sub-committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
- Inspect minutes of the council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the cabinet or individual cabinet members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting (a list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
- Access to a public register stating the names, addresses and wards of all councillors with details of the membership of cabinet and of all committees and sub-committees. Information about councillors is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/councillors
- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title. The council's constitution is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution
- Access to this summary of your rights as members of the public to attend meetings of the council, cabinet, committees and sub-committees and to inspect documents.

Recording of meetings

Please note that filming, photography and recording of this meeting is permitted provided that it does not disrupt the business of the meeting.

Members of the public are advised that if you do not wish to be filmed or photographed you should let the governance services team know before the meeting starts so that anyone who intends filming or photographing the meeting can be made aware.

The reporting of meetings is subject to the law and it is the responsibility of those doing the reporting to ensure that they comply.

The council may make a recording of this public meeting or stream it live to the council's website. Such recordings are made available for members of the public via the council's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/HerefordshireCouncil/videos

Public transport links

The Herefordshire Council office at Plough Lane is located off Whitecross Road in Hereford, approximately 1 kilometre from the City Bus Station.

The location of the office and details of city bus services can be viewed at:
www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services-

The seven principles of public life

(Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

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

2. Integrity

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

3. Objectivity

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

4. Accountability

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

5. Openness

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

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

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

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Tuesday 11 October 2022 at 2.00 pm

Councillors Physically Present and Voting:	Councillors: Daron, Toni Fagan, Helen l'Anson, Mike Jones, Pratley and Fiona
Councillors in Remote Attendance:	Councillor Graham Andrews
Cabinet Members in Attendance:	Councillor Liz Harvey, Cabinet Member - Finance, Corporate Services and Planning
Co-Optees In Attendance:	Councillor Diana Toynbee, Cabinet Member – Children and Families Wiktor Daron, Representative of the Archdiocese of Cardiff Sam Pratley, Representative of the Diocese of Hereford Fiona Reid, Representative of Families

Officers: Chief Executive, Head of Chief Executive's Office, Corporate Director for Children and Young People, Service Director for Safeguarding, QA and Improvement, Statutory Scrutiny Officer

105. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the Leader of the Council Cllr D Hitchiner, and Cllr J Stone.

106. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

None.

107. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

108. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

109. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 9 - 12)

Questions received and responses given are attached as Appendix 1 to the minutes.

110. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no questions received from Councillors.

111. INSPECTION OF HEREFORDSHIRE CHILDREN'S SERVICES

111. INSPECTION OF HEREFORDSHIRE CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Committee gave consideration to the report as set out on pages 13-36 of the agenda.

The Director for Children and Young People provided the Committee with a summary of the key findings arising from the Ofsted inspection of children's services and outlined the actions undertaken during and in the immediate aftermath of the inspection to address key areas of concern. It was confirmed that development of the action plan in response to the report was progressing at pace and includes a number of engagement activities about to commence. The directorate were working closely with the appointed Children's Commissioner, Eleanor Brazil, and were further developing their performance and management information systems, as well as preparing to undertake a self-evaluation of practice which it was intended will be completed by the end of January 2023, with a view to this to be presented to a future meeting of the Committee. Work remained ongoing to review and improve services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which had recently been the subject of a peer review to also be presented to a future meeting of the Committee. The directorate were working with partners to ensure that the response to Ofsted and the action plan were multi-agency led, and arrangements were being made to convene a summit of key partners in the near future.

The Committee sought assurances from the Executive and senior officers that key actions and improvements would be delivered in the following key areas:

- (i) Leadership
- (ii) Corporate Responsibility:
- (iii) Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- (iv) Support Services
- (v) Performance and Quality Assurance
- (vi) Monitoring and Tracking
- (vii) Voice of Children and Families
- (viii) Quality of Practice
- (ix) Management & Culture
- (x) Workforce,
- (xi) Human Rights and Scrutiny

Leadership

The Committee sought assurance, in light of previous reports having identified similar findings to the recent Ofsted report, on what would be done differently to ensure that failures were addressed and successes against key improvement measures could be sustained. Assurance was also sought that Human Resources support would be provided to sustain a stable and high performing workforce to deliver the necessary pace of change.

It was confirmed that the directorate now receives support from a dedicated senior HR officer exercising oversight of areas including contractual matters, performance, and recruitment and retention. The challenges of recruitment and retention in the social care sector were well documented and it was acknowledged that the recent Ofsted judgement had not helped in this regard, but significant effort was being made to try to improve the Council's recruitment offer.

The Chief Executive acknowledged his personal responsibility for championing improvement across the organisation, but also stressed that there was a collective responsibility held by the Council and its partners to work together to navigate the improvement journey. It was confirmed that each member of the corporate leadership team (CLT) had been assigned a leadership role and would be personally leading on key

individual areas of work, whilst the Council would also be reaching out to leaders in the community and voluntary sectors.

Corporate Responsibility

The Committee expressed concern that information had emerged in the national press on 1 October 2022 regarding financial settlements that had reportedly been made with respect to purported breaches of the Human Rights Act which members of the committee had not been previously made aware of. It was explained that payments arising from Human Rights cases could arise through a variety of means such as formal court judgements, legal settlements and insurance claims. The Council's constitution formally empowers qualified legal staff to agree payments on behalf of the organisation, and there were barriers to disclosure of details of such cases due to the risk of being found in contempt of court or breaching the confidentiality of individual families. The corporate risk of litigation was assessed and monitored via the Council's risk register, which was reviewed at least bi-annually under the remit of the Audit and Governance Committee. The Committee agreed with a suggestion by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate Services and Planning that the Committee might find it useful to review the corporate risk register for the children's services directorate at a future meeting, and suggested that it would be useful to learn how the risk level for Herefordshire compares with the level identified by other local authorities.

The Committee also questioned whether the examples of the payments rendered previous assurances provided to the committee that the Council's legal services team were adequately trained and conversant in the application of the Act were inaccurate. It was agreed that clarity should be sought from the Monitoring Officer regarding what access social workers have to expert legal advice to embed quality in social work practice.

Assurances were sought as to whether all payments had now been made and that all outstanding claims had now been settled.

The Committee expressed further concern that employees within children's services had undertaken much of their continuing professional development (CPD) through online self-assessment, which was considered to be a weak tool in comparison to face to face methods. An assurance was provided that the qualitative value of face to face training with peers was recognised by managers, and work continues to improve the training offer in this area, for example through lunchtime learning sessions and judicial training in family courts to enable less experienced social workers the opportunity to learn court skills.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The Committee sought assurance that the failures identified within the Ofsted report relating to the lack of a timely and appropriate multi-agency response to children and young people at risk of harm were being urgently addressed. It was acknowledged that under-resourcing and under-development of inter-agency partnerships over a sustained period of time had led to a loss of effective grip over these issues, and in order to address the situation, systems had been established to ensure weekly tracking and monitoring could be undertaken; the director for children's services had taken over as the Chairperson of the safeguarding partnership and had arranged for multi-agency audits to monitor the timeliness and quality of strategy meetings within the MASH; additional management and social work capacity had been added to the MASH; and dedicated office and meeting space at the Plough Lane offices had been created, with police colleagues due to move in imminently and an ambition to enable further co-location with other partner agencies in the future.

A question was raised in relation to whether having the Director for Children and Young People as Chairperson of the children's safeguarding partnership board could create a conflict of interest, but it was advised that it was common for the chairmanship to be held by a representative of one of the three strategic partners (the local authority, health and police), and in many cases this would be the Director for Children and Young People.

Support Services

The Committee sought assurance from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families that the availability of support and services for timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life story work and emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support the transition to independence and sufficient, suitable accommodation were being improved. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families advised that some of these services were not under the direct control of the Council, but provided an assurance that the Cabinet was lobbying its partner agencies extensively to drive improvement to the quality and availability of these services, and in relation to transition there was increasingly close cooperation between the adult social care and children's social care directorates, overseen by the director of community and wellbeing.

Performance and Quality Assurance

The Committee noted that assurances had been given on previous occasions that the findings of external inspections would be reviewed, considered and acted upon in order to deliver improvements, but these had not been successfully achieved. Therefore, the Committee sought confirmation as to why senior leaders were optimistic that the response to the latest Ofsted report would be measurably different, and asked what achievements there had been during the previous twelve months to support this optimism. It was explained that Ofsted had recognised clearly in its report that the directorate had spent much of the previous twelve months managing different crises and building the infrastructure for future improvement, such as adding extra capacity, bringing down officer caseloads and increasing management and supervision activity. It was reiterated that the improvement journey will be starting from a very low base and whilst the framework for future improvement was being established, this had come too early in relation to the timing of the Ofsted report for material improvement to be evidenced. There was however, confidence that due to enhanced systems robustly monitoring key performance measures, when Ofsted come back to conduct a reassessment they will be able to see evidence of a dramatic improvement in practice standards.

The Committee noted that the report contained references to early signs of improvement from a low base, such as reductions in caseloads, better use of performance management information and the appointment of a permanent senior leadership team, and further noted that some examples were given of current good practice within the directorate, including the edge of care service, the virtual school and the exploitation team support. In view of this, the Committee asked that consideration be given to assessing how the strong performance in these areas could be replicated or learned from across those services areas identified as currently performing inadequately.

Monitoring and Tracking

The Committee sought assurance that the monitoring and tracking of both existing and new cases were being improved at a sufficient pace to satisfy the expectations of the appointed Commissioner. It was clarified to the Committee that the role of the Commissioner was not to report upon whether the Council had significantly improved by the end of the year, but rather to report upon the Council's capacity to improve and whether satisfactory plans and resources have been put in place. The Commissioner had advised members directly at the Extraordinary Council meeting in September that

typically it can take a number of years for a local authority to improve from an inadequate rating to a good rating.

The Committee noted that a number of other local authorities have had to undertake their own journeys of improvement within children's services and asked for confirmation that the Council would be seeking to identify ways of emulating these authorities to move as quickly and safely as possible towards an improved rating. It was acknowledged that the directorate would not be able to identify and implement all the appropriate solutions from within, and they would be actively seeking assistance from all available sources of support including the Department for Education (DfE), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the wider local government family.

Voice of Children and Families

The Committee sought assurance that the Executive would be demonstrating a renewed commitment to listening and taking into account the views of children, young people and families of Herefordshire in order to achieve the best possible outcomes, and to use feedback from these groups in order to support ongoing service improvement. The Committee felt that it would be a useful exercise to scrutinise the Council's Participation Strategy to enable them to hold the Executive accountable for ensuring that the Strategy was sufficiently resourced and able to achieve its aims.

The Director for Children and Young People advised that there were certain areas of customer service practice where there was a statutory requirement to monitor and provide reporting data within specified timescales, but there was a recognition of the need to improve the 'softer' side of data collection, reporting and evaluation, in particular analysing feedback from customers on the level and timeliness of service they have received, to ensure that customers were able to express if they feel they have at least been adequately acknowledged and listened to, even when they may not be able to agree with the decision(s) taken.

The Committee specifically enquired as to how the Executive will ensure that the perspectives of children, young people and families would be heard in the development and implementation of improvement measures, and what resource would be needed to facilitate this. The Director for Children and Young People acknowledged that the directorate's self-evaluation and the Ofsted report had evidenced that the Council were not currently doing this effectively and was an area where significant improvement was required. It was explained that one of the aims of the Participation Strategy was to increase engagement with families and parents, and examples were given of how this can be achieved, through strengthening the existing relationship with 'Parent Carer Voice' and the proposed establishment of a 'Listening to Families Forum' to provide a platform for all voices including those reluctant to engage publicly with the service.

Quality of Practice

The Committee noted that according to the Ofsted report the quality and impact of social work practice had significantly deteriorated since the last judgement in June 2018, and raised a question regarding the percentage of current frontline social workers who had received additional training to refresh and update their skills, how much of this training was online and/or self-assessed, and what changes or improvements were anticipated to improve the quality and responsiveness of services. Training data was not available to present to the meeting, but it was acknowledged that there was a current lack of a strong learning and development profile and the development of this was included in the improvement plan. The corporate rollout of 'My Conversation' as an appraisal model to accurately monitor learning and development needs was addressing this in part, alongside increased management oversight in children's services and an improved face to face training offer.

Management & Culture

The Committee noted that according to the Ofsted report there was evidence of weak guidance and a lack of management grip, as well as historical lack of stable and capable senior management, and requested examples of current actions to address this. The Director for Children and Young People advised that the current management team were highly visible in the Plough Lane offices and approachable to all staff, and there was a conscious movement to increase levels of professionalism and challenge inappropriate behaviour and language within children's services and across the Council as a whole. An offer was extended to elected members to speak to the children's services workforce and walk the office floor to satisfy themselves that this was the case, which was welcomed by the Committee.

It was confirmed that, at the request of the Commissioner, there was an independent organisation working with the authority who were currently involved with a number of engagement activities with the workforce, without management involvement, to explore workplace experiences and identify any barriers to progress and improvement, which would be feeding back to the Chief Executive and the Director for Children's Services. The HR and Organisational Development team had also recently overseen the delivery of a Council wide staff survey, the findings of which were due to be disseminated imminently.

A question was raised regarding whether a representative of families could be included in the membership of the Improvement Board, however it was unclear whether the governance arrangements for the Board could accommodate this.

Workforce

The Committee noted Ofsted's observation that issues within children's services were compounded by continuous staff turnover, that there remained insufficient capacity across the workforce to support a timely and appropriate response to children, and that heavy reliance on agency workers made the service unstable and fragile. In light of this, the Committee sought assurance that recruitment and retention issues were being urgently addressed, and requested details of how many staff were currently employed in the directorate on an interim basis, how many were currently on long-term sickness absence, and how these staff were being supported to return to work.

The Director for Children's Services confirmed that recruitment and retention of staff would be the single greatest enabling factor on the improvement journey, and initiatives were under discussion to incentivise potential applicants and accelerate the on-boarding process, however the picture remained challenging due to market competition and a national shortage of skilled social workers. It was estimated that approximately 50% of the established workforce were currently employed as interims, and whilst this had benefits in terms of attracting workers with considerable skills and expertise, it was acknowledged that this did leave the authority in a vulnerable position and affected the stability of relationships between social workers and families. It was confirmed that absence levels within children's services were not considered high given the known pressures of the work involved, and were not an outlier in comparison to absence levels across other Council directorates. Staff on sick leave have access to HR support services and where appropriate a phased return to the workplace was offered. In cases of staff underperformance, there were clear and fair processes to manage improvement. It was confirmed that all local authorities participate in a national annual survey of its workforce, and it was suggested that this may provide a useful benchmarking document for the Scrutiny Committee to see how Herefordshire's workforce profile compares with other local authorities in relation to staff churn and the proportions of permanent and interim staff working in social care.

Reflecting upon the debate, the Chief Executive thanked members for their contributions and questions, and reiterated that a 'whole Council' response would be required to deliver the required improvements. It was suggested that the Scrutiny Committee may wish, in light of the debate and Ofsted's findings, to reviews its work plan to ensure that it refocuses its available resource on where it can deliver the greatest impact.

The Chairperson summarised the overall key conclusions of the Committee, which principally included:

- The need to deliver improvement at pace;
- Recognition that the Children's Commissioner's key role was to assess whether the authority had the capacity to successfully deliver the action plan, rather than assessing immediate improvements;
- The importance of ensuring a stronger voice for children and young people, and providing an appropriate forum for families as a whole;
- The importance of continued effective and timely engagement with partner organisations.

The Vice-Chairperson requested that future training sessions delivered to the Committee should be recorded for the consumption of all members, and encouraged members of the Committee to strongly consider the offer made by the Director for Children and Young People to speak to staff in the workplace and understand their current experiences.

It was resolved that:

- (i) The Ofsted inspection report be noted; and**
- (ii) The Committee Work Plan be reviewed at the next meeting to ensure that the work of the Committee is focused on the main areas for improvement in children's services as evidenced by the Ofsted report and the renewed improvement plan.**

And that the following information requests be made:

- (a) A copy of the Children and Young People directorate Risk Register;**
- (b) Clarification from the Monitoring Officer regarding what access social workers have to expert legal advice to embed quality in social work practice; and**
- (c) A workforce profile for Herefordshire to benchmark against other local authorities the level of staff churn and the proportion of permanent and interim staff working in social care.**

112. PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received the report as set out on pages 37-64 of the agenda, which provided a brief summary update on issues previously considered.

It was resolved that:

- (i) The progress report on scrutiny information requests, scrutiny reports and recommendations and other matters raised by the committee be noted; and**
- (ii) Those information requests where a response has been received be agreed as completed, and any other outstanding items be requested for the next meeting.**

113. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

13, December. Plough Lane. 2.00pm

The meeting ended at 5.40 pm

Chairperson



RESPONSE TO SUPPLEMENTARY PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 11 OCTOBER 2022 (Minute Item 109).

From: F Reid, Hereford
To: Chairperson of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Please advise for 2021-22 under the auspices of Herefordshire Council:

- The number of new-born babies that were taken into care?
- The number of placement orders (court order that a child should be put up for adoption)?
- The rate of placement orders per 10,000 children?

Please advise the above for 2021-22 and 2020-21:

- “Statistical Neighbours” (average)
- All ten (10) “Statistical Neighbours” e.g. Cornwall, Devon
- West Midlands
- England

Response:

The number of new-born babies that were taken into care?

- 19 children taken into care within 10 days of date of birth
- 24 children under 1 year old taken into care
- The number of placement orders (court order that a child should be put up for adoption)?
 - 10 placement orders in the year
- The rate of placement orders per 10,000 children?
 - Rate = 2.78

Please advise the above for 2021-22 and 2020-21:

- “Statistical Neighbours” (average)
- All ten (10) “Statistical Neighbours” eg Cornwall, Devon
- West Midlands
- England.

LA	(Age 0-17) Population Mid Year Estimates - 2020	2020-21		2021-22		2020-21		2021-22 * **	
		Number of PO Granted	Rate	Number of PO Granted	Rate	Number of Children Under 1 Taken into Care	Rate	Number of Children Under 1 Taken into Care	Rate
Herefordshire	36029			10	2.8			24	6.7
England	12093288	2910	2.4	2860	2.4	5610	4.6		
West Midlands	1306330	390	3.0	450	3.4	720	5.5		
Stat Neighbours Average	114957	32.1	2.8	29.9	2.6	52	4.5		
Shropshire	60293	15	2.5	21	3.5	39	6.5		
Devon	148076	45	3.0	51	3.4	77	5.2		
Cornwall	108954	31	2.8	16	1.5	48	4.4		
Somerset	111293	38	3.4	33	3.0	44	4.0		
Dorest	67698	24	3.5	11	1.6	25	3.7		
Wiltshire	106274	16	1.5	8	0.8	30	2.8		
Suffolk	152863	38	2.5	38	2.5	76	5.0		
Norfolk	172182	36	2.1	44	2.6	66	3.8		
Gloucestershire	129562	29	2.2	39	3.0	63	4.9		
Cumbria	92373	49	5.3	38	4.1	52	5.6		

[Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)
[Coram-i - Local Level ASGLB Data Q4 2020/21](#)
[Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting Year 2021 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)

* 2021-2022 comparator data not yet published

** Comparator data not available for children taken into care within 10 days of date of birth.

Supplementary question for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11/10/2022 From: F Reid, Hereford

Were 43 babies taken into care during 2021-22 ie 19 + 24?

Please insert data for Herefordshire in the table about POs and babies taken into care.

I am interested the rates of babies taken into care within weeks of birth and/or mothers leaving hospital without their newborns, provide for 2020-21:

- Numbers and rates for Herefordshire
- Any metric(s) that compares Herefordshire with the other areas (in the table) with source(s)

In view of the comparatively high PO rate (and for children in care and care proceedings) in Herefordshire, how and by when will support and reunification be improved to reduce:

- Care proceedings
- Babies and children in care
- Placement orders?
- How much did Herefordshire Council receive in 2020-21 and 2021-22 for children who were adopted subsequent to the council obtaining a PO?

Response

Care Orders 2020/21

During 2020/2021, 13 children under the age of one were taken into our care. This equates to a rate (per 10,000) of 3.6. This was lower when compared with the rate (per 10,000 children) for England (4.6) and the West Midlands (5.5). The rate (per 10,000 children) of children under the age of 1 taken into care for our statistical neighbours for 2020/21 ranged from 2.8 (Wiltshire) to 6.5 (Shropshire). The average rate of children under the age of 1 for our statistical neighbours for 2021/2022 was 4.5.

Of the 13 children under the age of 1 taken into care during 2020/21 by Herefordshire, 10 were taken into care within 21 days of birth. Comparative data for England, the West Midlands or our statistical neighbours in respect of this is neither published, nor available to us.

Care Orders 2021/22

During 2021/2022, 24 children under the age of one were taken into our care. This equates to a rate (per 10,000 children) of 6.7.

Comparative data for England, West Midlands and Statistical Neighbours is not yet publically available for the year 2021/22. Data in respect of this will be published by the [Government](#) and [Coram I](#); the links will take you to the information in respect of 2020/21. Please refer to the respective organisations for publication dates of the 2021/2022 data.

Of the 24 children taken into care under the age of 1 in 2021/22, 9 were taken into care within 21 days of birth. Comparative data for England, the West Midlands or our statistical neighbours in respect of this is neither published, nor available to us.

Placement Orders

A Placement Order was granted for 10 children during 2020/2021. This equates to a rate (per 10,000 children) of 3.9. This was higher than the rate (per 10,000 children) for England (2.4) or for the West Midlands (3.0). The rate (per 10,000 children) of Placement Orders granted for our statistical neighbours for that year ranged from 1.5 for Wiltshire to 5.3 for Cumbria. The average rate of Placement Orders for our statistical neighbours for 2021/2022 was 2.8.

The rate of Placement Orders granted fluctuates from year by year. To illustrate. For the following year - 2021/2022, the rate of Placement Orders granted for Herefordshire was 2.8 (per 10,000 children). Whilst this is higher than the rate of Placement Orders for England (2.4) it was lower than the rate for the West Midlands (3.4) and broadly in line with our statistical neighbours (2.6).

Permanency Planning / Funding

For each individual child we will seek to ensure that the permanency plan is the most appropriate and proportionate. It would not be appropriate to set targets as each case will have to be considered with the child at the centre of the decision making. Due to this individual approach is not possible to specify how and by when support will be provided or when rehabilitation is considered as you requested.

We do not receive payment for children who are adopted. Previously, Local Authorities could receive an Inter-Agency Adoption Fee when adopters were recruited and supported by one Local Authority but where a child from another Local Authority was placed. Since the introduction of Regional Adoption Agencies the Inter-Agency Adoption Fees (if applicable) are payable to the Regional Adoption Agency rather than the Local Authority. For more information in respect of Inter Agency Adoption Fees please refer to the relevant page on the CoramBAAF website linked [here](#).

LA	(Age 0-17) Population Mid Year Estimates - 2020	2020-21		2021-22		2020-21		2021-22		2020-21	
		Number of PO Granted	Rate	Number of PO Granted	Rate	Number of Children Under 1 Taken into Care	Rate	Number of Children Under 1 Taken into Care	Rate	Number of Children taken into care within 21 days (3 weeks of birth)	Rate
Hereford	36029	14	3.9	10	2.8	13	3.6	24	6.7	10	2.8
England	12093288	2910	2.4	2860	2.4	5610	4.6	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
West Midlands	1306330	390	3.0	450	3.4	720	5.5	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Stat Neighbours Average	114957	32.1	2.8	29.9	2.6	52	4.5	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Shropshire	60293	15	2.5	21	3.5	39	6.5	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Devon	148076	45	3.0	51	3.4	77	5.2	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Cornwall	108954	31	2.8	16	1.5	48	4.4	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Somerset	111293	38	3.4	33	3.0	44	4.0	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Dorest	67698	24	3.5	11	1.6	25	3.7	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Wiltshire	106274	16	1.5	8	0.8	30	2.8	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Suffolk	152863	38	2.5	38	2.5	76	5.0	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Norfolk	172182	36	2.1	44	2.6	66	3.8	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Gloucestershire	129562	29	2.2	39	3.0	63	4.9	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	
Cumbria	92373	49	5.3	38	4.1	52	5.6	Data not published		Benchmarking not available	

[Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

[Coram-i - Local Level ASGLB Data Q4 2020/21](#)

[Children looked after in England including adoptions, Reporting Year 2021 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

Additional Questions for Scrutiny on Improvement Plan

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
	David Barrett	<p>Following several press releases stating that HCS have changed dramatically for the better in the last three months and are moving at Pace to deliver the plans needed. I suggest they have not and invite the councilors and media to view the evidence I have to prove this.</p> <p>Press releases went so far to say there has been consultation with the families, ACB disagree with this statement, as the barest minimum is offered. Louise Tickle tweeted the councillors' responses in October following contacting them for Panorama. ACB members will release the responses we've had since if we have even had a response.</p> <p>There's been little than empty words offered by this Council for families damaged permanently by failings. Words aren't enough!</p> <p>Please can you advise how much money you are setting aside for compensation claims relating to this outrageous behaviour?</p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>Improvement activity has been supported by performance management and quality assurance arrangements which are overseen by single and multi-agency governance arrangements including Scrutiny, Cabinet and the Improvement Board, which is independently chaired by Gladys Rhodes-White who is our Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Advisor. Additional independent oversight or progress is further provided by the Secretary of State appointed Commissioner Eleanor Brazil.</p> <p>Any claim for compensation is reviewed on its own merit and reparatory action is taken as appropriate. We currently do not have monies specifically earmarked for any potential future compensation claims.</p>			
	Hannah Currie	<p>There are some very bold statements made as part of this new plan for improvement, which needs to be fully unpicked by the scrutiny committee and not be taken at face value as previous plans appear to have been:</p> <p>The children and families have more frequent contact with their social workers. Social workers have lower caseloads and better supervision.</p> <p>Given the proven pattern of behaviour to omitt key information (Keehan and other cases) are scrutiny satisfied, these appointments are sustainable permanent staff or spin-doctoring.</p>	

		I want to know how many social workers does a child have allocated over a 2 year period (in 2016/2017 one child is proven to have had 13 in less than twelve months, in 2022 8 is frequent) and what percentage of children have had a social worker change in the past three months?	
<p>Response:</p> <p>When a referral is received the first social worker from the Assessment Teams will complete the assessment before transferring to a second social worker who will support the child when subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan. Should the child come into care, a third social worker from the Children in Care team is allocated. As such it is not unusual for a child to have two or three different social workers over a period of two years or for a child to have a change in allocated social worker in the preceding three months.</p> <p>We do not hold the data for 2016/17 and to go back to determine the answer would take up a considerable amount of time and resource. As at 09/12/2022, 43.8% of children open to social care have had more than one allocated social worker in the previous three months. The average number of allocated social workers for children who have been open to social care for the previous two years is 3.7.</p>			
	Rachel Gallagher	<p>Members of the public were made aware of some truly shocking cases handled by Herefordshire childrens services by judge keehan and Panorama. There was uproar about twins being separated for adoption by a report being changed.</p> <p>The improvement plan states nothing about improving the bond and relationship between siblings that have been separated, it doesn't even state anything about not splitting sibling groups up. Does this council plan on continuing to sever sibling bonds for adoption or will the amount of permanently broken families within Herefordshire increase? Also, when they have separated siblings, will they get to meet each more than twice before never seeing each other again?</p> <p>This question is for a scrutiny meeting regarding the improvement plan for children's services.</p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>We work hard to ensure that the permanency plans for children are the most appropriate, proportionate and in the best interests of the child.</p> <p>Plans might be for a return home to families with support, long-term fostering or for some, a plan for adoption.</p> <p>In order for a child to be adopted a Placement Order needs to be granted by the courts. For 2021/22 the percentage of children who ceased to be looked after because a Placement Order was granted to Herefordshire had fallen, and was in line with that of our statistical neighbours and the England average.</p>			

Whether or not to keep siblings together is a significant consideration in any plan for adoption and the court will expect that this has been properly assessed. In the event that siblings are separated, their ongoing relationship and contact is also considered and assessed

Permanency plans, including the frequency of family time to see siblings, for children who are separated and adopted will have been subject to care proceedings in which a judge weighs the evidence available and grants orders based on this. During care proceedings children are represented by a Guardian whose role it is to ensure local authority arrangements and decisions protect the child(ren), promote their welfare and are in their best interests.

	Maggie Steel	<p>The focus of the Children’s Commissioner and Council leadership is on creating a new, improved service for Children and Families. Improvements to the service are important and necessary.</p> <p>Many families already harmed by the long history of inadequate Children’s Services have seen no changes on the ground. Their needs and their voices are still being ignored.</p> <p>Families affected by historic failings feel abandoned. The same old patterns of the past are alive and well. They feel that in the quest for “Improvement” what has happened to them, and what is still happening to them, is being brushed under the carpet. If the Council cares about these families, surely it is time to stop defending the indefensible and invest in the urgent appointment of an independent body to mediate between families and the departments they say have harmed them?</p>	
--	--------------	---	--

Response:

Both officers and counsellors have met with some of the families who have felt dissatisfied, although we recognise that this is still more that we must do meaningfully listen to and work with families. There has been acceptance and public apologies for the way children and families have been let down historically.

Our social workers and managers do their best to support families and protect vulnerable children and we continue to see positive changes from a very low base. We know that our practice and processes need to continue to change and improve, as set out in our refreshed Improvement Plan.

Progress made will continue to be scrutinised and reviewed by a number of independent and external structures such as the Secretary of State appointed Commissioner, the Department for Education, Ofsted and our independently chaired Improvement Board.

	Teresa Fenner	<p>Please can this scrutiny committee look at what is being done to improve the working conditions of our County’s Foster Carers ? As a former Foster Carer for many years, having been forced out because of a less than acceptable moment when under severe pressure and realising the dishonesty of reports made about me I worry that Children’s services are struggling to recruit the best of people to this very wonderful but stressful profession without huge improvements to the support given.</p>	
--	---------------	--	--

		<p>If we do not have enough Foster Carers then it is inevitable that the very damaging policy of adoption, seemingly being best practice will continue, leaving our struggling families broken and desperate.</p> <p>Please are you looking at Early help too as this is an area of great concerns and inadequacy .</p>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>By providing a safe, loving environment for the children in their care, foster carers make a real difference to vulnerable children in Herefordshire. The retention and recruitment of foster carers is an ongoing challenge for local authorities including Herefordshire. We have recently appointed a new recruitment manager in respect of foster carers and we are currently reviewing our foster care recruitment and retention strategy and plan. We are also reviewing the current fees and allowances for carers.</p> <p>A dedicated recruitment campaign to attract more foster carers is planned and will be launched in the spring of 2023. We working to expand our training offer for foster carers and we are recruiting a Clinical Psychologist to support foster carers.</p> <p>We need a range of different foster carers from overnight short-breaks to long-term foster care; for more information please visit Foster with us – Herefordshire Council</p> <p>We continue to collaborate with multi-agency partners to further develop an Early Help offer for families. Recently, services and organisations including from the voluntary and community, and faith sectors attended two “World Café” events to consider how we can work together differently to provide earlier help and support to children and families. Follow-up events are being planned for early in the New Year.</p>			
	<p>Melissa Portman - Lewis</p>	<p><i>This question is about Section 10 of the Draft Improvement Plan for Children’s Services: Services to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and / or a Disability (SEND).</i></p> <p><i>The content of the Draft Improvement Plan focusses heavily on improving processes and paperwork. Children, and outcomes for children, barely feature. There is nothing about listening to, working closely in partnership with or supporting carers - a critical part of improving outcomes for children with SEND.</i></p> <p><i>The plan is focussed on the timely production and completion of paperwork. There is scant reference to quality assurance processes and implementation reviews.</i></p> <p><i>The families of A Common Bond SEND children are still being ignored and their SEND children’s needs are still not being met. Culture change is badly and urgently needed. Is culture change possible without a change of leadership? “</i></p>	
<p>Response:</p>			

In October 2022, the Local Government Association completed a Peer Review of our Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities (SEND) which was commissioned earlier this year by the new leadership of the service and we have included SEND in our refreshed Improvement Plan as an acknowledgement that our local SEND partnership strategy needs to be developed and strengthened and that we need to review and improve the effectiveness of our collective resources.

Following the High Court judgement, a new Chief Executive and a new leadership team within children’s services was appointed. Improvements, including positive cultural changes, are being made but we know that we need to continue this and are working hard to deliver our refreshed Improvement Plan which ultimately will result in better services to the children and their families of Herefordshire.

	Ms Reid, Hereford	<p>The Children’s [Services] Improvement Plan report for the 13/12/22 CYPSC meeting states:</p> <p>“This Improvement Plan ... has been prepared in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including children, young people, parents and carers, the workforce and multi-agency / cross sector partners. ... We intend to continue engaging with our stakeholders to further develop a local conversation whereby we will listen, address feedback and take appropriate action as an integral part of our improvement journey as we move forward.”</p> <p>However, the list of consultees does <u>not</u> include any birth families consultees.</p> <p>Please outline the ways in which birth families have been consulted when drafting the Plan and how you will continue to engage with them.</p>	
--	----------------------	--	--

Response:

Whilst there were a broad range of participants who contributed to the development of the refreshed Improvement Plan, official representatives of birth families were not involved as a targeted group as there are currently limited opportunities for engagement. Some members of birth families were present, but representing another agency or organisation rather than specifically as a birth family. This is something that we are acutely aware of and are working to develop our listening to families approach, to be published in the New Year that will include the establishment of a regular forum for families to meet with service leaders, feedback processes at key points in a child or families’ experience of services (such as when an assessment is completed, or a service ended), and a change in our practice framework so that it is more relationship-based.

The views and opinions of families expressed at recent open meetings was taken in account in the development of this high-level plan. We are also committed through our future listening to families approach to collaborate with families in the development of new services.

Corporate Parenting

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 13 December 2022

Report by: Rachel Gillott - Service Director Early Help and Safeguarding

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the background information for the committee to review the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy, the plans for the review of the Strategy in 2023 and opportunities for policy review and development of the strategy with any recommendations to the Cabinet.

Recommendation(s)

- a) **That the contents of this report are noted by the scrutiny committee, and**
- b) **The committee offer any further constructive challenge, define any further action or recommendations to inform and support the process for the continuing commitment to corporate parenting within Herefordshire Council as required by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017**

Alternative options

Scrutiny Committee could choose not to review information contained in this report; this is not recommended as the Local Authority needs to ensure that it carries out its Corporate Parenting functions as set out in Children & Social Work Act 2017

Key considerations

1. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 sets out the Corporate parenting principles as follows:
 - (1) A local authority in England must, in carrying out functions in relation to the children and young people mentioned in subsection
 - (2), have regard to the need—
 - (a) to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
 - (b) to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
 - (c) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
 - (d) to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
 - (e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
 - (f) for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
 - (g) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
2. The [Corporate Parenting Strategy](#) notes that Corporate Parenting is the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies to give care experienced children, young people and adults (care leavers) the best start in life. A child in the care of the council should expect the whole council to be the best parent it can be. Every member and employee of the council has the statutory responsibility to act for a looked after child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child.
3. The Strategy sets out 4 Pledges the Council have made to improve the experience of children looked after and care leavers;
 - 1) Keeping children and young people safe – BE SAFE FROM HARM
 - 2) Improving children and young people’s health and wellbeing – BE HEALTHY
 - 3) Helping ALL children and young people succeed – BE AMAZING
 - 4) Ensuring that children and young people are influential in our communities – FEEL PART OF THE COMMUNITY
4. The current Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out 7 priorities they wanted the Council to deliver for them as corporate parents and lists the responsible leads for each
 - 1) We want our corporate parents, and other key leaders to understand and act on their responsibilities – Lead Member for Children and Young People
 - 2) We want to have a safe and stable home and life – Head of Looked After Children
 - 3) We want to reach our potential in education We want our education and training to ‘recover’ after the disruption of Covid 19 – Virtual school head teacher
 - 4) We want to be physically and emotionally healthy – Specialist Nurse, Children in Care Principal Clinical Psychologist in CAMHS
 - 5) We want to enjoy a range of play, sport, leisure and cultural opportunities - Director of Resource
 - 6) We want our voice to matter – Lead Member for Children and Young People (supported by foster carer representative and Participation and Mentoring Officer)
 - 7) When leaving care we want to live happy, healthy and financially secure lives – Head of Looked After Children and Director Of Resources
5. The overall responsibility for delivering the Corporate Parenting Strategy sits with the Corporate Parenting Board

6. In March 2022 Herefordshire Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Peer Diagnostic Review of the functioning of the Corporate Parenting Board and make recommendations on strengthening its role.
7. The LGA met with key officers within the service and partner agencies as well as Lead Members who sit on the board. The LGA also met with young people and observed a Corporate Parenting Board.
8. The LGA identified some key strengths currently:
 - Acknowledged and recognised the need for development of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB)
 - Improving partnerships with health, demonstrated by their attendance and professional contribution to the CPB. Acknowledgment of the improvement in communication with the Council.
 - The CPB does engage with young people from Your Voice Matters at CPB meetings, who are challenging with clearly expressed and strong views.
 - Some signs of growing understanding of their corporate parenting responsibilities across council services and partners
 - Willingness to improve across a wide range of people is evident, along with a desire to quicken the pace of change
9. LGA made the following recommendations in respect to the Corporate Parenting Board:
 - Clearer action planning and tracking of outcomes with specific time frames (SMART targets), linked to key indicators to prioritise. Streamlined minute taking with a focus on actions and outcomes.
 - Performance data dashboard (for Children Looked After (CLA) and care leavers) needs to be considered at each CPB meeting, to enable the Board to challenge and support on behalf of children and young people. However, this needs to be focused around key indicators performing well or off-target, for example health assessments and availability of dentistry to help drive required performance improvements.
 - Responding to and demonstrating that you have responded to young people's concerns. This is not evident at the moment, as young people say 'we have told you this before'.
 - Ensuring that CPB members better understand children and young people's experiences and means of communication. Update them by modern communication methods (e.g. social media)
 - Raising awareness and understanding of Working Together 2020 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 as a basis for the work of the Board.
10. The Corporate Parenting Board met on 24 August and accepted the recommendations and discussed proposals to strengthen the oversight and scrutiny of the Board. They were able to see a first draft of data available for CLA and Care Leavers.
11. The Corporate Parenting Action plan is in place until December 2022 but this will need to be refreshed against the requirements from the [Ofsted report](#) from the recent Ofsted Inspection (July 2022). This will be tabled for discussion at the January Corporate Board meeting.
12. In addition to the Corporate Parenting Action Plan, our current Corporate Parenting Strategy is being revised to incorporate findings from the Peer Diagnostic Review and the Ofsted Inspection.
13. The revised Corporate Parenting Strategy will be informed by the Peer Diagnostic Review, the Ofsted report in respect of the most recent Ofsted Inspection (July 2022).

14. The revised Corporate Parenting Strategy will also look towards the [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#). This latter was commissioned following a government commitment to review the care system and was published in May 2022. The government is currently considering its response to this independent review.
15. Progress against the 7 priorities are:
16. Understanding Corporate Parenting:
There has been CP workshops and training which was initiated in April for all Council staff, foster carers and elected members to support understanding. The roles and responsibilities of CP is now included in all new starter induction. This will be refreshed in the New Year and rolled out again to ensure all understand their role as Corporate Parent. The aim is to deliver this jointly with care experienced young people across all Directorates.
17. We want to have a safe and stable home and life
The stability of children who are looked after is good with 87% having had one placement in the previous 12 months and 12% having two. A key performance indicator is those children who have had 3 placements moves or more and this has shown significant improvement having fallen to only 2% in the last 6 months.
18. Children who have been in the same placement for 2.5 years has increased and we are outperforming our statistical neighbours at 79%.
19. Ninety-two percent of children's looked after reviews are up to date and this is one of our key priorities. 89% of our looked after children have an up-to-date social work visit.
20. Finding available accommodation across Herefordshire can be difficult but for those young people who have additional challenges, finding accommodation can be further impacted adversely and this small cohort do experience instability. However our current performance of young people in suitable accommodation at 92%.
- Consideration is currently being given to a guarantor scheme where, as Corporate Parents there is being made available a guarantor scheme to support young people in gaining accommodation of their own. It is hoped that this scheme will be in place by spring.
21. We are working with Housing colleagues on a joint working protocol to help reduce moves and suitability. The sufficiency strategy is also addressing the accommodation issues we face in Herefordshire. We have funding for a housing work for 3 years from the Department of Levelling Up and Communities. We are out to recruitment in the New Year.
22. We want to reach our potential in education
Both Key Stage assessments and tests were cancelled by the Department for Education in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid19 lockdowns. The overall achievements of the Looked after cohort in 2022 is lower than in 2019 for both Key stages.
23. For Key Stage 1, only 2 out of 5 pupils achieved at least the expected standard for all 3 subjects in 2022. For Key Stage 2 only a third of the 2022 cohort were assessed as reaching the standard for Writing, compared to over 60% in 2019
24. In 2022, only 3 out of 23 CLA achieved at least a grade 4 in GCSE English and Mathematics. GCSEs in 2020 and 2021 were based on teachers assessments and therefore not directly comparable to 2022.

25. The Virtual School is considering how best to support children in our care and is working together with education settings and school to make sure Personal Education Plans are in place for each child in our care.
26. The number of children who are not in education, employment or training (EET) is a key priority of the CPB with key actions including members supporting the identification of work experience and placements and the promotion of apprenticeships. The current figure of 41% in EET is concerning.
27. A number of training providers closed post Covid. There are now fewer places available for our young people. Additionally we need to reconsider Apprenticeships for care experienced young people across all directorates in the local authority as part of fulfilling our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.
28. *We want to be physically and emotionally healthy*
Health presented to the CPB in May and advised of the increased support available. 'Kooth' is a digital offer for Children and Young People (CYP) aged 11 – 18 (Qwell is the adult version), offering magazine articles, forums, text messaging and live counselling sessions. It offers immediate support and covers extended hours. Mental Health Support Teams in Schools (MHST) also offer evidence-based interventions for mild to moderate mental ill health presentations to CYP, in all of Herefordshire secondary schools.
29. The CCG have commissioned 'SHOUT' – a 24/7 text-based service which is free to use and not reliant on internet access. There is also Healthy Minds for young people over the age of 18.
30. The pathways for our children and young people looked after with more complex needs, to gain support for their mental health need improving. Our commissioning team are looking at the provision and pathways for C&YP with CAMHS to gain a more bespoke service to support our children at the point of accommodation. Funding for a psychologist post has been secure and we hope to recruit to this early in the New Year.
31. In respect of initial health assessments a new process has been put in place and a task and finish group has been in operation to improve the timeliness of initial health assessments. Additional funding has been approved for 2022/23 to support with additional clinic appointments within community paediatrics. Dental checks remain low at 38%.
32. *We want to enjoy a range of play, sport, leisure and cultural opportunities*
There have been a number of opportunities for young people over the holidays but we do not have an update as to the wider offer for our children from the Chair of this group.
33. *We want our voice to matter*
It is recognised that the voice of children to mould, shape and deliver services within Herefordshire needs significant strengthening. There were engagement events with young people in the spring but the work has not been fully completed to materialise this into a plan of action. The CPB advised there to be two groups one for care leavers and one for children looked after. The current participation offer is limited and the wider voice of children within our service needs strengthening. The Advocacy service and the use of Family Group Conference needs wider focus. During Care Leavers week (24th October -29th October) we undertook engagement events on the Care Leaver offer and the feedback from young people is being incorporated in the plan

34. We are reviewing our engagement and participation offer currently to ensure we have a team of staff to support this work and that we look across services as to how we deliver Voice for all of our children and young people. This service now sits in Corporate Parenting service. A refreshed children in care council for up to 16 year olds and a refreshed 'Your Voice Matters' for 16- 25 are currently being considered with our children and young people
35. The offer for Care Leavers (including the financial offer) is currently being reviewed. The current plan is for the Participation team to move within Corporate Parenting Service and the Head of Service is overseeing this. All of these areas are being looked at by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting to inform the refreshed plan which are led and overseen by the CPB plan.

Community impact

26. The Corporate Parenting Strategy has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
27. The County Plan 2020–2024 includes the ambition to 'strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together'. Specifically, 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; and
 - c. Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people. Set out any considerations relating to community impact including contribution made to corporate plan / health and wellbeing strategy or other local or national strategies or policies.

Environmental Impact

28. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.

Equality duty

29. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:
30. 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.
31. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Whilst this is an update to the scrutiny committees and will in itself have minimal equalities impacts, consideration has been made in the consideration of Executive decisions and the Executive Responses provided by the Cabinet.

Resource implications

32. There has been significant investment to gain additional capacity to support Childrens Services, but due to recruitment challenges not all roles have been filled. The current pressure of children within 'high cost' placements is the subject of an action group to gain permanence for these children. The recruitment of foster carers and sufficiency overall needs greater focus across the Corporate Parenting Agenda.
33. There is Corporate Sufficiency Board led by commissioners to oversee this. Project leads are commissioning a needs assessment of our foster carers and improved engagement with the wider market, to gain more homes for our children

Legal implications

34. There are no legal implications in respect of this report.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The children's services budget for placements is currently overspent by £273,000 with an overall overspend of £4million	There is resource been identified to review all CLA who may be able to be reunified with their parents and to drive the permanence agenda? There is a task and finish group reviewing all children subject to higher cost provision to assure that it is meetings its objectives to gain better outcomes for children and providing value for money

Consultees

35. There has been no public consultation on this proposal

Appendices

None

Background papers

None identified.

Children's Improvement Plan

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 13 December 2022

Classification

Open

Report by: Cabinet member children and families;

Decision type

Non-key

This is a non-key decision because this is being considered by a scrutiny committee, which will not make any executive decisions on this matter, but may make recommendations to Cabinet.

The Cabinet is later expected to make key decisions on this matter. A "key decision" is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present cabinet with the Children's Services Improvement Plan for authorisation to submit the plan to Ofsted following the inspection in July 2022.

Recommendation(s)

That the Improvement Action Plan outlined in Appendix A be noted.

Alternative options

1. To not submit the plan to cabinet for endorsement and authorisation 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. The Honourable Mr Justice Keehan delivered a Judgement (26 March 2021) with leave for the same to be published that identified serious failings in Herefordshire Council children’s services.
3. Full council unanimously supported on 27 April 2021 the establishment of an improvement board as part of the assurance and improvement strategy following the High Court judgement.
4. On 18 May 2021 the Department for Education issued the Council with a [non-statutory improvement notice](#).
5. A Focused Visit by Ofsted in July 2021 identified shortfalls in the capacity of Social Workers, inconsistencies in social work practice and insufficient management oversight and supervision. The previous inspection by Ofsted in 2018, and each focused visit since, has raised similar concerns. The focus visit in July 2021 also criticised the lack of pace to achieve the required improvements.
6. An independent audit project, commissioned by the Chief Executive, concluded on 21 December 2021 having audited in excess of 1,000 cases allocated to Early Help and Children’s Social Care Services. Whilst none of the audit outcomes raised serious safeguarding concerns about the imminent risk of harm with children and young people that required immediate action, the majority of audits were judged to be ‘Inadequate’ or ‘Requiring Improvement’ to be good.
7. At the [28 October 2021 Cabinet](#) there was a decision to endorse the Children and Families Strategic Improvement Plan v1.0. Following this publication cabinet received an update about the improvement plan in May 2022 and version 2 was subsequently endorsed.

Current Situation

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

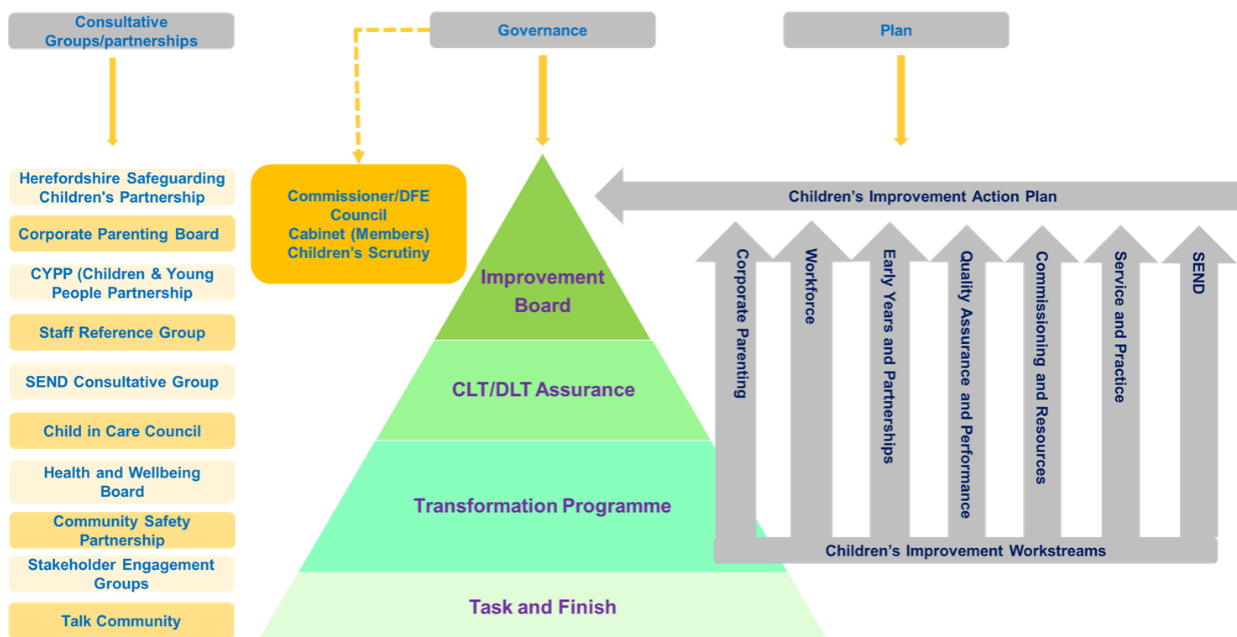
Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate

12. At the time of the inspection, the service was already developing a number of practice priorities and was focussing on addressing some wider systems issues. The service has increased the pace of this activity and in order to realise the vision and aspiration for improved children's outcomes, a comprehensive transformation of services is required to achieve the long-term and sustainable changes that local children, young people and families in Herefordshire need, deserve and expect.
13. Appendix A is the Improvement Plan that is required to be submitted to Ofsted 90 days after the judgement has been received and this is 20 December 2022.
14. Once finalised and submitted, a version will be produced for children and young people early in the New Year.

Development of the plan

15. This Improvement Plan (Appendix A), hereinafter referred to as the Plan, has been prepared in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including children, young people, parents and carers, the workforce and multi-agency / cross sector partners. Some of this engagement has been very challenging, particularly given the impact and legacy of inadequate service delivery. It has been necessary to do this however so that we can confront and abate the current problems and make improvements as quickly as possible. We intend to continue engaging with our stakeholders to further develop a local conversation whereby we will listen, address feedback and take appropriate action as an integral part of our improvement journey as we move forward.
16. The plan sets out the first phase of the post-inspection improvement activity as a direct response to receiving the inspection feedback and report. It focuses on the next 12-18 months although the transformation activity will necessarily take longer than this and the plan will be reviewed, refreshed and further developed as required. Having accepted the service's shortcomings, the focus is on doing what is required to deliver safe and effective core services as quickly as possible. This builds upon the activity undertaken before the inspection to diagnose the extent of existing weaknesses and is followed up with a focus on strengthening core systems, clearing backlogs, securing thresholds and stabilising the service. The service will continue to work at pace and in partnership to problem solve and assure the quality of practice moving forward.
17. The overall transformation programme has a number of projects, focusing on workforce, service and practice development, performance and quality assurance, commissioning resources, early help and partnerships, corporate parenting and special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND). The corresponding project plans have all been reviewed and aligned to address the high level actions for each of the priority improvement areas identified by the Ofsted inspection, and the recent Local Government Association SEND peer review. A diagram outlining the governance arrangements is included at paragraph 19 and outlines the relationship between the Transformation Programme Projects and the Improvement Board.

18. The improvement activity will be supported and driven by strengthened performance management and quality assurance arrangements, with clear lines of accountability that are overseen by single and multi-agency governance arrangements reporting into Herefordshire's Improvement Board, which is independently chaired by our Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Advisor.
19. We will be reflective and embrace the learning opportunities that are afforded to the service from working in partnership with the appointed Commissioner, Sector Led Improvement Partners and through an open dialogue providing support and challenge by our colleagues in the DfE and Ofsted.
20. The diagram below sets out the relationship between all the different elements of the improvement planning and governance process. The base of the pyramid (coloured in yellow) identifies a range of task and finish groups that focus on the operational practice and performance priorities. These are directed by and report into to the seven delivery projects within the transformation programme. These seven delivery projects have refreshed plans to ensure all areas of improvement are addressed. Internal assurance for the transformation programme is provided by the Directorate and Corporate Leadership Teams and all the improvement progress and updates are reported into the Improvement Board. This activity is informed by several consultative groups and partnerships (outlined on the left hand side of the diagram), including the council's internal overview, scrutiny and decision making processes.



21. To ensure that improvement activity is focused, well-coordinated, progressing at pace and having the desired impact to improve outcomes for children and young people, the Children's Improvement Board, which is independently chaired by a Department of Health Improvement Advisor, will meet and report on a monthly basis.
22. The progress reporting will provide a rating to determine if improvement activity is both on track and delivering the right impact to improve outcomes for children and young people. The ratings will be informed by the progress reporting of activity as well as analysing quality assurance and performance reporting.

23. Corporate senior responsible officers and the project management office will work together with the Improvement Director, Service Directors and the Corporate Director for Children and Young People to ensure a collaborative operating model that delivers the improvement requirements.
24. Herefordshire Council continues to have a strong commitment to improving performance in Children's Services. Transformation of the service is in its second year, of a three year programme that commenced in October 2021 following the publication of the first version of the Improvement Plan and a further refresh is expected in December 2023.
25. The aims of the transformation plan remain the same which are:
 - a. Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
 - b. Making working in Herefordshire an attractive and rewarding career choice.
 - c. Embedding systemic partnership approaches and exploring alternative models of delivery.
 - d. Making the service financially viable for the future across a range of services the Council delivers.

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

Community impact

26. 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.
27. The County Plan 2020–2024 includes the ambition to 'strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together' and more specifically, 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

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

Equality duty

30. 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.

31. 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.

32. 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.
33. As individual improvement projects and service delivery progresses, and changes are designed, equality impact assessments will be undertaken, as necessary and appropriate.

Resource implications

34. There are no resourcing implications to this decision report.
35. The resource implications of the transformation programme have been outlined in separate reports to Cabinet.

Legal implications

36. There are no additional legal issues to bring to the Cabinet's attention which are not already mentioned in the report

Risk management

37. 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.

Consultees

38. A large number of partners has been consulted whilst the plan has been in development. These are listed below:

Group	Date
Foster Carers	4 November 2022
Police and Health Colleagues	4 November 2022
Education Partners	4 November 2022
Children’s Services Workforce	3 November 2022
Voluntary and Community Groups	3 November 2022
Child in Care Council	3 November 2022
Children’s Directorate Leadership Team – Operational Board	28 November 2022
Children’s Assurance Board	16 November 2022
Corporate Leadership Team	29 November 2022
Improvement Board	1 December 2022
Children’s Scrutiny Committee	

Appendices

Appendix A – Children’s Services Improvement Action Plan

Background papers

A – Improvement Plan for Children and Families V1 – October 2021 - [28 October 2021 Cabinet](#)

B – Tranche 1 Cabinet Paper - [March 2022](#)

C – Tranche 2 Cabinet Paper - [November 2022](#)

D – Council Report – April 2021 - [April 21 Council Meeting](#)

E – Non-Statutory Improvement Notice - [Non-statutory Improvement Notice](#)

F – Ofsted’s Recent Publication - [Ofsted Inspection Report](#)



Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan (DRAFT)

Version control:

<i>Author Name and Role</i>	Darryl Freeman, Director of Children's Services
<i>Date Created</i>	24/11/2022
<i>Date Issued</i>	
<i>Description</i>	Developed but not finalised Improvement Plan
<i>File Name</i>	20221121_Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan v0.01
<i>Format</i>	MS Word
<i>FOI Disclosure</i>	
<i>Geographic Coverage</i>	Herefordshire
<i>Group Access</i>	Participants in Improvement planning
<i>Master Location</i>	Improvement Board
<i>Security Classification</i>	Restricted
<i>Status</i>	Draft
<i>Subject</i>	Children's Services improvement
<i>Title</i>	Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan; first draft
<i>Type</i>	Improvement Plan incorporating Progress Report

<i>Version</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Description of change</i>	<i>Pages affected</i>	<i>Review date due</i>
0.01	Draft	24/11/2022	Draft for Operational Board		28/11/2022
0.02	Draft	28/11/2022	Draft for Corporate Leadership Team		01/12/2022
0.03	Draft	01/12/2022	Draft for Improvement Board	Appendix A and B	11/01/2022
0.04	Draft	15/12/2022	Draft for Cabinet		20/11/2022

Content

Background	4
Our transformation programme	5
How we will achieve success	5
Our workforce	6
Evidencing Impact	6
'BRAG' rating guide:	6
Our Practice Priorities	7
Areas for Improvement	8
1: Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care and care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships.....	9
2: The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, including sufficient numbers of foster carers, so children receive a timely response to having their needs identified and met across the service.	12
3: The timely and robust identification and multi-agency response to children and young people who are at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care.	15
4: The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need.	19
6: Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the public law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes.....	24
7:The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation.	27
8: Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision.....	30
9: Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.....	33
10: Services to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and / or a Disability (SEND)	35

Background

Children’s Services were inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 under the Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) framework.

The inspection report was published on 21 September 2022 and is available on the Ofsted website¹.

The overall judgement was that Herefordshire Children’s Services are ‘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

Following the inspection, we have moved openly and swiftly to acknowledge the key areas for improvement, many of which we had already identified and incorporated into our existing Transformation Programme. We have taken immediate action to increase capacity where it was needed to strengthen our MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and other frontline services for children and young people.

At the time of the inspection, we were already developing a number of practice priorities within the service and were focussing on addressing some wider systems issues. We have increased the pace of this activity and we know that in order to realise our vision and aspiration for improved children’s outcomes, a comprehensive transformation of our service is required to achieve the long-term and sustainable changes that local children, young people and families in Herefordshire need, deserve and expect.

This high-level Improvement Plan has been prepared in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including children, young people, parents and carers, our workforce and our multi-agency / cross sector partners. Some of this engagement has been very challenging, particularly given the impact and legacy of inadequate service delivery. It has been necessary to do this however so that we can confront and abate the current problems and make improvements as quickly as possible. We intend to continue engaging with our stakeholders to further develop a local conversation whereby we will listen, address feedback and take appropriate action as an integral part of our improvement journey as we move forward.

¹ <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50192875>

Our transformation programme

Our plan sets out the first phase of our post-inspection improvement activity as a direct response to receiving the inspection feedback and report. Having accepted the service's shortcomings, we are focusing on what we need to do to deliver safe and effective core services as quickly as possible. It focuses on the next 12-18 months although the transformation activity will necessarily take longer than this and the plan will be reviewed, refreshed and further developed as required. This builds upon the activity undertaken before the inspection to diagnose the extent of existing weaknesses and is followed up with a focus on strengthening core systems, clearing backlogs, securing thresholds and stabilising the service. We will continue to work at pace to problem solve and assure the quality of our practice moving forward.

The plan carries forward the key elements of the previous plan and reflects changed priorities following the recent Ofsted inspection. Our transformation programme has a number of Projects, including Workforce, Service and Practice Development, Performance and Quality Assurance, Commissioning Resources, Early Help and Partnerships, Corporate Parenting and Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities (SEND). Improving outcomes for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disability is not restricted only to the SEND work stream and is included in each of the work streams. Each work stream has a member of the Corporate Leadership Team as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)

The corresponding project plans have all been reviewed and aligned to address the high level actions for each of the priority improvement areas identified by Ofsted inspection, and the LGA peer review of SEND services. A diagram outlining the governance arrangements is included at Appendix A and outlines the relationship between the Projects, the plan, and the Improvement Board.

For ease of accountability, responsible leads are primarily senior officers of the council but there is an increased focus on partnership working reflected in the various task and finish groups and in the project plans that sit behind this high-level plan.

Our improvement activity will be supported and driven by strengthened performance management and quality assurance arrangements, with clear lines of accountability that are overseen by single and multi-agency governance arrangements reporting into our Improvement Board, which is independently chaired by our Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Advisor.

We will be reflective and embrace the learning opportunities that are afforded to us from working in partnership with our Commissioner, Sector Led Improvement Partners and through an open dialogue with support and challenge provided by our colleagues in the DfE and Ofsted.

How we will achieve success

Success is dependent upon a county-wide approach working together with the Service, the Council and all stakeholders, including working in partnership with parents and carers and taking full account of children and young people's voices.

High support and high challenge will be essential, backed by robust governance arrangements and effective partnerships. In addition to the work of the Improvement Board, key partnerships including the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP), Corporate Parenting Board, Children and

Young People’s Partnership, SEND Partnership Group, Health and Wellbeing Board and Community Safety Partnership will each have a significant contribution to make to deliver improved services and achieve better outcomes for children, young people and families in Herefordshire.

Our workforce

Our workforce is our greatest asset and we are building an organisational culture characterised by strong relationships, high support and high challenge. We are committed to working with our workforce and have established a Staff Reference Group, have appointed a Principal Social Worker and developed other engagement fora, to ensure our workforce has a voice that is championed to inform and influence our improvement activity. The Staff Reference Group meets monthly and their representation is heard at the Improvement Board.

Evidencing Impact

To ensure that we are both increasing the pace and the impact of our improvement activity, the impact of our actions will be monitored by the Children’s Improvement Board on a monthly basis. The progress reporting will provide a rating to determine if improvement activity is on track as well as the impact it is having. Ratings will be informed by the progress reporting of activity as well as analysing quality assurance and performance reporting.

‘BRAG’ rating guide:

The BRAG ratings will report on the status of both the improvement activity and the overall impact and outcome of this with children, young people and their parents, carers and families. This will show the status of the activity being undertaken both in terms of its timeliness and progress as well as confirming if it is having the desired impact to deliver improved outcomes with children and young people. Details of the BRAG descriptors are as follows:

Green ratings will indicate when activity has started, is on track and progressing according to agreed plans.

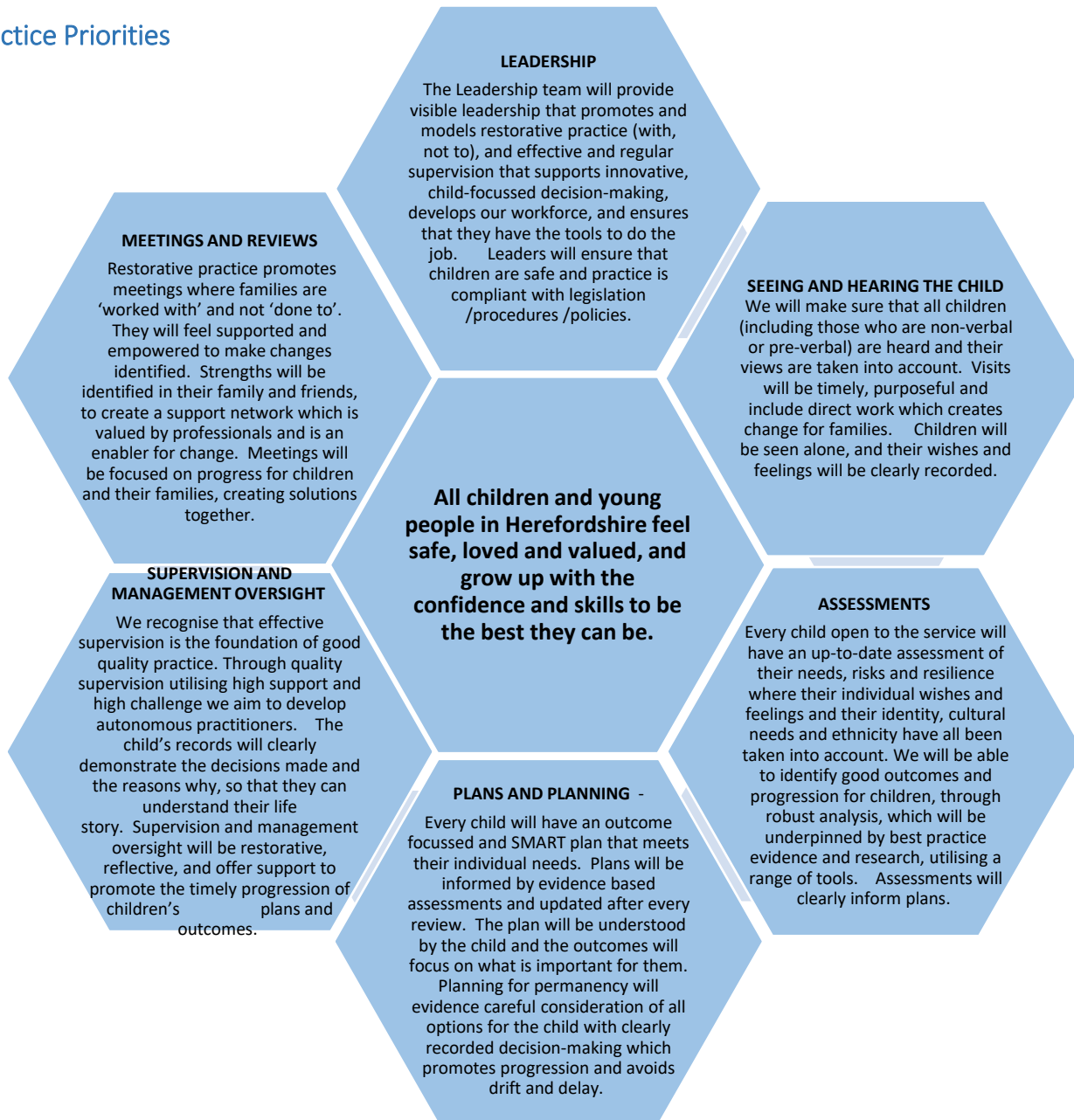
Amber ratings will indicate where activity has started and although some issues have been identified these are being dealt with but are causing some delay

Red ratings indicate where activity has not started, stalled or stopped due to unresolved issues which are preventing progress, causing delay and presenting significant risks

Blue ratings indicate when activity has been completed according to agreed plans, and the **impact** needs to be tested to ensure the desired **outcomes** are delivered. These will require further review as part of ‘business as usual’ practice and performance arrangements.

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	--	--	---	--	--

Our Practice Priorities



Areas for Improvement

The Ofsted inspection report identifies the following nine improvement areas which provide the framework for this high level Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan:

1. Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care and care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships.
2. The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, including sufficient numbers of foster carers, so children receive a timely response to having their needs identified and met across the service.
3. The timely and robust identification and multi-agency response to children and young people who are at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care.
4. The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need.
5. Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements to ensure children are protected and enter care when required.
6. Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the Public Law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes.
7. The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation.
8. Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision.
9. Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.

In addition to the nine improvements areas outlined above, the plan also includes a tenth improvement area that focuses on Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). This improvement priority has been included following a SEND Peer Review undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) in October 2022.

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

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
1.1 Allocate additional corporate resources with dedicated project management support to strengthen strategic and operational planning for the improvement and transformation activity.	Director of Programme Management Office & Performance	October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-inspection, Corporate Senior Responsible Officers aligned with the Transformation Programme Programme Management Officer resources allocated New Improvement Director appointed 	
1.2 Re-establish the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) to create a multi-agency/cross sector forum to develop and Early Help offer with families	Director of Public Health	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYPP Board and Terms of Reference (TOR) completed First Board 28.11.22 to agree work plan Draft Early Help (EH) & Prevention Strategy to be developed 	
1.3 Work quickly and collaboratively with the community and voluntary sector to utilise assets and increase capacity for undertaking Early Help assessments and providing family support.	Head of Service (Early Help)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement event held and baseline position established World Café Event being convened for 30.11.22 and 01.12.22 	
1.4 Review the work of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) and the local offer for care experienced young people, including access to education, employment and training	Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPB TOR and membership agreed Corporate Parenting Strategy under development, including refreshed offer Engagement with Child in Care Council to strengthen and relaunch 	
1.5 Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to identify a corporate lead as a council-wide 'champion' for corporate parenting.	Chief Executive	September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Director (Community Wellbeing) appointed as council-wide lead. 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)

1.6 Ensure multi-agency governance arrangements provide a clear framework for decision making and accountability, specifically in relation to the Improvement Board and the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP), but also in relation to other key partnerships.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping process with relevant Partnership Chairs underway 	
1.7 Implement a Communication Strategy so 'Messages that Matter' are disseminated clearly and regularly to all key stakeholders.	Service Director (Improvement)	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping of the strategy completed in accordance with the existing Corporate Communication Strategy 	
1.8 Launch a Leadership Pledge to communicate the purpose, values, strategy and goals for improving outcomes for local children and young people.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft outline for consultation with Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) and CLT for completion December 2022 Launch as part of Communication Strategy (January 2023) 	
1.9 Ensure there are strong and effective arrangements in place to address identified concerns about multi-agency safeguarding practice/arrangements which includes escalation to the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) for swift resolution when required.	Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Independent Scrutineer	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of arrangements underway 	

52

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Members and the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) will take timely and necessary action, supported by accurate data that makes a difference for children and young people. (Performance data and records of decisions) Multi-agency partners will hold equal responsibility and accountability for children who are identified at risk. This success will be seen in the reduction of children on repeat child protection plans and children requiring court intervention. (Performance data and quality assurance activity) 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	---	---	---	--

- All of those with corporate parenting responsibilities will have sufficient understanding of their role to offer robust challenge to ensure positive outcomes for children in our care and those that we have previously looked after. (Feedback)

Measures that Matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage and number of care experienced young people aged 19 – 21 in education, employment and training (higher is good) • Percentage and number of Early Help assessments completed by services other than the Herefordshire Council Early Help Team

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

2: The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, including sufficient numbers of foster carers, so children receive a timely response to having their needs identified and met across the service.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
2.1 Reinvigorate our Workforce Strategy, informed by a comprehensive workforce profile, by increasing our recruitment and retention activity so there is an increasingly stable, permanent, skilled and experienced workforce providing continuity of support and intervention with children, young people and families	Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Strategy due for sign off in January 2023 Recruitment microsite launched November 2022 Dedicated Recruitment Team established October 2022 Recruitment training for all managers Systems and processes refreshed 	
2.2 Refresh and relaunch induction arrangements for new starters so they receive a comprehensive Herefordshire welcome, orientation and introduction our practice priorities and ways of working with local children, young people and families	Principal Social Worker (PSW)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New permanent Principal Social Worker appointed November 2022 	
2.3 Develop the Academy's continuing professional development (CPD) offer and progression pathway for professionals working directly with children, young people and families to ensure it is aligned with our priorities and their learning needs.	Principal Social Worker (PSW)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Career Progression Pathway complete November 2022 CPD under review 	
2.4 Review the Fostering Service capacity and capability to support Herefordshire's foster carers and launch a new Campaign to recruit more local foster carers.	Head of Service (Fostering, Adoption & Placements)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment to build officer capacity to provide assessment and support underway but proving challenging Stakeholder engagement events in early November 2022 proved very challenging 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
-----	-------------------------------	-------------------------------	---	-----------------------------------	--

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One to one consultations with foster carer households underway and on-going • Foster Care whole service event scheduled for 21.11.22 	
2.5 Review our Sufficiency Strategy to increase the availability and choice of homes, including foster homes, to meet the needs of children and young people in our care	Service Director (All-Age Commissioning)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interim Commissioner appointed to review and refresh the Sufficiency Strategy • Appraisal to scope accommodation placement options underway • New Fostering Campaign being finalised November 2022 	

55

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce profiling data, average caseload data, and improving performance data will together evidence increased capacity to implement and achieve improvement at pace, supported by strong leadership. (Performance data) • Children and young people will experience minimal changes in allocated worker. (Performance data and feedback) • All new starters will have a meaningful induction on joining children’s services to ensure that our workforce understand what is expected of them, what support is available, and key systems and processes. (Performance data, and feedback) • More families will be supported to continue caring for their own children and young people where this is safe and in their best interest to do so (Performance data, and feedback) • More foster carers will be recruited and retained to provide local placements for local children and young people when they are unable to remain living with their own family (Performance data)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

Measures that Matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of the established workforce that is permanent (increasing and high is good). • Average social worker caseloads (excluding Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS)) (target range 16-20 children) • Number of social workers with >24 children allocated (zero or low is good) • Number of in-house foster care households (and the number of placements offered) (increasing is good) • Proportion of available in-house fostering capacity utilised. (high is good)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

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

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
3.1 Confirm Information Sharing Protocols and issues of consent with the partnership to ensure there are no barriers to safeguarding children and young people in a timely and informed way	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership leads have met to agree resolution Information sharing agreements to be refreshed 	
3.2 Accelerate the co-location of agencies in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to improve the multi-agency identification and response to risk	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MASH Co-location complete and operating from Plough Lane offices 	
3.3 Urgently refresh arrangements for identifying, assessing and responding to the needs, risks and circumstances of unborn babies in collaboration with relevant Health partners	Head of Service (MASH & Assessment)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshed handbook and guidance completed and due to be agreed by Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (December 2022) Pre-birth pathway completed (September 2022) New multi-agency Panel in place (October 2022) Pre-birth tracker in place Initial audit and dip sampling completed 	
3.4 Develop promotional material and collaborate with the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) to promote awareness about Private Fostering	Head of Service (Fostering,	Feb 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> information leaflet to raise awareness completed and due for HSCP sign off 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)

across Herefordshire so notifications, assessments and support are timely and responsive to need.	Adoption & Placements)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotional campaign and learning event under development 	
3.5 Revise and relaunch our joint protocols for safeguarding and supporting 16 and 17 year old young people who present as homeless	Head of Service (Corporate Parenting) / Head of Service (Strategic Housing Manager)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocol between Housing and Social Care developed • Joint issues resolution meeting scheduled for December 	
3.6 Work collaboratively with safeguarding partners to strengthen multi-agency contextual safeguarding arrangements to identify and manage risk outside of the home	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Director appointed as Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Sub Group Chair (September 2022) • Review of Terms of Reference (TOR) for Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Meeting complete (November 2022) • Scoping of Contextualised Safeguarding models complete (October 2022) • Review of response to young people and care experienced young people/ underway (October/November 2022) • Alignment with the Operation Encompass approach to missing children complete (October 2022) • Partnership briefing delivered about cross border arrangements and potential for alignment • Sub Group recommendation for the ‘Get Safe’ model and ‘Get Safe Plus 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

			<p>to support children as victims of exploitation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to HSCP scheduled for December 2022 	
3.7 Revise and relaunch multi-agency protocols for safeguarding and supporting children and young people who go missing from home and care and improve the quality of return interviews by exploring ‘push-pull’ factors and using available intelligence to support effective planning.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and refresh of existing protocol to be completed for February 2023 Exploitation Team resources have been reviewed Exploitation access pathway reviewed and to be completed February 2023 	
3.8 Review, relaunch and then evaluate the impact of the multi-agency Neglect Strategy	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-launched by HSCP in October 2022 	

59

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MASH is high performing with capacity and capability to manage the nature and level of demand and complexity so children and young people have their needs identified and responded to efficiently and effectively. (Performance data, and feedback) Partners work well together and in partnership with parents to safeguard children and young people in a timely and effective way so they are safe, well and able to fulfil their potential throughout their childhood and beyond. (Performance data, quality assurance activity, and feedback) The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership has strong and effective arrangements in place to safeguard children and young people at risk of harm from a range of different presenting circumstances (Performance data, quality assurance activity, and feedback) 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

Measures that Matter

- % of child and family assessments completed within timescales (high is good)
- % of strategy meetings initiated at the right time (high is good)
- % of Initial Child Protection Conferences convened within 15 days (of the strategy discussion at which the need for child protection enquiries was agreed) (high is good)
- % of return interviews which took place within 72 hours of the missing episode ending (high is good)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

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

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
4.1 Review and refresh our Academy learning and development offer to ensure a clear focus on our practice priorities, principles and standards including practice guidance and tools.	Principal Social Worker (PSW)	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice priorities, principles and standards developed September 2022 Review and remodel of the Academy learning offer underway for December 2022 Preliminary tools developed and being designed by Corporate Communications November 2022 	
4.2 Develop and implement a service wide Engagement and Participation Strategy to ensure children and young people's voices are heard and taken into consideration.	Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement and Participation Strategy being developed for January 2023 Roll out of strategy February 2023 	
4.3 Champion the voice of the child to take account of their views, wishes and feelings by promoting direct work skills and purposeful visiting so this remains a central feature of our engagement and relationship with them.	Principal Social Worker (PSW)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaunch guidance January 2023 Develop direct practice skills workshops Review of direct work tools / resources under review 	
4.4 Develop, revise and launch our practice model to emphasise the importance of relationships, respect and restorative practice for how we will work <i>with</i> children, young people and parents/carers, especially where this may not have been their experience previously.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad agreement received to explore a restorative model 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)

4.5 Strengthen quality assurance activity in accordance with the re-launch of the Quality Assurance Framework to provide robust assurance that the quality of practice is improving.	Service Director Improvement	December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised QAF complete November 2022 Re-launch due December 2022 Operational arrangements to be embedded January 2023 	
--	------------------------------	---------------	---	--

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy promotes and supports continuous learning and development that is evidence based, research informed and makes a demonstrable impact on improving practice. (Performance data, quality assurance activity) Practitioners and managers know what is expected of them, are supported to practice confidently and capably and are increasingly more restorative in their approach which builds trust and strong relationships. (Quality assurance activity and feedback) The needs of children and young people are of paramount importance, their voices are championed and they report feeling safe, well and able to meet their full potential (Quality assurance activity and feedback) Practice is routinely audited against best practice standards and evidences increasingly good and better practice that improves outcomes for children and young people (quality assurance activity)

Measures that Matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall number and % of outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate audit grades each month

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

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

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
5.1 Re-launch and embed the partnership thresholds to improve awareness, understanding and application in relation to decision making across the child's pathway from needing to receiving support, protection and care	HSCP	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit referral activity to analyse evidence and feedback to partners about the application of thresholds and the effective use of the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) 	
5.2 Review and address MASH social work capacity and management decision making capability to ensure there are consistent responses to concerns that evidence professional curiosity and analysis	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MASH / Assessment management addressed through appointment of interim managers (permanent HOS recruitment at shortlisting/interview stage) Dip sampling activity demonstrates some impact and improvement Further improvement and embedding required Exit plan to BAU following further audit activity in March 2023 	
5.3 Review and adjust the interface between Early Help and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to ensure robust screening arrangements with a clear and effective pathway are in place to ensure needs are addressed promptly.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshed guidance to clarify Early Help / MASH relationship, roles, responsibilities and expectations about decision making complete Step Up / Step Down audit with refreshed protocol complete Further audit due July 2023 	
5.4 Work collaboratively with the partners to ensure there are always appropriate resources to convene child protection strategy meetings when required so these are	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police action during inspection has provided additional resources and built capacity 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	---	---	---	--

timely, involve all relevant partners and protect children at the point they are referred and when they are already known to the service and subject to existing support, protection or care plans.	Support) & Detective Superintendent, West Mercia Police		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit activity October 2022 indicated improvements in MASH / Assessment which are largely secure now Audit activity October 2022 indicated delays still evident in other teams elsewhere in the service 	
5.5 Re-establish and strengthen multi-agency arrangements to improve safety planning and risk management arrangements whenever child protection enquiries are being undertaken.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshed practice guidance regarding roles, responsibilities and expectations complete Safety planning audit activity to be completed December 2022 	
5.6 Develop a multi-agency/cross sector 'Edge of Care' offer supported by the existing Edge of Care and Home (ECHO) Team and other allied services that build on family strengths and resources so children and young people are able to remain with their families where it is safe and appropriate to do so	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edge of Care Strategy underway and to be completed January 2023 Operating model and resource to be decided February 2023 Implementation of plans for March 2023 	
5.7 Develop and launch a Family Group Conference model of approach to engage, support and promote family based arrangements to address identified needs, risks and circumstances and ensure there is robust decision making for children entering care when all family options have been exhausted.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate funding and resources in January 2023 Determine FGC model and approach asap thereafter 	
5.8 Take action to strengthen risk management arrangements with disabled children and young people so their additional needs, risks and circumstances are appropriately addressed.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional social work Service Manager appointed into Children With a Disability team to strengthen safeguarding arrangements 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)

- Thresholds are well understood and applied consistently across the partnership so children and young people are identified and have their assessed needs, risks and circumstances responded to in a timely manner so they are supported, protected and cared for. (Quality assurance activity, feedback)
- Children, young people and families are provided with the right help at the right time. (quality assurance activity, feedback)
- Safety planning and risk management arrangements engage all partners to work well together so children and young people are protected from the risk of harm. (quality assurance activity, feedback)

Measures that Matter

- Number of Family Group Conferences (FGC) (when established) (increasing and high is good)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

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

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
6.1 Review all Public Law Outline (PLO) pre-proceedings and on-going care proceedings with Legal Services to establish a clear position across all teams and services and continue to track and report this on a monthly basis to achieve and maintain compliance with national standards.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review baseline position for all children subject to PLO process complete August/September 2022 PLO process review with updated PLO pre-proceedings flow chart complete New PLO Panel launched October 2022 PLO tracker in place with monthly reporting 	
6.2 Establish improved leadership and management oversight of PLO practice to address any drift or delay, ensure families are effectively engaged where there are concerns that may lead to court proceedings and so children receive legal protection when required.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further reviews of PLO practice and progress due February 2023 and July 2023 Action to repair and strengthen relationship with the judiciary commenced and on-going via the court user group. To be reviewed December 2022. ‘Learning together’ sessions focusing on the quality of Social Work Evidence Template (SWET) and collaboration with Legal Services due January 2023. 	
6.3 Increase the leadership and management oversight for any child placed in an unregistered setting and publish revised guidance for our staff to ensure there is a clear	Service Director (All Age Commissioning)	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No child to be placed in any unregistered placement without the authority of the Corporate Director for Children’s Services 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	---	---	---	--

understanding of what is a placement unregulated by Ofsted and what is an unregistered placement.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full review of the Home Finding Team underway to strengthen leadership, capacity and capability • End to end review of home finding policies, procedures and processes for December 2022 • Revised guidance to be issued January 2023 	
6.4 Revise the Permanence Policy and Procedures to achieve legal, emotional and placement permanence with children and young people as soon as possible.	Service Director (Improvement)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping of policy and procedure underway with draft due February 2023 	
6.5 Develop and implement a reunification framework to assess and support children and young people who are able to return home to the care of their parents/families when it is safe and in their best interest to do so.	Service Director (Improvement)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping of framework underway with draft due February 2023 	

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents with children subject to PLO pre-proceedings are helped to appreciate the concerns about their parenting and supported to make changes in a timely manner so their children remain safe and well cared for so that care proceedings are not necessary. (quality assurance activity, feedback) • Families are encouraged and supported to come together to explore opportunities, problem solve, plan and makes decisions that promote family based solutions to address identified concerns for children and young people. (Performance data, feedback) • Where parenting concerns persist and children continue to be at risk of significant harm they will be safeguarded and legally protected so that alternative permanent care can be achieved in a timely manner. (Performance data, quality assurance activity) • Plans are reviewed over time to make sure that if and when circumstances change there are opportunities for children and young people to return to the care of their parents and family, so long as this is safe and is in their best interest (Performance activity, quality assurance data) 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

Measures that Matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of children for whom PLO pre-proceedings were completed within 16 weeks (Rolling Year) • Number of children in unregistered provision, including where the Corporate Director’s oversight and decision is recorded on the child’s record • Number of children subject to Deprivation of Liberty (DoL) including the % of these children where DoL has been in place for 6 months or more

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

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

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
7.1 Work with the Director of Public Health and with the Integrated Care Board to review the availability, accessibility and quality of support in Herefordshire to provide services that make a difference for children and young people in need of support, protection and care	Director of Public Health	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership mapping of health provision underway and to be completed December 2022 Thereafter to agree partnership governance for addressing and prioritising support needs Partnership workshop scheduled for January 2023 	
7.2 Complete a partnership mapping exercise to establish the availability of local services and publish this with clear pathways to ensure children and young people in care and preparing to leave care are supported to access timely and appropriate multi-agency support and, where identified, address any gaps.	Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Parenting Board has convened and agreed partnership contributions October 2022 Review of Care Leaver's Offer underway and to report in December 2022 All care experienced young people will have an up to date Pathway Plan by March 2023 to take account of the refreshed Offer 	
7.3 Ensure there is sufficient support and provision in place to meet the demand for high quality life story work with children and young people	Service Director (Improvement)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life story best practice guidance under development for end of January 2023 Principal Social Worker (PSW) to champion implementation of best practice guidance 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of resource options to address legacy, current and new demands for April 2023 	
7.4 Review, refresh and publish our Sufficiency Strategy to increase the choice and availability of suitable accommodation for children and young people.	Service Director (All Age Commissioning)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist commissioner appointed to refresh the Sufficiency Strategy • 1st draft complete October 2022 • 2nd draft due 02.12.22. 	
7.5 Ensure that care experienced young people are provided with their health histories with all the essential information they need to become an independent young adult.	Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with Designated / Named Health leads for care experienced young people • Consultation with care experienced young people • Sample health history to be developed February 2023 for all new care leavers • Agree model of implementation 	

70

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people in need of support, protection and care have a range of suitable therapeutic, emotional and mental health support services and receive priority access so their needs can be assessed and supported without delay. (Performance data, quality assurance activity, feedback) • The partnership is increasingly knowledgeable, skilled and experienced at working together to identify the range of local services and pathways so children and young people receive prompt support that addresses their needs effectively. (Quality assurance activity, feedback) • The choice and number of available accommodation is suitable to meet the assessed needs of young people so they are settled and secure. (Performance data, quality assurance activity) 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

Measures that Matter

- % of children in care with an up-to-date initial health assessment
- % of children in care with an up-to-date dental check
- % and number of children in care for 6 months or longer who have a life-story book
- % and number of care leavers aged 19 -21 who live in suitable accommodation

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

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

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
8.1 Review the structure of the Directorate Leadership Team and the Heads of Service Group to ensure there is sufficient capacity and capability to lead and manage the service.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure reviewed and recruited to with interim Head of Service, 	
8.2 Review supervision and management oversight to ensure it is regular, reflective and well recorded so those working directly with children, young people and families receive clear direction and support.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit completed Review and refresh Supervision Policy Simplify recording processes for February 2023 	
8.3 Introduce a reflective case discussion model of group supervision to create emotionally informed thinking and promote respectful uncertainty and healthy scepticism.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit completed Introduce a reflective case discussion model by March 2023 	
8.4 Review and adjust where required the service structure and pathways to ensure these are clear, responsive and support practice and service delivery.	Service Director (Improvement)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End to end service review of the child's pathway through the service to streamline and rationalise internal transitions and hand offs Use the above to address the systems review of MOSAIC (recording software system) to support clear workflows (see 9.3 below) 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	---	---	---	--

8.5 Review and relaunch policies and procedures on tri.x (commissioned company) to ensure these are up to date and fit for purpose.	Policy & Procedures Lead	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of interim lead completed October 2022 • Review of tri.x local procedure completed November 2022 • Detailed programme of remedial action underway November 2022 • Business as usual (BAU) updating to be establish for April 2023 	
8.6 Re-launch the Independent Reviewing Officer Dispute Resolution Protocol (DRP) to address the needs of children where there are concerns	Head of Service (Safeguarding & Review)	December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise and republish the DRP • Implementation of DRP with tracking and monthly reporting due from January 2023 	

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workforce is sufficient, stable, skilled and experienced to lead, manage and respond to the nature and level of service demands so practice and performance improves, is in line with established best practice standards and in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance. (Performance data) • Supervision routinely provides high quality management, development, support and mediation to ensure children and young people receive the best support possible and staff have the knowledge, skills and support they need to undertake their role confidently and competently. (Performance data, quality assurance activity, feedback) • The service structure and pathways are enablers to achieving good outcomes with children and young people and support staff to undertake their role efficiently and effectively. (Quality assurance activity, feedback) • As an employer of choice, the conditions within which staff are undertaking their roles, and the resources that are available to them, in Herefordshire are conducive to supporting and promoting consistently good quality practice and performance. (feedback)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

Measures that Matter

- % of allocated children who have an up-to-date (within the past month) supervision completed on their record
- Number and % of concerns raised and resolved at stage one of the Dispute Resolution Protocol
- The number of unallocated cases in the service (snapshot at month end)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

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

75

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
9.1 Launch and publish a revised Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) that will test practice by analysing all available evidence, including practice performance and improvement activity, and take into account what relevant stakeholders, including children, young people and parents/carers, are telling us.	Service Director (Improvement)	December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh of the QAF has been completed November 2022 with DLT sign off Formatting and design underway December 2022 Ready for publication and launch January 2023 with schedule of QA activity and corresponding processes for auditing and review 	
9.2 Decide on a performance reporting framework and deliver a timely and accurate monthly performance and management data report with analysis to support management and drive improvement	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance reporting framework agreed and being built for December 2022 Regular monthly reporting due for January 2023 	
9.3 Review and address the MOSAIC system changes to ensure it is fit for purpose, user friendly and supports the service’s workflow and reporting requirements	Corporate Director Children and Young People	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of issues underway Preliminary timeline of 9 months to complete required changes 	
9.4 Develop and launch refreshed recording standards setting out clear expectations about what good quality children’s records and reports look like and including ‘Language that Cares’ guidance used with and about children and young people is appropriate	Service Director (Improvement)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of project being clarified November 2022 	
9.5 Work collaboratively with other agencies across the safeguarding partnership to develop and publish a quarterly	Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of partnership data hub being developed 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

multi-agency data set to safeguard children and young people.	Partnership, Independent Scrutineer			
---	-------------------------------------	--	--	--

<p>Expected Outcomes (how we will know)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality assurance and performance frameworks and the system that supports them are robust, reliable and routinely provide evidence and analysis to support and drive continuous improvement and assurance. (Performance data, quality assurance activity) • The day to day management of operational practice and performance is supported by quantitative data, information and intelligence that is readily available and easy to access so practitioners and managers have a clear view and appreciation of what this shows and what it means for them and the children, young people and families they are supporting at an individual, team and service level. (quality assurance activity, feedback) • The focus, findings and follow up to quality assurance activity provides a shared narrative based on qualitative evidence of what the service has done, how well it has done it and what is required to address recommendations and remedial action to improve outcomes for children and young people (Performance data, quality assurance activity) • The partnership achieves and maintains a shared appreciation of quantitative and qualitative data, information and intelligence to fulfil its statutory functions to assess the effectiveness of help being provided to children and families, whether partners are fulfilling their obligations, assure the quality of joint practice and identify lessons, as well as monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training.

<p>Measures that Matter</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and % of children’s file audits completed each month by Managers, Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers • Number and % of children’s file audits moderated each month by senior leaders (Heads of Service, Service Directors and Corporate Director).

<p>Key</p>	<p>Activity Not yet due to start</p>	<p>Activity Started and on track</p>	<p>Activity Started with some issues/delay</p>	<p>Activity Not on track and at risk</p>	<p>Activity completed (impact to be tested)</p>
-------------------	---	---	---	---	--

- Number of outstanding priority actions on the audit tracker following an inadequate audit outcome where concerns were escalated about the likelihood of significant harm (zero or low is good)

10: Services to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and / or a Disability (SEND)

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress	BRAG
10.1 Relaunch the revised Special Education Needs and / or disability (SEND) Strategy across the local area, with co-production at the heart	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working party has met and agreed changes (October) • December – draft strategy shared with partnership group 	
10.2 Establish the SEND Strategy Board with appropriate representation from each sector to provide strategic oversight and direction for improvement.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership agreed and first meeting being organised. 	
10.3 Strengthen the SEND Partnership Group with current participants from the strategy group.	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership has met and has full representation • Chairing now by Service Director 	
10.4 Review the graduated response with a focus on early identification of support for children and young people with SEND.	Service Director (Education,	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working party established and agreed course of action. 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	---	---	---	--

	Skills and Learning)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft to be presented to partnership group in the autumn term 	
10.5 Review the Education, Health and Care (EHC) planning process and establish a procedure with a clear pathway that is understood by all so all Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) are within timescale, high quality and include contributions from all partners	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	Spring 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SD and data analyst have strengthened tracking information templates • Working party established to formulate an EHC procedure that can be circulated to all parties. Procedure to be agreed by December 2022 • EHC timeliness is accelerating and above West Midlands and National averages. • Workshop with paediatricians completed to ensure health outcomes capture the voice of the child November 2022 • Rolling workshop programme to be offered to social care practitioners to ensure care outcomes are reflecting child’s views 	
10.6 Develop a Preparing for Adulthood Strategy for young people with additional needs to receive timely and well-coordinated transitional arrangements and support.	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marches Careers Hub has launched Inclusion Community of Practice (COP) events for careers leads to support the careers education agenda for young people with SEND within local schools • A draft guide document for the website has been produced – graphics and final version needs to be agreed. First COP event 6 October 2022 	

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

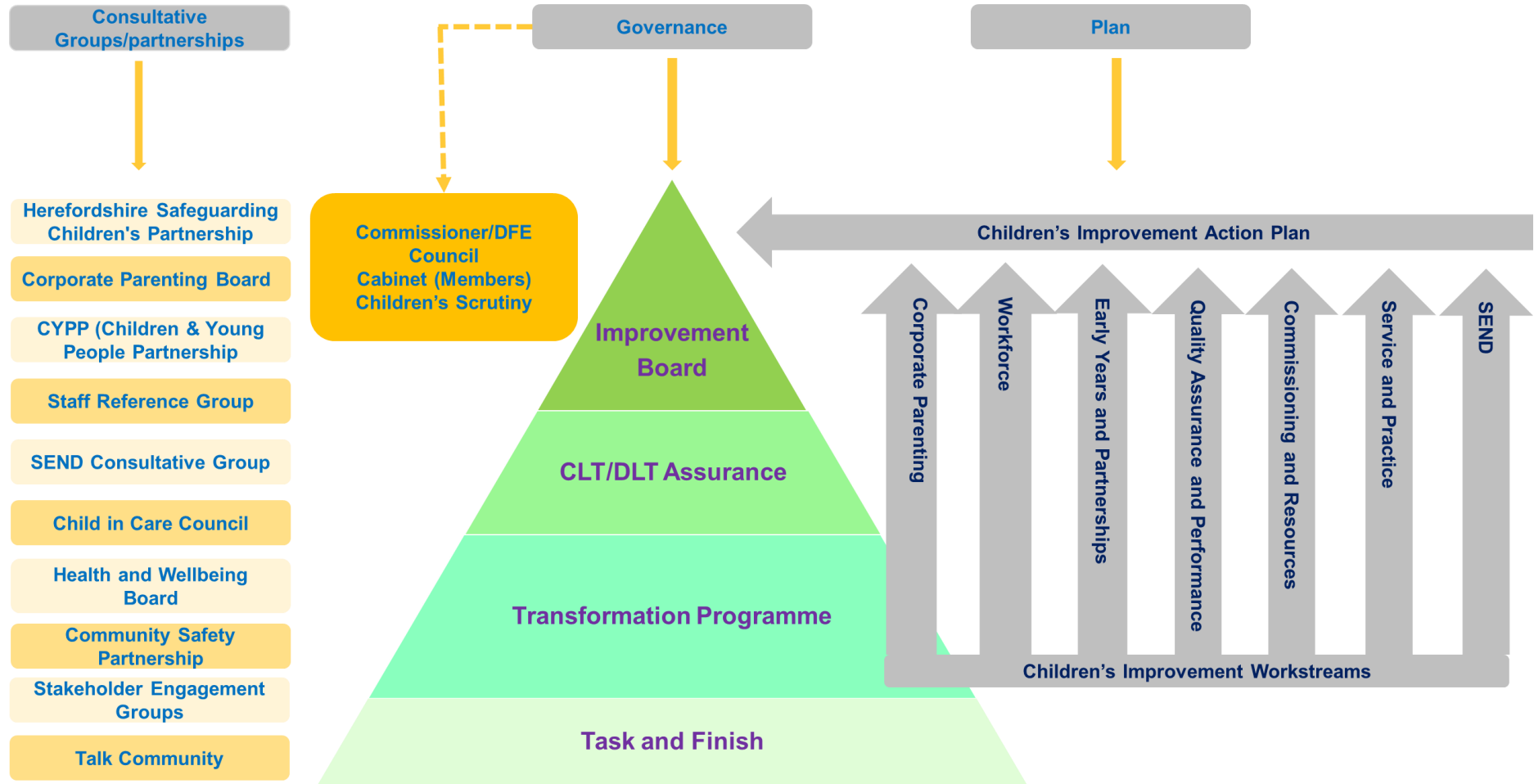
- SEND Strategy is shared publically and with all stakeholders; Strategy widely supported and used to shape/complement other areas of work supporting children and young people. (feedback)
- Data dashboard in place and all partners/service providers provide timely and accurate information; Each sector has a clear data matrix which defines the specific measures being used to evaluate individual success of the strategy
- Pathways identified on the Local Offer and can be easily found and understood by families and young people. (Feedback)
- Graduated approach co-produced and published
- Phase transfers are completed within statutory timescales ensuring that children / young people have an updated Education, Health and Care Plans for their next setting and parents are assured where their child / young person will be attending.(Performance data, quality assurance activity, feedback)
- There is an increase in the proportion of Education, Health and Care Plans published within statutory timescales. (Performance data)

79

Measures that Matter	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratings of EHCPs under Quality Assurance process • Timeliness of health and social care assessments (completing / updating EHCPs) • Timeliness of EHC plan issue (90% of plans are issued within statutory timeframes) • Timeliness of EHC annual review process (90% EHC plan phase transfer annual reviews are completed on time) 	

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
------------	---	--------------------------------------	--	--	---

Appendix A – Herefordshire Children’s Services Improvement Plan Governance



Appendix B - Glossary of Roles with Names:

Chief Executive	Paul Walker
Corporate Director for Children and Young People	Darryl Freeman
Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development	Tracey Sampson
Head of Chief Executive's Office	Joni Hughes
Director of Public Health	Matt Pearce
Detective Superintendent, West Mercia Police	Jon Roberts
Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	Julie Mephram
Head of Service (Early Help)	Nicky Turvey
Head of Service (Fostering, Adoption & Placements)	Robina Khan
Head of Service (MASH & Assessment)	Denyse Ratcliffe
Head of Service (Strategic Housing Manager)	Hayley Craine
Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Independent Scrutineer	Kevin Crompton
Policy and Procedures Lead	Michael Nugent
Principal Social Worker	Kerry Oddy
Service Director (All-Age Commissioning)	Ewen Archibald
Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	Liz Far
Service Director (Improvement)	Gail Hancock
Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	Rachel Gillott



Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Annual Report 2021-22

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 13 December 2022

Report by: Corporate Director - Children & Young People

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To consider the annual report of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP)

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The annual report and effectiveness of the Herefordshire safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) be considered; and**
- b) **The committee determine any recommendations it wishes to make to relevant bodies to secure further improvement in safeguarding children and young people in Herefordshire.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative recommendations.

Key considerations

2. The activity of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership is a critical element of the ongoing multi-agency approach to keep children and young people safe from harm.
3. The purpose of the safeguarding arrangements, as set out in Chapter 3: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, is to support and enable local organisation and agencies to work together in a system where:
 1. Children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted,
 2. Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children,
 3. Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively,
 4. There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats,
 5. Learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice,
 6. Information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families.
4. The annual report presents the work that the HSCP (and the organisations that make up the HSCP) have done to keep children and young people safe. The report covers the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.
5. The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership is made up of the three statutory safeguarding partner organisations - West Mercia Police, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and Herefordshire Council - and continue to be supported by a range of relevant agencies, which include:
 - Wye Valley NHS trust
 - Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
 - Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue
 - Herefordshire Voluntary Organisation Support Service (HVOSS)
 - West Mercia Youth Justice Service
6. The Statutory Partner members have joint and equal responsibility for the success or failure of its multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA). The partnership understand the absolute dependence on each other and on relevant agencies to make a difference to the work with children young people and families in Herefordshire.
7. During the course of this reporting year, the HSCP underwent a review of its multiagency safeguarding arrangements. The HSCP substructure changed to reflect the new arrangements and ambition to strengthen strategic and operational activity and improve effectiveness for the children and young people of Herefordshire. Further information with regard to the HSCP's multiagency safeguarding arrangements is available on the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's [website](#).

8. The report details progress made against the four partnership priorities and the activities that supported these priorities.
9. During the reporting period the Joint Case Review Group (JCR) a sub-group of the partnership conducted one rapid review. No Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) were commissioned during this period.
10. The Partnership published a Serious Case Review and a Child Safeguarding Practice Review in February 2022. The publication of each of these reports had been delayed due to ongoing criminal proceedings.
11. This report and the activity of the strategic partners' signals a need to reset the partnership as it and the agencies that form it emerged from the Covid pandemic. Having made changes to the governance structures the report points to other challenges that it needs to address in 2022-23 such as the development of a multi-agency dataset that can be used to support and drive improvements, and an increased focus on the impact of its activities.
12. Since this report was concluded Kevin Crompton has been appointed as the Partnership's new Independent Scrutineer and the Chair of the Partnership having been briefly held by West Mercia Police following the departure of the previous Independent Scrutineer is now with Herefordshire Council.

Community impact

13. The activity of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.

Environmental Impact

14. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.

Equality duty

15. 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.

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

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

17. 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.
18. As individual improvement projects and service delivery progresses, and changes are designed, equality impact assessments will be undertaken, as necessary and appropriate.

Resource implications

19. There are no resource implications for consideration with this report.

Legal implications

20. None for the purposes of this report.

Risk management

21. There are no identified risks in the consideration of this report.
22. The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership maintains its own risk register and take action as required to mitigate any identified risk.

Consultees

23. There has been no public consultation on this report.

Appendices

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Review of Effectiveness 2021-22

Background papers

None identified.



Annual Review of Effectiveness Report 2021-2022



Table of Contents

Foreword.....	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Herefordshire Context	5
3. Our Partners.....	6
4. Funding and Support.....	6
5. Governance Arrangements	7
6. Safeguarding Children – what have we done as a result of the safeguarding arrangements? 2021-2022 in review	8
7. What do the Safeguarding Partners know about the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in 2021/22 and how do they know it?	12
8. Activities that have supported safeguarding priorities 2021/2022	14
9. Ask Listen Act – Learning from the Voice of Children and the Experiences of Frontline Practitioners	28
10. The Experience of Frontline Practitioners	31
11. Learning from Performance Information, Assurance Activity and Case Reviews	32
12. The Joint Case Review Group (JCR).....	34
13. Learning and Development.....	41
14. HSCP Strategic Priorities and HSCP Business Plan 2022-2023 Year 2	45
15. Evaluation of effectiveness of the HSCP	46

8

Foreword

Since our last report there has been work undertaken to strengthen our partnership arrangements with a particular focus on the progress made on the agreed priorities including:

1. Leadership and the work undertaken to improve the Partnership’s governance
2. Work undertaken to improve the safeguarding system in relation to the Right Help Right Time document and the understanding of thresholds, and
3. Specific developments relating to protecting children from Neglect and Child Exploitation.

This report covers the period from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The last twelve months have remained challenging for all practitioners in Herefordshire due to the continued impact of the pandemic on services and on our professional and personal lives. Despite the ongoing situation, work has continued across the Partnership to protect children. Practitioners have remained committed and have worked tirelessly to ensure children have been seen and kept safe.

Working practices changed during the pandemic with less face to face working. However, the importance of maintaining in-person and virtual contacts cannot be overstated, with a move back to increasing face-to-face contacts being implemented across many services as soon as practicable and the pandemic allowed. In addition, where appropriate, telephone and on-line access has also been retained.

The Partners acknowledge that whilst much work has been undertaken to drive improvements, the pace of change has been slower than anticipated. Over the forthcoming business year we will continue to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families and prepare for the much anticipated OFSTED Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS).

88

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – Accountable Officers



Pippa Mills
Chief Constable Police
West Mercia Police



Paul Walker
Chief Executive
Herefordshire Council



Simon Trickett
Chief Officer
Herefordshire and Worcestershire
Clinical Commissioning Group



Edd Williams
Superintendent Policing
Commander for Herefordshire
Local Policing Area and the
Detective Chief Inspector for
the local policing area
West Mercia Police



Darryl Freeman
Corporate Director for Children
and Young People
Herefordshire Council



Lisa Levy
Chief Nursing Officer
Herefordshire and Worcestershire
Clinical Commissioning Group

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership – Delegated Officers

1. Introduction

The purpose of the safeguarding arrangements, as set out in Chapter 3: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, is to support and enable local organisation and agencies to work together in a system where:

1. Children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted,
2. Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children,
3. Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively,
4. There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats,
5. Learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice,
6. Information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families.

This report presents the work that the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (and the organisations that make up the HSCP) have done, in the last year of operation, to keep children and young people safe. The report covers the period from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

2. Herefordshire Context

In Herefordshire, the population size has increased from around 183,500 in 2011 to 193,615 in 2021. As of 2021, Herefordshire is the least densely populated of the West Midlands' 30 local authority areas, with an area equivalent to around two football pitches per resident.

There are approximately 36,000 children and young people under the age of 18 years living in Herefordshire. This is 18.6 % of the total population of the area (ONS mid population estimate).

Growing up in Herefordshire – if there are 100 children the following would be a breakdown of their circumstances and lived experience

14 would be living in poverty
13.4 would be from a minority ethnic group
16.5 children would be claiming free school meals
2 children would be subject to a child protection plan
15 children would live in households with any of the so called 'toxic trio' of domestic abuse, parental mental ill-health or substance misuse; 0.8 of them with all three risks.
3.8 children would be in the care of the Local Authority
18.9 children would have special educational needs
3.8 children would have an education Care and Health Plan
2.4 Are children from the Armed Forces (service families)
10 children 5-15years are likely to have difficulties with their mental health
71.8 children would achieve a good level of development in their Early Years Foundation stage of their education
10.9 children would be classed as persistent absentees
1.9 teenagers would be pregnant



3. Our Partners

The HSCP extends beyond the contribution of the three key statutory partner agencies with commitment, on-going support, and contributions from a wide range of relevant agencies including the voluntary and community sector and education providers.

The Safeguarding Partners Board (SPB) is the meeting of executive members with delegated responsibility. The Board has met seven times over the course of the year. There is no requirement for Accountable Officers to attend the SPB meeting. The variance in attendance rates for the Council occurred as a result of Herefordshire Council’s appointment of its new Chief Executive in May 2021 and the change from an interim Director for Children’s Services to the permanent recruitment of this role in December 2021. There was a representative from each of the three Safeguarding Partners at every meeting.

In addition to the SPB meetings there have been nine Safeguarding Partners Extraordinary meetings. These were convened to provide leadership and traction to areas of the strategic plan which had stalled. These meetings were chaired by the Chief Nursing Officer, NHS Herefordshire & Worcestershire CCG.

Both SPB and Extraordinary meetings have had 100% attendance achieved by the HSCP Independent Chair and Scrutineer.

Safeguarding Partners Board Meeting Attendance Rates			Extraordinary Meeting Attendance Rates		
Agency	Accountable Officer	Delegated Officer	Deputy	Delegated Officer	Deputy
West Mercia Police	-	86%	71%	100%	100%
NHS Herefordshire & Worcestershire CCG	-	71%	100%	100%	100%
Children & Families, Herefordshire Council	43%	71%	57%	55%	66%

29

4. Funding and Support

The HSCP continues to be supported by the Partnership Support Team.

In June 2021, Herefordshire Council commissioned an Independent Strategic Partnerships Advisor to undertake a review of the partnerships effectiveness and its business support arrangements. The Partnership Team provides logistical support, administration and development support to the HSCP, the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and Community Safety Partnership.

The review concluded in December 2021 and the findings identified that the Partnership Team did not have sufficient staff and resource to meet demand arising from the partnership’s day to day function and that there was a need for additional contribution to reconfigure the support arrangements. In addition, the review highlighted the need for greater leadership, a change of culture and practice of HSCP and a need to promote greater engagement and accountability of members for the work of the partnership. Further work is to be undertaken through 2022-2023 to address the issues raised.

Contributions			Category	Expenditure £
Agency	21-22 Contribution £	%		
Children's Wellbeing	143,519	0.35	Salary Costs	281,110
			Transport costs	0
Adults Wellbeing	108,150	0.26	Independent chair costs	78,246
CCG	95,550	0.23	Consultancy costs	10,198
Police	65,100	0.16	Training expenses	-1,400
			Office expenses	28,573
			Training income	-75
Total	412,319	100%	Total	396,652

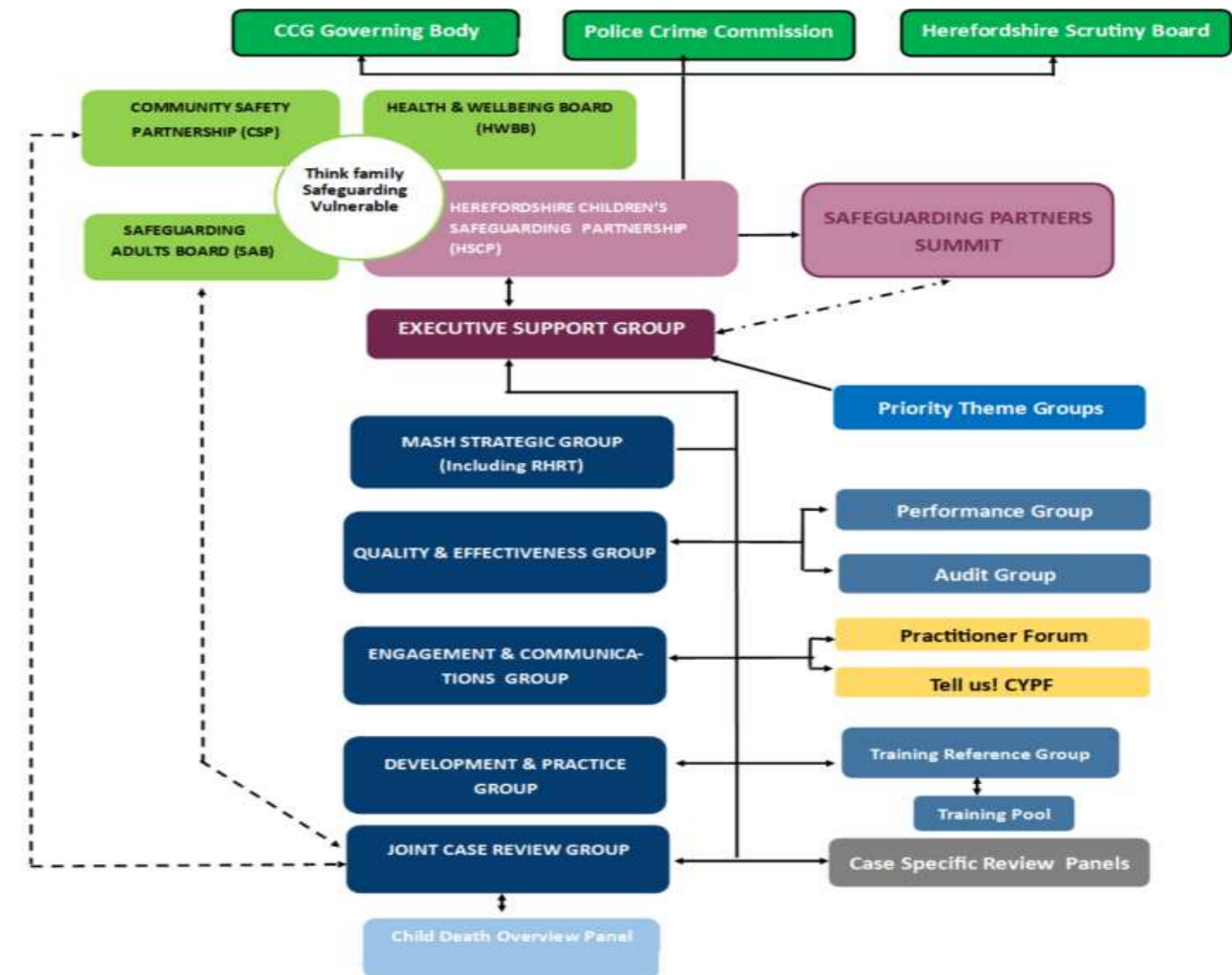
5. Governance Arrangements

The Herefordshire Partnership Vision is:

Children are safely cared for by their family because services work well together, and with families

Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018 - This statutory guidance says we must publish a report at least once in every 12-month period. It must set out what we have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews. The report should also include evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies.

Governance Structure - Safeguarding Children and Young People in Herefordshire (SCYPIH) 2020-2021



Structure diagram of HSCP Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership is made up of the three statutory safeguarding partner organisations - West Mercia Police, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and Herefordshire Council - and continue to be supported by a range of relevant agencies, which include:

- Wye Valley NHS trust
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue
- Herefordshire Voluntary Organisation Support Service (HVOSS)
- West Mercia Youth Justice service

The Statutory Partner members have joint and equal responsibility for the success or failure of its multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA). The partnership understand the absolute dependence on each other and on relevant agencies to make a difference to the work with children young people and families in Herefordshire.

During the course of this reporting year, the HSCP underwent a review of its multiagency safeguarding arrangements. The HSCP substructure changed to reflect the new arrangements and ambition to strengthen strategic and operational activity and improve effectiveness for the children and young people of Herefordshire.

Further information with regard to the HSCP's multiagency safeguarding arrangements is available on the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's [website](#)

6. Safeguarding Children – what have we done as a result of the safeguarding arrangements? 2021-2022 in review

Progress made against the HSCP Priorities

Priority 1 – Leadership and Partnership Effectiveness

Aim: Through the leadership of the three Statutory Partners, promote a culture of collective responsibility, accountability and professional challenge built on guiding principles of respect and openness to forge an effective Safeguarding Children Partnership with strong governance, shared work practices and meaningful engagement with children and families.

What have we done?

Under the Leadership and Partnership Effectiveness Priority, we have –

- Held two Partnership Summits in May and November 2021. This is a meeting of leaders and was attended by over 80 representatives respectively to share the progress against the HSCP Strategic Plan and provide opportunity to engage in discussions about improving partnership effectiveness and participation, and engagement with children and young people.
- Published the Strategic Plan 2021-24.
- The Executive Support Group (ESG) was established in May 2021. The group was originally Chaired by the Independent Chair and Scrutineer but agreement was reached that this function needs to remain separate and therefore the function was placed with the Safeguarding Partners Delegated Officers. From November 2021 the ESG was Chaired by the Interim Assistant Director Quality Assurance Safeguarding and Partnerships, Children and Young People and sponsored by the Director of Children's Services.
- The ESG is the engine room for the HSCP and has delegated responsibility to drive the HSCP strategic plan through the operating sub-groups. ESG has undergone further in-year development to ensure robust oversight of the sub-groups' action plan delivery and progress reports back to the SPB.
- We secured funding from the DFE for a project on improving engagement and participation of children and young people within partnership working, and completed this project.
- We secured funding to commission a Local Government Association Advisor to provide 20 days of support to the HSCP to improve the Partnership's effectiveness
- We commissioned an Independent Strategic Partnerships Advisor to undertake a review of the Partnership Team and support us to improve our effectiveness.
- We hosted two Practitioner Forums: one in September 2021, which was attended by over 80 practitioners, on the topic of Learning from Case Reviews, and another in February 2022, focusing on Peer on Peer Abuse and Voice of the Child.
- Reviewed the multiagency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) including the HSCP governance structure.

- Sub-group Terms of Reference underwent review and revision alongside the related delivery plans, to provide an outcome focussed approach and greater accountability for the progression of work.
- Reflective discussions have taken place with Safeguarding Partners and agency leads relating to the changes required to leadership values, culture and behaviour.
- We agreed an Annual Plan for Independent Scrutiny, to ensure that there is constructive and critical challenge to the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for the HSCP.

In February 2022, a partners' reflective session was held with leaders from statutory and relevant partner agencies to provide clarity about expectations and requirements of a safeguarding children partnership and their leadership accountabilities. The event also created the space to review the effectiveness of the Partnership and its strategic work programme, and collectively identify how improvements can be achieved. The meeting was well attended and there was good contribution to discussions about what makes a strong partnership, the legislative framework and time for self-evaluation. A resource pack was produced as a complete guide for leaders of the Partnership with all documents and information they would need.

What do we still need to do?

Key areas for further development includes the following:

- The Leadership event highlighted that the Partnership needed to reset itself in terms of identity and other issues discussed
- There was a need to improve leadership direction – including a revisit to how we promote our purpose and identify internally amongst the sub-groups, and externally to the partnership
- Clarity with regards to the vision for how sub-groups and work plans will work together
- Further events between the SPB and ESG to embed leadership principles and to support a change in behaviour and cultural practice
- Members to know the purpose of their role in HSCP - Induction for new and existing members
- A need to improve engagement and accountability of HSCP members
- Embed evidence-based approach to partnership practice to understand impact
- Improve the communication and engagement networks within the partnership and other partnerships
- Create formal space for information share and receipt between the SPB and the Improvement Board

Priority 2 – Neglect

Aim: We aim to recognise, prevent and reduce neglect to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Herefordshire.

Neglect is the most common form of childhood maltreatment and can recur multiple times. Neglect may be difficult to identify and respond to, and it commonly occurs alongside other forms of abuse. The harm resulting from neglect can be wide-ranging, apparent in many areas of a child's life. The impacts of all types of neglect can be serious, enduring and can potentially continue across the life course.

Focused inspections by Ofsted in 2019 reported, "issues of neglect are not always recognised quickly enough, and the graded care profile to help identify neglect and poor parenting is not being used consistently to help measure progress" and in 2021, "Graded care profiles are not completed within the child's timescales and actions identified through the graded care profile tool are not acted upon quickly enough. This means that children's needs are not fully understood, and they remain too long in neglectful situations."

The HSCP Neglect Strategic Group was implemented to develop a Neglect Strategy to support the HSCP Safeguarding Partners to tackle child neglect in Herefordshire, and to ensure that:

- Multi-agency strategic leadership prioritises and drives tackling childhood neglect in Herefordshire
- Partners and our workforce are well informed, competent, and work well together to prevent, identify and tackle neglect

- Risk factors and children who may not be thriving are identified and responded to at the earliest stage so that neglect is prevented
- Less children are harmed, as a result of childhood neglect or have repeat interventions

The HSCP Neglect Strategic Group is responsible for:

- understanding the level of child neglect in Herefordshire, including trends and dynamics of neglect.
- Being aware of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in service/ support provision for children and families suffering neglect.
- Setting the strategic direction for multiple agencies to work in partnership to address child neglect in Herefordshire.
- Preparing and upskilling the Herefordshire workforce* (*including volunteers) to competently identify and address child neglect in Herefordshire
- Developing and delivering a work plan to support the reduction of child neglect cases in Herefordshire

What have we done?

Under the Child Neglect priority, we have –

The Interim Neglect Strategy was approved by HSCP in August 2021, pending better understanding of neglect in Herefordshire. The revised strategy, planned for 2022, will include a stronger focus on prevention and community resilience and helping families to thrive, before neglect happens.

The initial priority in the Neglect Delivery Plan is to undertake a needs analysis to identify, quantify and qualify the needs of children and young people in Herefordshire, to help us understand what we need to do. This piece of work is being led by Healthwatch and aims to:

- Gather a current picture of the issues surrounding neglect in Herefordshire from professionals and community leaders who work with children & families
- Explore what the barriers are to families and children accessing earlier support to prevent the circumstances of neglect
- Gather x number of anonymized neglect case studies and utilise these case studies to explore current issues and experience of neglect in Herefordshire

The Neglect Strategic Group will develop a ‘dashboard’ of performance indicators identifying child neglect in Herefordshire to identify trends and availability of service provision support and resources needed. In addition, the group will review current tools, e.g. GCP2 and develop a suite of tools to identify risks of and actual neglect across the spectrum of neglect across all agencies.

Moving forward, the group will examine relevant neglect training packages/resources and work in collaboration with partners to develop a robust multiagency training offer.

Priority 3 – Right Help Right Time

Aim: We will seek to provide children and families with the right help and support at the right time through a coordinated multi-agency safeguarding approach.

What have we done?

Under the Right Help Right Time Priority, we have

- Launched a new Working Together to Safeguarding Children training, to offer an overview of child safeguarding for any professionals who interact with children
- Launched a training on the Right Help Right Time thresholds. Although this was briefly paused in October, the training has resumed
- Completed a review of the front door and subsequently established a new Strategic Group, to oversee the MASH Operational Group
- Worked with SafeLives to complete a review of our MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) arrangements for domestic abuse cases, which highlighted the strengths in our approach, and also some work-on points that we will address

The MASH is a single point of entry and essentially the ‘front door’ for access to early help and children’s services. Any concern or query that comes into the local authority for a child will be screened by a Manager within the MASH team, in order to make a timely decision on what needs to be done to ensure that child is safe and receives the most appropriate support/ intervention if required.

The effectiveness of the MASH relies on the collaborative work with partner agencies to ensure timely information sharing to aid multi-agency decision making.

- Agreement reached for plans of co-location of the multi-disciplinary team
- Application of threshold is being applied appropriately to manage risk this has been evidenced in audit activity undertaken across the year
- In March 2022, 93% of the threshold decisions were appropriate this is a significant progress to outcome of audit activity undertaken 6 months earlier. This evidences that threshold application is proportionate and the right decisions are being made for children and families at the front door

Priority 4 – Child Exploitation

Aim: We aim to prevent and reduce child exploitation and improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Herefordshire.

What have we done?

- Held a joint Child Exploitation Conference with Worcestershire in May 2021
- Developed and published a Peer on Peer Abuse Guidance
- Offered training on Child Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding
- Completed a review of peer on peer abuse cases in Herefordshire

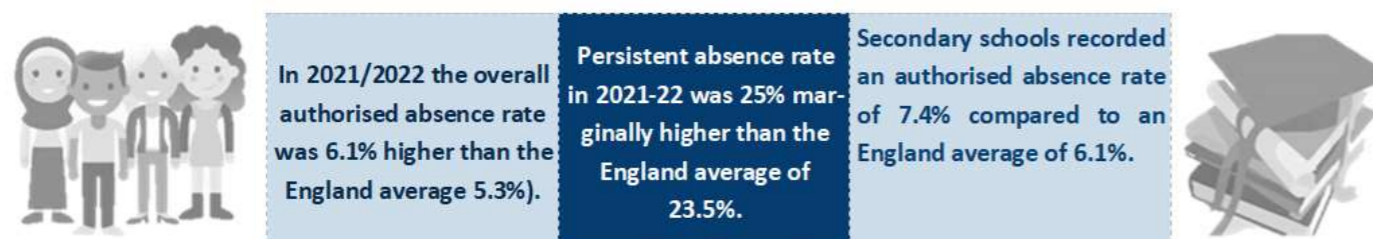
In addition,

- 120 Return Home interviews completed in last 12 months
- 123 Child Exploitation Risk Assessments completed in last 12 month
- 74 initial Risk Management Meetings (RMM) held in last 12 months
- 164 Review RMM held in last 12 months
- 87 children/Young people identified vulnerable to CE in last 12 months: Emerging: 33 Moderate: 33 Significant: 21
- 117 children/young people identified vulnerable to CSE in last 12 months: Emerging: 36 Moderate: 29 Significant: 26 Actual: 26

7. What do the Safeguarding Partners know about the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in 2021/22 and how do they know it?

Children’s Education

The Government have recently published their White Paper on education and a further document called ‘Working Together To Improve School Attendance’. School attendance is a priority in Herefordshire. Overtime, Herefordshire have reported particularly low rates of unauthorised absence whilst rates of authorised absence have been particularly high (largely composed of sickness absence). The safest place for children is in school and schools are working hard to improve overall attendance rates. Below is a snapshot of Herefordshire’s latest absence data:



Mental wellbeing has been addressed in Herefordshire’s schools and colleges through the council funded Covid catch up project which has funded grants for secondary schools to support non-attenders and grants that all schools could apply for to support mental wellbeing through outdoor spaces and staff CPD (Thrive programme). A nationally funded programme run through CAHMs/NHS called WEST is also available in all secondary schools and will be rolled out to primary schools later this year.

Section 175/157

The section 175/157 audit was sent out to schools and colleges in November 2021. This was completed by all bar 5 educational establishments and showed that overall safeguarding in our schools and colleges is effective.



All published OFSTED reports on Herefordshire schools in this last academic year have found safeguarding to be effective

All safeguarding concerns regarding Herefordshire Schools are followed up by a safeguarding audit – where audits have been undertaken they have largely demonstrated that safeguarding is effective.

The School Improvement Lead ensures that safeguarding always forms part of their visit to educational establishments and a section on safeguarding is included in each note of visit produced.

There is a robust system in place to address concerns through action plans monitored and overseen the Education Safeguarding Lead.

The Education Safeguarding Lead and Head of Learning and Achievement attend partnership meetings, sub groups and ensure key issues are communicated effectively to schools and settings.

Further effective communication and liaison between the Education MASH, The Education Safeguarding Lead, the LADO and schools/colleges evidences effective safeguarding arrangements within settings.

86

Education and Children’s Mental Health




39 schools/colleges took part in the Children and Young People’s Quality of Life Survey 2021. This gave us some insight into wellbeing and mental health in our schools and colleges. See link below.

[Children and Young People's Quality of Life Survey 2021 - Understanding Herefordshire](#)

The survey found that:

20% of primary pupils, 34% of secondary pupils and 44% of FE students were worried about their mental health.
76% of primary pupils, 58% of secondary pupils and 55% of FE students are quite or very happy.
24% of primary pupils, 13% of secondary pupils and 13% of FE students had a high resilience score.
SEND pupils were less likely to feel they belonged to their school, were less happy with life and were less likely to keep trying if at first they don’t succeed.
38% of primary pupils, 17% of secondary and FE students were worried quite a lot about coronavirus.
79% of primary pupils, 72% of secondary pupils and 74% of FE students said if they were worried they had a trusted adult to talk to.
Soft intelligence from schools/colleges in Herefordshire also suggests more pupils have anxiety post Covid and this is also affecting school attendance rates. In 2020-2021 the second most popular reason in Herefordshire for choosing EHE (elective home education) was cited as Covid.

Children in the Safeguarding System 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

Child Protection	Children in Need	Children Looked After
No. of children subject to child protection plan at 31/03/22 was 286	Children with an open episode at 31 March (rate per 10,000 children) rate is 622, total number is 2240 this is an increase from the previous year. SN and England rates not released at time of reporting.	Herefordshire looked after a total of 378 children, 204 (54%) were boys and 174 (46%) were girls. There were 158 new children brought into care over the course of the year almost double the previous year.
Child Protection Plans reviewed in time: 101 (66%) . Performance has decrease from the previous year (81%) and is much lower than the statistical neighbour 97% and national averages 93%	Total number of referrals into Herefordshire MASH was 3329 (up from 1,080 the previous year	Children between the age of 10 and 15 were the highest category of children entering care 87 (53%) boys and 78 (47%) girls. This is in line with regional and national averages. A total of 76 young people were looked age 16-17years. 59% (45) boys and 41% (31) girls.
No of children subject to child protection plan for a second or subsequent time has increase from 32 the previous year to 87 (23%) , this is in line with statistical neighbours and slightly higher than the national average of 22%	 Number of males 1669 Number of females 1588	Good performance on Children Looked After at period end with three or more placements during the year 5.6% (21 out of 378 children) which is lower than the 202/21 England and Statistical neighbours at 9% and 8% respectively.
Missing Children	Referrals that became section 47s: 1025 to 410 initial child protection case conference (ICPC) (up from 388 and 176 respectively in the previous year) 	Good performance on Children Looked After in care at least 2.5 years at period end living in their current placement for at least 2 years was 86.7% (104 out of 120 children) this is higher than the 202/21 England and Statistical neighbours at 70% and 72% respectively
There was a total of 182 missing episodes recorded through the year.	The majority of referrals continue to be made by Schools: 286	Good performance on the percentage of Children Looked After at 31 March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live.
More girls than boys went missing last year 26 girls and 18 boys respectively.	Number of assessments completed in 45 w/days: 1720 (77%) an increase from 1104 the previous year and performing much lower than the statistical neighbours (87%) and England average of (88%)	Inadequate performance - Initial Health Assessment (IHA's) completed in Statutory Timescale for children living in Herefordshire is 16.35%
Children aged between 10-15years 2- 0 children went missing on 70 episodes		Adoption Good performance - 22 (24.4%) children were placed for adoption this is significantly higher than England 10% and Statistical Neighbours 12%
The highest number of missing episodes occurred in children aged 16-17 years . This involved 18 children and 84 missing episodes .		Leaving Care 21 young people reached 18 and stayed with their carers 25 children ceased to be looked after 23 children returned to parents or relatives 10 children were made subject to special guardianship orders 3 Residence or Child Arrangement Orders 30 children's care ceased for other reasons

8. Activities that have supported safeguarding priorities 2021/2022

The Multi-agency Early Help Service

Why is this service important to us?

The Early Help approach in Herefordshire is the Right Help at the Right Time using the strength based model Signs of Safety. The Early Help Service in the council is made up of:

- The Early Help Hub (part of the Multiagency Safeguarding Hub) which manages contacts screened by MASH at level 2 or 3 on the Herefordshire Levels of Need threshold document
- The Early Help family Support Team – work with complex level 3 cases; the Early Help Coordinator team – administrate the early help assessed cases;
- Children Centre Services – support families with children 0-5 years; the Supporting Families administrative team
- Early Help Co-ordinator team – facilitates and administers the Early Help Assessments and Early Help Multiagency meetings
- Supporting Families Team – administers and tracks cases for the Supporting Families Programme

Families with emerging or more complex needs below the threshold of requiring statutory intervention are identified and assessed using the Early Help assessment (EHA). The assessment is holistic and supports the family to identify their strengths and their individual and collective unmet needs. This informs an outcomes focused support plan, drawn up with the family, to bring about sustainable change and leave the family stronger for the future. Each family has a 'Lead Practitioner,' this role is usually fulfilled by a professional from a partner agency e.g. a primary or secondary school, health visitor or early year's provider. The lead practitioner is the link for the family and co-ordinates all professionals required to bring about sustainable change in the family.

There are on average at least 1000 active EHA's in the county at any one time. The service has developed an Early Help Practice Framework to bring together all information and practice standards for early help into one document. It also highlights the requirement for high quality EHA's and has put timescales in for allocating cases and regular reviews to monitor the impact of the work being completed and prevent drift.

The impact of the work of early help is evidenced in the number of Payment by Results (Supporting Families sustainable outcomes payments) which have been achieved. This is mainly work completed with families at high end level 3 on the Right Help Right Time Herefordshire's levels of Need document. In 2020/21 Herefordshire achieved 183 PbR's meeting the target set by central government. In 2021/22 Herefordshire is on track to achieve the target of 190 set by Ministry of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities having already got 181 (February 2022).

What is working well?

- Up to 80% of Early Help Assessments are completed by a range of partner agencies mainly schools both primary and secondary, health visitors and early year's providers.
- First Steps is a programme developed by Children Centre Services in partnership with midwifery, health visitors, Nationwide Community Learning Partnership and the Rotary. It supports all young parents 21 years and under with a mentor and additional support including a Moses basket full of essential items provided by the Rotary.
- Herefordshire is on target to meet its Supporting Families target set by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for the second year running. Herefordshire is third in the West Midlands for the percentage of PR's completed at the end of Qtr 2 2021/22 against the target set by DLUHC.
- Early Help Hub has met its target of completing 95% of all contacts within 72 hours since its inception in September 2020.
- Supervisions continue to be 100% for all early help staff and their cases.
- A significant increase in NEF take up during the autumn term 2021 of 92.5%, well above the national average of 75%.
- Children Centre Services have a very buoyant Facebook page with 11,334 people having seen the page in January 2022.
- Feedback is collected from families at the end of the intervention is collated and analysed.

An example of feedback is

“The support I’ve had as a mother have had from the EHA has been vital for the healing and growth of the whole family. The regular meetings gave me a safe space to feel heard and supported. The different leaders involved gave me excellent advice which was key in helping me move forward. I was often signposted to other areas where I could receive more support. I was also given some basic targets in order to help me progress in confidence and re-teach me how to take control and act on things which need to be done. I am forever grateful for this support. Thank you.”

What have we been doing?

- Following the audit of a large amount of early help cases an audit action plan was completed and the actions are being carried out including improving recording particularly the child’s lived experience and the impact of work being carried out on the child’s lived experience.
- Incorporating the Early Help Hub into a single front door.
- A new Early Help Practice Framework has been drafted and the framework is now out for consultation with partner agencies. This has been developed to include the required standards for the quality assurance of EHA’s and work completed, time frames for assessment; cases to be allocated; frequency of visits and regular Team around the Family (TAF) reviews.
- Working on workflows in Mosaic for early help - initially at the front door moving onto workflows for the day to day work of the teams. This will enable data to be extracted from Mosaic using PowerBI which will improve analysis and be used to better inform future need and commissioning.
- High quality training has been commissioned for frontline managers which has been well received and the learning is being put into practice. Core skills training for early help frontline staff has also been commissioned to address the areas for improvement identified by the audits. This is in the process of being delivered.
- Developed EH team guidance and protocols to enhance consistency of practice

What do we still need to do?

- Launch the Early Help Practice Framework in April 2022 following completion of the consultation process and reviewing the framework.
- Development of an Early Help dashboard. A lot of the early help data is collated from excel spreadsheets.
- Review and revise the Early Help Strategy into an Early Help & Prevention Strategy following the work being completed under the DfE funded project in the Right Help Right Time work stream of the Children & Families Improvement Plan. This work includes consultation with children, young people and their families and community groups. Mapping the child’s journey from conception to adulthood, mapping community assets and analysing data and information held by the council and partner agencies.
- Development of the Early Years & Sufficiency Strategy together with Early Years Partnership.
- Development of the proposals for the implementation of Family Hubs across Herefordshire.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Why is this service important to us?

The MASH is a single point of entry and essentially the ‘front door’ for access to children’s services. The MASH team comprises of onsite Social Workers and their Team Managers, Women’s Aid practitioner, Education, Police and Health colleagues. There is also virtual access to Probation Officer, GPs and maternity services colleagues.

The MASH process involves liaising with the key agencies, speaking with parents and importantly, speaking with the children themselves when appropriate to do so, in order to explore and obtain appropriate information to inform decision making.

The MASH team have 24 hours to process any contacts that come into the local authority and a decision will be made about action to be taken within this timeframe. This could involve making a decision that no further actions is required, that Early Help support is appropriate or it may be that the child(ren) require statutory involvement with one of our Social Work teams.

What is working well?

There is a Strategic MASH and Operations group which sit within the HSCP substructure, Oversight and reports on progress made against the strategic plan is presented to the ESG meetings and directly to SPB as a key focus for the MASH is to ensure that there is effective application of the partnerships Right Help Right Time thresholds guidance.

- Application of threshold is being applied appropriately to manage risk – further evidenced in recent audit activity. A recent multi agency audit showed that there was an agreement with 93% of the threshold decisions which had been made, which is a significant progress to outcome of audit activity undertaken 6 months ago. This evidences that threshold application is proportionate and the right decisions are being made for children and families at the front door.
- The team continue to forge and adopt positive relationships amongst each other and with other relevant partner agencies.
- Recent training held with the MASH team to look at outcome of audits and what the next steps are that we are working towards. This has helped the team to see the journey that we are on and to have time together to reflect on practice.
- A team training session has taken place on Signs of Safety, looking at how the service can apply this model in a bespoke manner for the MASH. This has helped to streamline the practice and ensure consistency of assessment across the team.

What do we still need to do?

- Complete co-location of partner agencies within the MASH
- Continue to work with partner agencies to ensure consistent understanding and application of thresholds
- Ensure robust and timely response to referrals and the embedment of the 'Right Help right time' guidance (and Right Quality)
- Improve the quorate, timeliness and decision making of strategy meetings and its impact on the outcomes of CYP
- Improve the communication of the key decisions made about children, within strategy meetings, to relevant partner agencies

Conference and Review Service

Why is this service important to us?

The Conference and Review Services is the team of child protection chairs and independent reviewing officers (IRO), Herefordshire's most vulnerable children are children subject to a child protection plan or children looked after by the local authority and will be subject to regular reviews of their child protection plan or care plan.

What did we do?

The priority of the service over the last year has been for both the CP and IRO service they were to:

- Improve the footprint of IRO through visits, monitoring and oversights on child's records including escalations
- For CP service they were also about improving the visible foot print of conference chairs; reviewing implementation of Signs of safety, increasing staffing assignment and subsequently recruiting interim staff
- Embedding standards and expectations re process of conference and parent/ child focused practice, looking at how child's voice can be better heard / reflected in conferences
- Fostering IRO (FIRO) role to be introduced and developed

"Sarah is a tremendous asset to the Hereford IRO team, after taking over from another IRO she had big boots to fill which she certainly did. I'm very thankful to have someone as supportive as Sarah."

What did we know?

- Evidence behind these activities was that conference chair resource was inadequate for the increasing number of children subject to a plan and to undertake an effective quality assurance role including oversights and escalations.
- Signs of safety had not been reviewed since introduction and there was a lack of inclusion of young people in the conference process and for older young people lack of engagement in their own safety plan.
- For IROs there was inadequate evidence of their role as a significant person in a child's life and their planning – their footprint was not being clearly seen.
- There needed to be oversight and independence in terms of fostering reviews being undertaken.

Where there has been little progress or things have not gone well, what lessons have been learnt?

There has been progress across all areas and this will continue in some areas particularly including voice of the child in the conference as whilst some children are being seen at or contributing to their conferences it is still not a proportionate number to the age of children who could contribute to their meetings.

With regards to the role of the IRO, the year average for initial Child Looked After Reviews completed within the 20 working day timescale is 78% which requires improvement. There have been systems issues that have impacted on the timeliness of the IRO Service receiving notification. Manual reporting has been used for the last 4 months to ensure that we capture all children coming into care and allocate an IRO within 5 working days.

There have been 18 formal disputes raised by IRO's between April 2021 and March 2022. The main themes coming from disputes demonstrate delays in assessment and care planning which directly impact children's right to permanency and right to family life in a timely manner. This demonstrates that the LA is not progressing permanency for children at pace. Although challenged by IRO's through the Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) this has been hampered by changes of Social Workers in Children in Care (CIC) teams and adequate management oversight and monitoring to ensure timely progression. Given pressures on CIC teams IRO's have not used the DRP process robustly. Improvements are needed in this area with robust challenge from the IRO service, followed through and escalated further at the necessary intervals to ensure children's care plans are progressing effectively and in within the right timeframe for them. To this end DRP process has been reviewed. Weekly DRP meetings have been rescheduled with a plan to involve Team Managers and IRO's within discussion to monitor, progress and resolve disputes within the 20 working day timescales. More recently DRP process has been used more effectively and a large portion of the disputes that have not been concluded in a timely manner have now been resolved.

IROs are moving back to more face to face meetings with children when they want them rather than Teams meetings. There needs to be more improvement on better understanding of the threshold for a child protection plan.

How has learning from activities (including from rapid reviews and local or national child safeguarding practice reviews) been shared with key partners?

IROs, FIRO and conference chairs are all part of all staff briefings and groups that are relevant to their roles which provide opportunities for learning from others and sharing knowledge. Staff all receive briefings from Chief executive and director that disseminate information and links that are used as part of team meetings and CPD. Information from the Partnership board is disseminated in both teams for team meetings and reviewed in terms what can we learn from this and how can we change practice for the better. In terms of learning both service managers attend a range of panels where individual children are discussed /considered which enables best practice decisions to be made. There is an awareness of national issues like child deaths that will impact on professional practice.

Service manager for IROs are part of National Association of Independent Review Officers (Nairo) forum that considers regional and national issues relating to safeguarding children any information and learning is also shared within the service.

All IROs attended a bespoke training to enhance their skills in challenging delay in children's care plans. IROs have monthly development sessions where they share knowledge and learning from training and discuss practice issues.

Conference chairs are now having more regular team meeting / practice discussion sessions and have had a refresh with signs of safety lead as part of the ongoing development of signs of safety. The conference chairs have also participated in joint sessions with team managers to look at improving joint understanding of the model Both CP chairs and IRO undertake individual training as it arises through opportunities offered through the academy. IROs have a link to a service area across children's services where they can discuss issues and look to develop better links with the team. They have regular joint meetings with Cafcass to promote better understanding of each other's roles and improve working together.

Impact is being measured by how the information and learning is being it is used –i.e. helped IROs develop mid-point template they now use. Feedback from parents led to current development of information sheet for parents. Team members have been actively involved in staff reference group to contribute to service improvement.

What difference did we make?

Performance has been consistently high with regards to IRO oversights with the year average being 100% of all children having an IRO oversight in 12 months and 98% with two or more IRO oversights of their care planning.

The IRO service has also performed highly in terms of consulting with children as part of their care planning and review process with the year average being 99.7% of children being consulted by their IRO's.

The year average for subsequent Child Looked After Reviews being held within timescales is 92%. This has dipped as a result of changes in Social Workers and reports and care plans not being completed in time for children's Reviews. To this end IRO's recently completed an expectations and bottom lines guidance for all service areas which they are promoting as part of their link work. The IRO Service Manager has also raised these issues with other Service Managers. The informal and formal escalation process has also been used where necessary.

IROs are now evidencing their communication with children and other relevant parties, children are encouraged to participate in their reviews.

Midpoint check template is now live.

Escalations are being completed and chased by IROs and the service manager.

CIC service manager meeting with IRO service manager weekly to discuss open disputes and closing them down as promptly as possible.

Performance for the conference chairs has fluctuated across the last year – initially due to increase in volume of conferences and insufficient chairs but since December 2021 Increased Conference chairs has meant more conferences can be chaired and offered in timescale. Delays have therefore been about social worker and managers cancelling meetings, not returning convening lists so invitations cannot be sent out .The average timeliness of ICPC across the year has been 52% which is inadequate but generally improving. Current reasons for delay are changing social workers, social worker leaves no one to immediately take over, no time to complete work.

A number of strategies have been put in place to chase / remind people. Business support remind a worker x 3 of need for Request To Convene and on a Thursday the following week's conference list is sent to workers and managers to remind them.

Conference chairs can now escalate concerns and data can be produced going forward about this. This Started at the end of March 22. Oversights are placed on mosaic and specific timescales have been given for when this is undertaken to ensure adequate monitoring of the plan.

A consistent group of conference chairs has meant standards can start to be reinforced and practice improved for children.

The FIRO is able to demonstrate effectiveness of independent reviews for carers that also provide a QA service in terms of work done with carers and for children's, if all relevant checks are in place.

Feedback from Children and Families

For IROs, questionnaires go to children and ask their views in the CP service parents were called after every meeting to see how it was for them this has reduced currently because of lack of business support to complete all tasks. All parents are met with before conference to discuss process and expectations in these discussion some parents raise issues that are relevant to service improvement. We are currently drafting a 1-page document to go out with invitations that shows threshold and scaling – parents have expressed that if they have this and then have questions they can discuss when they meet the conference chair

No Wrong Door (NWD)

Why is this service important to us?

Herefordshire Children Safeguarding Partnership worked with No Wrong Door (NWD) on a 6-month Children and Young People's Participation Project funded by the DfE, to improve the ways that we engage with, listen to, and act on the voices of children, young people and families in Herefordshire as a multi-agency partnership. NWD is an established voluntary organisation that has strong connections to children and young people across Herefordshire including some of the harder to reach communities, this includes an established network of children within education and health provisions.

What is No Wrong Door?

No Wrong Door was established to be an infrastructure organisation, creating a partnership of services for young people with a single 'front door' for young people to access whatever support they need. Open to support young people between the ages of 11 to 25, it works to enable young people to access the most appropriate support services for information, help and guidance to meet their full potential.

Who we help and how?

Any young person can walk in to one of our Drop-ins for advice, guidance, or support and be able to talk about anything. No Wrong Door responds to the needs of all young people offering low level early intervention. Work targets vulnerable young people in need of additional support to enable them to regain purpose and direction, build their resilience, develop coping strategies and help them progress positively in life.

We provide a process of support to Young People including Triage – Assessment; Action Plan and a Referral process to enable Young People to access the most appropriate support services from our partner agencies

We provide a cross-sector partnership of now 51 youth agencies and services in Herefordshire who have signed up to a protocol of data sharing and working together to enable support to all young people but targeted at those most in need. Our youth offer is:

- **A Safe Space to Talk:** having someone to talk with who is non-judgemental and who then can open up to and be honest with, who supports their goals in life
- **Find Help:** where young people not always having the confidence in themselves, find appropriate advice and guidance on navigating to the adult world
- **Make a Difference:** to access a platform where they get support not only to be able to make a difference to their own lives but to others as well

"I work representing the views, wishes and feelings, as instructed by the young person. I have found Carole to be incredibly supportive of the role. She actively encourages and accommodates the voice of the child throughout the review, both when a young person is in attendance and when I am there as a representative of their voice. In my experience, Carole conducts meetings in both a professional and an appropriate manner – ensuring that everyone, whether in attendance in person or via the submission of a report, has an opportunity to share their views whilst being respectful and appropriate to all. I have known Carole to challenge professionals and young people alike, during a review. These challenges have been carried out appropriately whilst treating people with respect and understanding. I have, on numerous occasions, had communication with Carole, outside of reviews, to ensure clarification for a young person. She has always been very responsive and pertinent."

What needs are we addressing?

The past 18 months have been disjointed, traumatic and seemingly never ending for so many of us. Young people have seen their lives put on hold and lacking stability, and many have experienced lockdown as a 'pressure cooker' and are experiencing increased mental health issues. On top of this Young People face many more challenges as they make the transition into adulthood. Challenges like developing strong relationships, building resilience, finding a job, reaching their potential and playing an active role in their community. As we adapt post-pandemic, there is also a need to focus on academic catch-up alongside young people's mental health and wellbeing, and employability. Through consultation with young people and our partner agencies we have asked how best to support the growing needs of young people experiencing anxiety. Feedback has identified the preference for access to a safe space where they know they can talk to someone who will listen to them, who will not judge them, and who they trust to help the young person make sense of their life and find positive ways forward.

We believe that Youth Work has a key role to play in helping promote young people's personal and social development. We know this makes a difference to their formal education. Research also shows that good youth work can help improve attendance and behaviour, promote achievement and improve home and community links.

Funding however continues to be a significant concern!

Key achievements (the period covered is 1st April 2021 - 31st March 2022)

Through consultation No Wrong Door asked Young People how best to support those most affected. The result was young people forming a "Herefordshire Youth Reps" group, coming together they made a short film capturing **Lockdown Stories**. The views and issues of young people together with their suggested solutions were also put together and presented to the Local Authorities then head of Children's Service.

Following the success of this work, young people have helped design our **new flyer** with one young person drawing the characters.

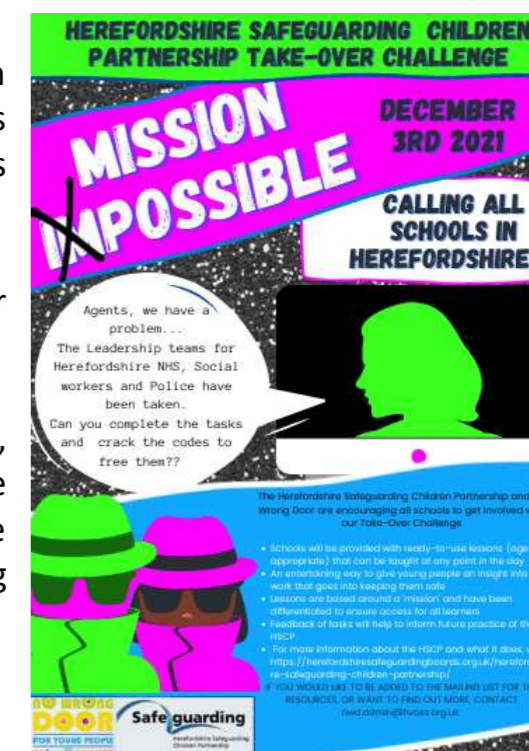
Our work to value young people, enabling them to take a leading role to express their views, developing a service and now impacting on Herefordshire's strategy and practice was nominated by Jo Hilditch DL and High Sheriff of Herefordshire for the National High Sheriffs Crimebeat Award where a group of young people attended the awards ceremony in London where we gained 2nd prize. It is hoped that this practice will continue and be embedded in the future.

NWD was commissioned to survey and capture the "Voice of the Child" where a **new Young Person's Advisory Group** has emerged from our Youth Reps group to help inform strategy and policy for the Herefordshire Community Safeguarding Board.

All children and young people in Herefordshire were invited to take part in the **Take-Over Challenge**. In collaboration with No Wrong Door, the HSCP have developed a series of Missions that children and young people can complete as part of their school lessons, to help shape the work of the Partnership. The Missions are age-appropriate for primary and secondary school students and based on the work of the Safeguarding Partnership. Work will be fed-back to the HSCP Leadership team and will influence the priorities of the safeguarding partnership. [HSCP Voice of the Child Participation Toolkit - Herefordshire Safeguarding Boards and Partnerships](#)

Numbers assisted (including groups and individuals)

Since January 2021, over 700 young people have accessed the No Wrong Door services and with the support of Multi Agency team. Commissioned work enabled us to provide outreach work in the city and create a New Youth Space working in collaboration with St Nicholas Church based at the Church house. The No wrong door partnership has steadily grown to 51 partners, and we are now working in collaboration with 7 high schools across the county.



Some quotes from young people highlighting the difference made

There has been a notable increased feeling of safety within local communities and schools with the visual presence of NWD. This initiative has proved so successful, Quotations from young people supported by No Wrong Door include:

“If I hadn’t walked through No Wrong Door doors, I would never have imagined I would have felt so confident and now have a full-time job”

“I’ve been pretty bad at home but because I’ve been here, I’ve been good at home”

“I’ve learnt to be kind”

“Since I have been coming to No Wrong Door, I have had some good days and bad days, but I feel good now. I am no longer bullied, I have had my storey published, I am studying full time and just moved into my own home.”

“Playing with older kids helped build my confidence”

“I would like to express our gratitude for the work that NWD has completed here at EMC this term on Monday afternoons. The sessions have been very well received.

Development areas/priorities for the year ahead

We recognise the importance of work with high schools and to be able to provide early intervention support to targeted, vulnerable young people who are suffering from anxiety, whose wellbeing is at risk, or those that are not flourishing suffering or becoming involved in exploitation. To enable youth services to reach as many young people as possible we would like to see the development of a **larger multi-agency base to service hub and spoke model**, which will enable us to reach out across the county.

We have just negotiated a new project funded by the CRF to work with schools and communities, 5 senior youth workers recruited from different disciplines of JNC qualified youth workers, teachers, Social Workers, Counsellors started 1st April. We hope to pilot this new way of working to **evidence proof of concept** and demonstrate our Theory of Change Model and measure impact of the work. The final report will inform further ways of supporting young people based on all learning captured during the engagement and enable us to extend and expand this of this new way of working.

A big thank you to all our funders including the Eveson Charity, Herefordshire Community Foundation, Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership, they all who have believed in us.

No Wrong Door and its partnership have demonstrated ways to improve the quality of young people’s lives and make a positive difference. By demonstrating safe practice and with the movement back to face-to-face work, including work with schools we hoped that new initiatives this coming year will build on what we have shown so far.

West Mercia Police

Why is this service important to us?

The Police have a central role in protecting children, this includes the duty to safeguard and protect children and to investigate crime. The Police may hold important information about children who may be at risk of harm as well as those who cause such harm and it is important that this information and other intelligence is shared with other organisations when necessary to protect children.

What did we do well?

Covid brought about a curve ball which led us to change our ways of working to ensure children were safe. This highlighted the need for a multi-agency Domestic Abuse hub which would triaged cases daily. We also agreed a cohort of children at risk and arranged for local officers to conduct safe and well visits.

RHRT was established to pull together what the framework looked like. It required tweaking and training. The inconsistencies of thresholds brought about the need for training as there was too much work coming through the front door which led to people being risk adverse. Also issues with the step down from child protection to child in need without partners being informed led to confusion on cases.

Signs of safety was introduced with limited initial training. This is now firmly embedded across Police staff.

We saw the implementation of the MASH strategic board. The Neglect sub group was introduced to promote the use of early help assessments and now a busy group that mirrors regional best practice.

The child exploitation and missing sub group has ongoing work around transitions which was an issue that hadn't been addressed. There was no focus on transitions but there is now a focus to capture data which informs us on who the perpetrators are and where it is prevalent. Positively, the Prevent and Disrupt operational group is well attended and enhances the understanding of contextual safeguarding.

What difference did we make to the lives of CYPF?

Over the past year we have moved to a vulnerability model whereby we have specially trained child protection officers with dedicated supervisors. These officers work closely with partner agencies, building stronger working relationships. The engagement that vulnerable children and young people receive from these Officers ensures their voice is heard.

Our child exploitation team works closely with partner agencies and meet regularly to ensure we are all sighted on the cohort of children at risk or being exploited. Through multi-agency risk management meetings, we have examples of where young persons at risk of exploitation and on the edge of being criminalised, have been referred to the 'Climb Project' – a support worker identified and suitable hobbies which has successfully diverted them away from being exploited and potentially criminalised. Police lead and chair a monthly multi-agency prevention and disruption meeting focussing on hotspots, themes and places related to exploitation. This group is attended by more than 30 representatives from across both statutory and non-statutory organisations.

The introduction of an early intervention and prevention officer within our harm assessment unit has identified individual families that require support. This officer works closely with the early help team and has forged links to improve outcomes for families.

Youth engagement Officers work alongside schools and colleges and other local groups to identify any safeguarding issues and promote good practice.

**An analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities*

COVID prevented co-location, with most agencies working from home. Although this did hinder some lines of communication the harm assessment unit and child protection team have worked hard to continue improve communication with partner agencies and respectfully challenge partners, this needs to continue with agreed outcomes being reached.

The imminent move to a co-located MASH will improve communication and build stronger relationships between partners.

Criminal Exploitation has made little progression on transitions pathways for young people requiring adult services post 18 years. This is an area of work which will be given particular focus for development in the next business year.

Were there opportunities to learn and improve?

Our dedicated harm assessment unit reviews all Police incidents involving children and young people. All officers within that unit have now attended training on the right help, right time thresholds. This now provides consistency around the use of thresholds. A recent internal audit on the application of thresholds revealed that there is assurance in this area.

Learning from safeguarding-related reviews is promulgated across the organisation by the Strategic Vulnerability Safeguarding Team, and governance is provided by the Strategic Governance & Oversight Board, which reports into the Service Improvement Board. The Learning & Development Department ensure that practice is developed and continuous improvement continues.

West Mercia's Statutory Major crime review team have responsibility for all statutory reviews. Any learning identified from such reviews are all recorded, by the Detective Inspector who will then disseminate to the correct person for outward dissemination to frontline staff.

There are various ways this can be done:

- Reflective Practice to the individual officer/team via their supervisors.
- 60 second learning documents completed for all staff.
- Regular meeting with Vulnerability and Exploitation trainers to disseminate learning to frontline staff and partner agencies.
- Regular contact with the Strategic leads for relevant areas to assist with inputs during Continual Personal Development (CPD) days.
- Through the Vulnerability and Safeguarding DCI to Chief Officers through Strategic Improvement board.

- Regular contact with learning and development and CPD trainers to ensure learning is passed to frontline staff.
- Recently a Domestic Abuse Audit was completed within two policing areas of West Mercia which highlighted a number of learning opportunities this was driven through the organisation by the Domestic abuse delivery group. These types of audits are seen as the way forward and other areas of business are currently being considered.
- WMP have recently developed reality testing (seen as promising practice by VKPP) that now takes place via a schedule on different topics. Centrally we have the ability to ensure that any learning points are included as part of this reality testing.
- Learning from serious case reviews in regard to multiagency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) offenders is the responsibility of the MAPPA Performance and Standards Sub-Group with oversight from the Strategic Management Board. Again this learning is disseminated through the channels listed below and is included in the programme of audits to ensure learning has been embedded.

This is a continual cycle and the actions/recommendations are reviewed on a regular basis with Senior Managers to ensure the recommendation has been embedded.

What are the remaining challenges?

Police staff experienced to complete internal and multi-agency audits is limited however the importance of these is recognised and therefore this area of work does need to continue.

The continuous change in management roles makes it difficult to maintain consistency with processes, this can make third party sector frustrated as they are not always included in the communication of changes.

There is an uphill struggle with press attention from all agencies, which can prevent people from reporting child abuse matters.

Issues with the single agency decision to step up or down with partnership consultation.

With the current improvement plan in place as a service we need to be included in this.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) cross cutting themes – Domestic Abuse children come under definition DA bill.

Child Exploitation & VAWG- We need to map and ensure all data is pulled together.

Training – need to make sure all staff are trained making use of the multi-agency training that is available. Links in with all sub groups to ensure we cover the cross cutting themes and reduce the number of sub groups wherever possible.

Make use of 'Walk the Floor' activities. Police have started this with Health colleagues.

NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Why is this service important to us?

The CCG ensures that keeping children safe whilst they are receiving services commissioned through the CCG is central to what they do. The CCG work together with all provider organisations to achieve this it means that all commissioned organisations have robust systems that safeguard children in line with section 11 of the Children Act (2014), and clearly understand their role in safeguarding children and young people, this includes: clear accessible policy and procedure, safer recruitment, training and governance systems.

What did we do well?

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (HWCCG) as one of the 3 Safeguarding Children Partners has supported driving the safeguarding agenda and improving the effectiveness of the Partnership. The CCG Executive Leads, along with Executive leads from the other two Partners, recognised that the effectiveness of the Partnership was not where we wanted it to be. Therefore, over the last 12 months, the Partners convened monthly Extra-ordinary meetings Chaired by the CCG Chief Nursing Officer. These continued until March 2022. The purpose is to improve traction, pace and completion of outstanding work within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA). For example, traction on development and publication of several key documents: the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024, HSCP Annual Plan for Independent Scrutiny 2021-2024, HSCP Strategic Plan- Performance Outcomes Framework 2021 – 2024. The Extra-ordinary meetings are in addition to the 6 weekly Safeguarding Partnership Group (SPG) meetings. The funding provided by the CCG equates to a 22% increase over the last 3 years.

The position regarding the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) is showing early improvement. However, progress remains slow in achieving consistent traction/pace, despite the measures in place.

In addition, the CCG has supported the HSCP through appropriate representation and contribution at the: Executive Safeguarding Partners Group, Executive Support Group, Quality & Effectiveness Group, Development & Practice Group, Child Exploitation & Missing Group, Joint Case Review Group, Neglect Strategic Group and MASH Strategic and Operational groups. As well as the many Task and Finish or other Groups established to support the work of the Partnership such as the Performance Data Group and Audit group. The CCG have provided leadership across the partnership and supported driving the safeguarding agenda forward including roles of chair and vice chair for some groups.

The Safeguarding Health Leads from Herefordshire and Worcestershire meet at a quarterly forum. The group shares 'Integrated Care System' wide learning and works together to drive system improvements from all multi-agency safeguarding across the health economy.

What difference did we make to the lives of CYPF?

Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG are a commissioning organisation therefore we do not have direct contact with children and young people. However, the providers of the services we commission do have feedback from people who use their services. Compliments and complaints and the actions taken are shared as part of the reporting processes from Providers to the CCG. In addition, any serious incidents are shared with the CCG, who provide scrutiny and oversight to ensure actions taken address the issues raised. When services are visited, as part of the CCG assurance process, feedback is obtained from staff and services users when appropriate. When issues emerge, information is sought from the providers. For example, the CCG sought assurance from the Trust regarding the children's workforce to confirm that public health nurses and midwives were not redeployed in the lockdowns during this reporting period. Information is triangulated to evidence that the services are safe and are of a high quality. Where there are areas for improvement the CCG has oversight to ensure these are addressed.

HWCCG commission health services for the population of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. We work with Provider organisations, such as Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, (HWHCT) and Wye Valley NHS Trust (WVT), to seek assurance regarding the effectiveness of safeguarding across the partnership. This includes evidence that action has been taken to address single and multi-agency learning from local case reviews. To support the assurance processes, the Trusts invite the CCG Safeguarding Leads to their internal safeguarding committees. In addition, within the Quality Schedule, there is a Safeguarding template, to ensure NHS contractual requirements in respect of safeguarding are met and reported upon which includes learning from reviews. As a health system, we are working within the partnership to improve how we evidence impact; or i.e. the 'so what', what difference have we made to the lives of children and young people.

HWCCG have supported awareness raising of the Early Help process and Right Help Right time Guidance; to GPs and other clinicians in primary care to demonstrate how they can support the early help offer through discussion with families, other practitioners such as Health Visitors and understand how to refer into targeted Early Help services when required.

The partnership response to learning from the National Panel, in respect of 'Out of routine: A review of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) in families where the children are considered at risk of significant harm, Final report July 2020'; the Fieldwork report: National Review of Non-Accidental Injury in under 1s September 2021, "The Myth of Invisible Men" Safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers September 2021; is being led by the CCG in collaboration with the Board Managers from HSCP and WSCP, and leads from the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). The learning also links with learning from local reviews, as well as findings from CDOP. The 'Keep Me safe...' strategy has been developed to support these work streams.

Its purpose is to provide consistent and co-ordinated messages to practitioners across the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System (ICS) to help reduce the number of children who are seriously injured or die. 2022-2023 will see the strategy disseminated to all multi-agency partners alongside key information that focus on particular themes. For example, guidance relating to 'Keep me safe...when I am sleeping' and 'Keep me safe...when I am crying'. To support the focus on 'Under ones', the full ICON programme has been purchased by HWCCG via NHSE/I funding streams. ICON is an evidenced based programme designed to help people who care for babies to cope with crying. ICON stands for Infant crying is normal, Comforting methods can help, it's Okay to walk away, Never, ever shake a baby. It aims to reduce the number of babies suffering from Abusive Head Trauma due to shaking.

The purchased ICON programme will support the free resources which have already been disseminated across the system over the last 12 months. ICON links in with work that the Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) are leading on, including the 'DadPad'. DadPad is an information pack developed by dads for dads is helping fathers in Herefordshire and Worcestershire prepare for family life and tackles the mental health issues which can affect new parents.

It covers a range of issues, such as the support dads can give while mums are breastfeeding, being aware of perinatal mental illness and the anxiety and frustrations that come with parenthood, as well as hands-on advice on issues like nappy changing. Its aim is to provide new fathers across Herefordshire and Worcestershire with guidance on how to develop the mind-set, confidence and practical skills needed to meet their baby's physical and emotional needs.

Representatives supporting the development of the 'Keep Me Safe When I'm Crying' and 'Keep Me Safe When I'm Sleeping,' strands of the strategy, are from across the multi-agency system.

HWCCG has fully supported the Children Looked After (CLA) agenda, working closely alongside both health and Children's Social Care to drive forward improvement in the quality and timeliness of information shared between agencies to ensure the best health outcomes are sought for this cohort of children. The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Nurse for CLA attends the Corporate Parenting Board.

Were there opportunities to learn and improve?

GP Practices are offered support visits, reflective sessions, as well as learning and development sessions which incorporate learning from reviews, locally and nationally. Discussion/reflective sessions regarding learning from Rapid Reviews or CSPRs are also provided to the GP Practice involved to help improve safeguarding practice across the partnership.

HWCCG have continued to commission bespoke learning and development sessions for Primary care and have widened this to invite multi-agency partners – these have included Fabricated and Induced Illness training, Domestic Abuse Training and the White Ribbon Conference. Supervision Training is commissioned, to increase the number of health professionals who can provide safeguarding supervision. High quality supervision is important in supporting staff to ensure they are able to safeguard children; or adults (with care and support needs) by providing appropriate advice and challenge in safeguarding matters. Safeguarding Supervision is mandatory for all Health Professionals working with

children and families. Safeguarding supervision has been demonstrated, to be fundamental in supporting frontline practitioners in delivering high quality care, providing risk analysis and individual action plans (NSPCC, 2015).

Learning from across the Integrated Care System-The Safeguarding Health Leads quarterly forum provides the opportunity to share learning from across the system. An example includes sharing how the HWHCT have oversight and monitoring of their Single and Multi-Agency Recommendations and actions taken to address, through the trust's Integrated Safeguarding Committee. This has been shared with WVT who have attended the HWHCT internal safeguarding meeting, in order to improve their oversight and monitoring processes. Other examples are where joint work can be undertaken across the system, such as for policies and procedures. This is an opportunity to work jointly across the multi-agency system, not just across health.

What are the remaining challenges?

These remain an area for development across the system:

- Strengthen oversight of implementation of recommendations and that those findings have been used to change/improve the safeguarding system. Particularly, improving evidencing impact as a result of changes.
- Drive the changes identified through the Leadership development sessions and improve traction and pace across the partnership.
- As a partnership we need to work smarter and consider what information is already available to us via CSC systems recording as well as utilising individual agency data if there is a gap. However, we need to ensure we focus on relevant key and succinct themes to support ongoing priorities, rather than trying to have too much data without the narrative.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

Why is this service important to us?

The Health and Care NHS Trust are the main provider of community nursing, therapy and mental health services. They provide services for people of all ages, across a range of settings, experiencing both physical and/or mental health conditions.

The child and mental health services (CAMHS) provides assessment and support services for children with emotional behavioural and mental health difficulties. It is important to Herefordshire due to the increased rates of mental health reported on following the national lockdown measures as a result of Covid 19.

What did we know?

Audit of referrals showed that CAMHS staff are risk averse and are completing MARF even when the actions they have taken had already reduced the risk. Short focused training package has been developed for a named nurse to deliver to the various multi-disciplinary meetings to empower staff to be comfortable holding the risk.

List of all children subject to child protection plans and looked after are now provided to HWHCT so that mental health staff working with those families in Herefordshire are aware of the additional challenges facing the family. Where children are placed in Worcestershire that information is shared with the public health nursing service to ensure they provide an appropriate response to the child. This has improved the speed at which services can become involved in the support for these children and their families.

What difference did we make to the lives of CYPF?

91.5% of the workforce in Herefordshire has completed or refreshed the appropriate level of safeguarding children during the last 3 years in line with the NHS Intercollegiate training guidance.

Were there opportunities to learn and improve?

As the Trust provides services across two Counties learning from DHRs and CSPRs in one County are shared across both. Particularly some of the learning for health visitors from Herefordshire have been shared with Worcestershire where the Trust does provide a public health nursing service.

A paper was provided to Child Exploitation strategic group to look at the support CAMHS provide generally and specifically to this group of children. There were no queries as a result of this paper.

What are the remaining challenges?

Referral rates into the service have appeared to be relatively stable over time (with a dip in early 2020 due to the pandemic despite the service remaining 'open'); however CYP are presenting with, a higher rate of referrals that meet thresholds and are accepted into the service; in 2019/20, this was 54%, 2020/21 was 58%, and 2021/22 (to date) 71% of referrals are accepted.

Highest Number of Referral Types

Largest increase in referral type (from 2016/17-2021)

1. Eating Issues
2. Self-Harm
3. Low Mood/Depression
4. Separation Anxiety
5. Generalised Anxiety Disorder



Wye Valley NHS Trust

Priority 1 Leadership and Impact

Safeguarding children is a multi-agency process and the Trust works closely with colleagues across Herefordshire to support the work of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) ensuring that the Trust is represented at its groups and contributes consistently to the work streams for the partnership's priorities. WVT NHS Trust Safeguarding Children provides appropriate representation and contribution to: Executive Support Group, Quality & Effectiveness Group, Development & Practice Group, Child Exploitation & Missing Group, MASH Strategic Group and Joint Case Review Group. Additionally the trust has supported the partnership at various task and finish and other groups such as: the Performance Data Group, Neglect Strategy Group, Prevent and Deter Parts 1 and 11 and the Training Reference Group and the Training Reference Group and the more recently formed CPSR review of Multi-Agency Action Plans group.

The Named Nurses - manage the safeguarding children (SC) and children looked after teams (CLA). The SC team have all received safeguarding supervision training, the senior members completing training in leadership in safeguarding and 3 members of the team so far have completed the Mary Seacole Leadership Programme. The Chief and Associate Nursing Officers have also attended Safeguarding Leadership training during this last year.

WVT Children Looked After Team

All children continued to have statutory health reviews throughout Covid Lockdowns via Video call

- Use of virtual contacts has enabled more contact with young people and carers outside of the statutory health reviews.
- CLA Nurses are able to provide consistency of professional for CLA allowing trusting relationships to be built with children and young people and their carers.
- Where there are health concerns and children have been reunified CLA Nurses have undertaken direct work with the parents and children after they have moved back home to support health needs. This has enabled children to raise concerns they have.
- The positive impact of this has been to afford greater variety of opportunities and platforms with which to engage with Children and Young People and their carers. This has allowed carers to be spoken to and raise concerns away from the child and face to face contacts with the children and young people are more focused.

Development and Practice Sub-group – Includes Neglect Priority 2 and Training and Policy Task and Finish Groups)

The Trust safeguarding team have attended all meetings of the Development and Practice sub group and associated work streams / task and finish groups. Ways WVT have contributed include:

- Delivery of GCP2 a training both internally to Trust staff as a single agency and also to the multi-agency training courses offered by the partnership.
- Signs of Safety- One of our safeguarding advisors has completed the 5 day full course, all team members and key Level 3 staff (e.g. Public Health Nursing) have attended the 2 day training.
- The development of and adoption of the Injuries to Babies and Children under 2 year's policy



Internal Governance

Safeguarding is central to quality of care and patient safety. The Trust has a clear governance structure in place.



Right Help/Right Time - Priority 3

The WVT SC team developed and delivered a training package to develop practitioner understanding of thresholds and the Right Help Right Time document

The Named Midwife delivered a presentation to a Partnership Practitioner Forum which highlighted an example of good practice and beneficial impact on outcomes using the Multi – Agency Resolution of Professional Disagreements policy

WVT authored an NHS audit (G.P., WVT and HWHCT) to explore child safeguarding referrals made by these providers to children's social care.

Child Exploitation Sub Group – Priority 4

WVT prioritise attendance at all sub-group meetings but liaise with other NHS health representatives to attend otherwise.

Main outputs include:

- Development of a social media platform locally for children and young people
- Promoted CE awareness week in March
- Completed multiagency audits and attended multi-agency task and finish regarding Peer on Peer Abuse guidance
- The outcome of the multi-agency Peer on Peer audit provides a baseline for the published guidance
- Additional focus on peer on peer and harmful sexual behaviour
- Prevent and Disrupt group continues to feed through themes and trends to inform the safety plan and provide an updated overview
- Children's' views are sought by the CE team via RMM and RHI and those are shared with WVT professionals who are involved if the child agrees

The work of the Named Midwife - since the establishment of this post the following outputs have been achieved:

- Orientation programme for newly qualified midwives to ensure they feel confident and knowledgeable with safeguarding process
- Wider implementation of the ICON initiative, which includes education and training on the ICON message
- Routine enquiry for Domestic Abuse in pregnancy/postnatal has improved and is now at 92%
- Policies and procedures are up to date with the most recent updates being to the routine enquiry and domestic abuse in pregnancy, substance misuse in pregnancy and FGM
- Monthly case alerts are communicated with the midwifery and health visiting team to ensure staff are aware of cases due each month and are confident on the safeguarding planning for each individual case
- Regular child abduction drills have been taking place with positive learning identified, the policy/guideline has been updated with multi-disciplinary input

Other Areas of Development / Impact WVT have led/ contributed to

- The development of the Domestic Abuse Hub in MASH
- A quarterly newsletter for all staff trust wide and a specific maternity safeguarding newsletter
- Fabricated and Induced Illness (FII) training to WVT staff has been developed and delivered
- Developed an escalation process for delayed discharges for young people due to lack of suitable placements for those with children's social care or CAMHS requirements
- Developed a more suitable child friendly/ young people friendly environment within our Emergency department
- ICON messages being implemented and development with additional training planned for Midwifery staff and then extended to all staff working with babies and young children.

9. Ask Listen Act – Learning from the Voice of Children and the Experiences of Frontline Practitioners

The Voice of Children (VoC)

The Voice of Children and Young People have continued to influence the work we have done over the last 12 months and in particular over the further lockdown periods across 2021-2022, children's voices has been a priority and very much at the heart of what we do.

HSCP Participation Project

In June 2021 the HSCP received funding from the Department of Education 'Multi-agency Safeguarding: Implementing the Reform' programme, to deliver the children's engagement and participation project.

The aim of the project is to inform the development of a 'system-wide approach to understanding what the issues are for children from their perspectives with support to schools, education providers and other agencies, to operate in a preventative manner by informing practice based on the 'Voice of the Child.'

The project sought to:

- Identify how to gain the views of children
- Identify the concerns around being safe are for children in Herefordshire
- Identify how front line staff can use new methodologies of working with children and to better understand and inform how they work with them – eg use of peer counselling, young inspectors
- Identify improved opportunities for children to disclose any concerns they have for themselves, their peers or their siblings
- To improve and build upon the use of the multiagency self-assessment on child and family participation
- Children would be actively encouraged to share their views on matters that affect them and are therefore more likely to disclose any issues or concerns when they arise

The DFE-funded phase of the project started in September 2021 and concluded on March 31, 2022. The HSCP partnered with local charity No Wrong Door to help deliver the project.

Key Outputs included the following:

- Your Voice Matters survey ran from October 2021 to February 2022, with 300 responses received from young people
- No Wrong Door held 3 focus groups held with young people (11-13, 16-25, NEET)
- Take-over Challenge for young people was run through schools in November 2021
- Presentation of survey findings was made to professionals at Voice of the Child Briefing in March 2022
- Survey and mapping findings were built into the Participation Toolkit to be launched in June 2022-2023
- Engagement & Communications sub-group created and as acted as professional focus group which will continue to embed this work
- Redevelopment of HSCP web design
- Bespoke training course to further promote and embed the practice of the VoC

Project Impact

While much of the impact of the project will be seen in subsequent years, when the Toolkit is embedded, there is evidence of the project having had an impact in fostering a culture-shift through in renewing the value of listening to and acting on the Voice of the Child. Evidence of impact can be seen through:

- The HSCP has established a new Engagement & Communications sub-group, to champion participation and engagement activity for the HSCP.
- The Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan includes ambitions to create opportunities for children and families to feedback and influence service design.
- Herefordshire Council is developing an Engagement and Participation Framework.
- The Feedback loop that was proposed as part of this project (Ask – Listen – Act – Feedback) has been widely accepted and endorsed, with the addition of the "feedback" element showing a change in culture in how we value and communicate the impact of participative activities.

Further, during the course of the project, No Wrong Door (community partner for the delivery of the project), were recognised with a 2nd place award at the National Crimebeat Awards, for their work in enabling the voice and opinions of young people to have an impact on the design and delivery of youth services post-Covid.

Next Steps

The following areas of work are to be progressed in the business year 2022-23. The launch of the:

- ✓ Toolkit
- ✓ Children's micro-site
- ✓ Further training, and resources
- ✓ The Voice of the Child Conference on June 10th 2022

Point of View Podcasts

P.O.V. is a youth voice programme, funded by Esmee Fairbairn Foundation that is making space for rural young people to tell their stories and share their experiences in ways that will create change.

Series overview - The Point of View podcast, or P.O.V. podcast for short, is a series of conversations and interviews featuring incredible young people living in rural England. Each episode features a different host exploring a theme important to the children's lives.

There are 12 episodes in total, recorded over a few months in 2021, listed below are a few of the podcast summaries.

Jeremy Oseman (Participation Ambassador for **young people with care experience in Herefordshire**, shares his hopes and ideas for service improvements and has talked to us about what it's been like to have social workers in his life since he was three years old. He was joined by Debbie, who has been supporting him for more than 10 years.

Finding hope Living with Chronic pain - Chantelle and 18-year-old Elles are talking about their **experiences of living with chronic pain conditions**. As well as discussing the discrimination they've both faced and the realities of navigating the health system, they're sharing their positivity in the face of challenge, their resilience and their hopes for the future.

17-year-old Lola interviews Sarah Melia, who works with West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre, **about safety on our streets** and protecting young people, particularly people who identify as women, from sexual violence.

Talking truth about drugs and alcohol. Harvey is talking to Charlie from Turning Point about **drug and alcohol use among rural young people**. They discuss their own experiences as well as County Lines, which is the movement of illegal drugs often across county borders. Harvey and Charlie are also poets and catch up about what it's like to be young creatives when you live in a rural county.

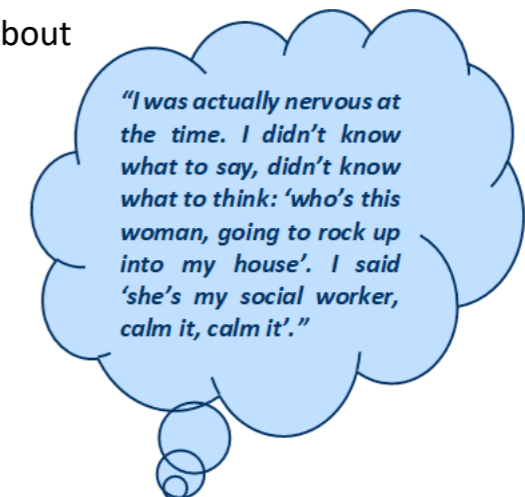
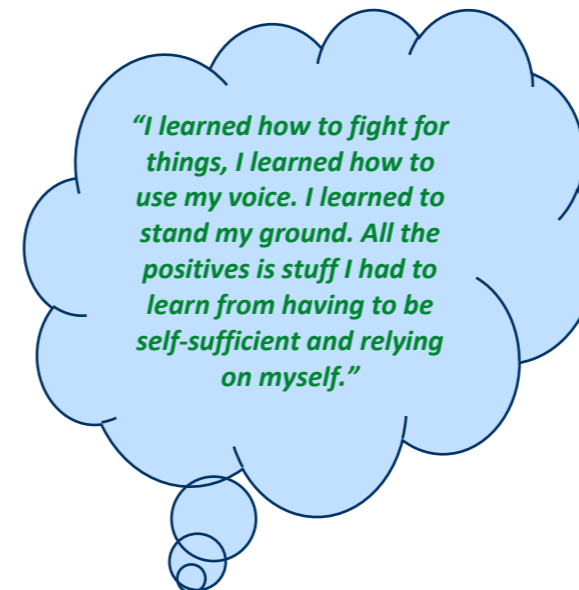
The EPIC value of volunteering. 18-year-old Charlie talks about how volunteering has changed her life. She interviews youth worker Tammy about the EPIC volunteering programme based at Close House, a drop-in youth centre in Hereford.

Where to listen to the podcast

Apple: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/point-of-view/id1607318366>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/0KvFKZs7eLyXTnjWqAvMti>

P.O.V. website: <https://pointofviewrural.com/pov-podcasts>



10. The Experience of Frontline Practitioners

As a Partnership, we have worked really hard to ensure that there has been regular senior leadership engagement with front line staff across all agencies and services throughout the year, during lockdown and COVID 19. We additionally have used creative approaches to remain in touch with the workforce including virtually held meetings, surveys, and Partnership bulletins, as well as the:

Multi-agency Practitioner Forums

The Practitioner Forum gives an opportunity for practitioners to reflect and learn together, provide networking opportunity for practitioners and provides an opportunity for the Partnership to assess how well things are working on the front line.

The Forum have successfully influenced a range of service and practice developments through 2021-2022 this includes the following:

- Developments regarding the MASH and the colocation of key agencies
- The review of the Right Help Right Time thresholds guidance
- The review of the multiagency referral form
- Developed innovative systems and processes for information sharing between agencies virtually during the challenges of lockdown and Covid 19

The Practitioner Forum was established to promote the voice of the practitioner in influencing strategic developments and to ensure that there was a degree of effective challenge from those working on the front line. The forum meets twice a year and is attended by the key strategic leads from across the partnership. This allows for a direct feedback link between multiagency strategic senior management and front line practice. The Forum is also attended by the Independent Chair of the HSCP.

The two Forums convened focused on the following areas of practice

Sept 2021

- Learning from Case Reviews
- Findings from the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- Self-neglect and hoarding
- Recent trends in domestic violence and homicides
- The impact of rurality, elder abuse and child to parent domestic abuse in Herefordshire
- Keep me Safe ...strategy
- Resources to support learning

February 2022

- Project BRAVE: Supporting rough sleepers
- Introducing the new Peer on Peer Abuse multi-agency guidance
- Serious Case Review for Matthew – overview and learning
- Your Voice Matters HSCP Survey – Brief Update
- Substance Use Interventions with Adults and Young People
- Voice of the Child: An Appreciative Enquiry Using Signs of Safety to Listen to Children

The practitioner forum is well attended by practitioners, they have additionally raised issues relating to their needs and interest in learning and development topics. Multiple practitioners have expressed an interest in the following development areas:

- Domestic abuse – impact on and supporting children and survivors
- Mental health issues and support for young people
- Drug/alcohol awareness / county lines and exploitation
- Supporting children with disabilities and additional needs
- Updates on new publications, policies, guidance, learning from reviews

11. Learning from Performance Information, Assurance Activity and Case Reviews

The Quality and Effectiveness Group (Q&E)

The terms of reference (TOR) set out the purpose of the group as:

“To monitor outcomes for children, and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the partnership safeguarding arrangements, and work to ensure findings from the audit and performance monitoring activity translate into actions within individual agencies to improve practice and outcomes for children.”

The group originally reported to SPG and had a wider remit than performance and quality assurance e.g. approve CSPRs and oversee the work of sub groups. The review of the partnership arrangements completed in 2020 recognised that the remit of Q&E sub group was too broad and that Q&E needed to solely focus on performance and quality assurance activity; the creation of Executive Support Group (ESG) facilitated this change. Much of the partnership work has been very ambitious and has been overly complex leading to a lack of focus and progression. The Partnership commissioned the support of the Local Government Association (LGA)

Performance Data

Reviewing some of the partner agency data at the start of 2022 started to identify areas where it was not known what the multi-agency contribution was. Unfortunately the development of the Partnerships performance information has not progressed well. The following information has been gleaned from partner agency data

Issues identified through performance data and which was reported to SPB.

What is working well?

- Impact of plan to increase supervision to health visitors (now 85% was 55%) and school nurses (was 0% now 100%) – Wye Valley NHS Trust
- Routine enquiry (domestic abuse) by midwives – 90% Q4
- Increase in referrals to National Referral Mechanism (9 in total quarter 1-3, and 12 in quarter 4)
- Timeliness for decision making from Early Help, Domestic Abuse hub and MASH have been met

Areas of concern

- Right Help, Right time - what is the story:
 - Increase in demand EH/waiting list for EH support
 - Completion Early Help Assessment by partners - 73% completed by education
 - Rate of re-referrals to MASH (rate not provided – but higher than stat neighbours and WM’s LAs)
 - Rate of children subject to a child protection plan (CPP) is lower than statutory neighbours and other west midlands local authority areas
- Decrease in Persons who Pose a Risk to Children (PPRC) referrals and conversion rate PPRC and peer on peer abuse contacts
- Discrepancy Police and CSC missing data in quarter 1; not resolved by quarter 2 and repeat missing episodes (21% missing again within 72 hours) and return home interviews children placed in county
- Timeliness of health checks for Looked after children - 15% of Initial Health Assessments completed in timeframe
- Significant decrease in Child Exploitation assessments (75, quarter 1 compared to 16, quarter 2)

The challenges

- The lack of technical expertise to support the work of the group

- Quality of multi-agency dataset – gaps in commentary/benchmarking and analysis has impeded the group’s ability to deliver its core purpose
- Lack of substantive chair of audit group meant there was not the required level of direction or accountability; this has been addressed in year and a substantive chair has been appointed
- Delay in regional S11 audit tool being devised; a decision was made to explore opportunities to collaborate on a West Mercia wide footprint. A streamlined s11 audit will take place in 2022-23 to mitigate against the ongoing delay in launching the regional s11 audit tool
- December 21 meeting cancelled as only 2 papers available - not an effective or efficient use of people’s time to meet
- Lack of response from all partners (apart from Hereford and Worcester NHS Trust) to request to provide single agency audit programme
- Up to March 22, there had been little progress made on the ‘walk the floor’ activity
- The arrangements to evaluate the impact of training on practice have not gone live

In summary there is not a robust multi-agency dataset to support the HSCP and limited performance information to plan, review and make decisions about commissioning or decommissioning multi-agency service provision for children in Herefordshire and there is limited line of sight on quality and strength of multi-agency front line practice.

In year, and with effect from January 2022, there was a change of chairperson from Independent Scrutineer to Safeguarding Services Manager, Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health and Care NHS. The subgroup meets quarterly and is now supported by a standing audit group.

In addition in year, a performance group was established through the Business Unit and its purpose was to review and analyse multi-agency data and prepare the performance report that was presented to Q&E, a decision was made to disband the group following a failure to make any real traction on this improvement area.

Audits

Findings from Multiagency Audit into Strategy Meetings

The decision was taken to move from the deep dive audits of a few cases as so many of these had been undertaken as part of the improvement plan and to do a focussed audit of a large number of cases to look at partner involvement in strategy meetings. This has allowed all agencies to consider how they support crucial decision making at this juncture of the safeguarding process and identify where improvements can be made to ensure key information informs decisions.

Findings from multi-agency audit in regard to Peer on Peer Abuse:

In March 2021, an audit of current practice in respect of Peer-on-Peer Abuse was undertaken. The audit findings, presented in September 2021, noted some strengths as well as identifying areas of concern:

- This audit evidenced that the majority of the referrals into MASH in respect of peer-on-peer abuse had been referred at the correct level in accordance with Right Help, Right Time (RHRT) guidance.
- Strategy meetings are not consistently convened for all children, whether victim or alleged perpetrator. This is being followed up through the work of the Child Exploitation group.
- Audit shows schools create safety plans for children when there are concerns about the safety of pupils.

Findings from multi-agency audit in regard to Neglect/under 1’s audit findings:

- There is a lack of engagement by CSC with GPs including invites to Child Protection Conferences (CPCs) and Child in Need (CIN) threshold meetings.

It is acknowledge that as a system, audits demonstrate that the use of the escalation process is not as effective as it should be, and work continues to drive improvements across the partnership:

- For example, in health organisations, escalation is discussed in Supervision.

- In HWHCT, work has been undertaken to understand the difficulties with escalating concerns demonstrated that staff get stuck at the lower level of escalation and keep going at the same level causing all parties to get frustrated. A survey identified this was due to lack confidence with their concern to raise higher.
- In health, safeguarding leads signpost professionals to the Resolution and Professional Disagreement policy and support them with the escalation.
- Through health single agency training and supervision, Practitioners are encouraged to raise any challenges with their line managers who in turn will escalate following the policy.
- Police have raised awareness of the Resolution and Professional Disagreement policy amongst key professionals, including those in MASH, who utilise it.
- Awareness raising by agencies through training, supervision, various work streams, webpages and Safeguarding Partnership Newsletter, of the use of the escalation process using the Resolution of Professional Disagreement policy.

Wye Valley NHS Trust (WVT)

- Promoting use of the levels of need guidance and professional disagreement policy.
- All midwives are advised to seek supervision where a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) is submitted at level 4 and screened at a lower level.
- Work with all midwives to empower them to make professional decisions, judgements and challenge appropriately in the best interest of the child with support from Named Midwife and Trust Safeguarding Team.

HSCP Response

- Peer on peer practice guidance produced, with associated training
- Assurance report from children social care (CSC) on invites and engagement with GPs - NB focused on CPCs.
- Clarity provided and Right Help Right Time (RHRT) training reviewed to reinforce that CIN is included at Level 4 (level of need)

Next Steps

- The new focus of Q&E sub-group has been on small discrete areas so that improvements can be made quickly and impact measured.
- Development session for the Partnership auditors to enhance knowledge, confidence and experience in conducting multi-agency audits
- Strengthen the audit process and the oversight and monitoring arrangements of the actions arising from audits
- HSCP to urgently consider the merit of additional technical support and Q&E members development session to impact on this improvement area

12. The Joint Case Review Group (JCR)

Many agencies work across more than one local authority area and work with different safeguarding adult boards, community safety partnerships and safeguarding children partnerships. Partner Agencies represented at JCR, have responsibilities in respect of Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs), Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs). It is important that the Partnerships and Boards were cited on the overall themes from all reviews and any cross-cutting learning or issues within the system in Herefordshire. Therefore, the JCR Chair, with agreement of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adult Board (HSAB), Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) and Herefordshire Community Safety Partnerships (CSP), provides one report per quarter on behalf of the JCR Subgroup.

Safeguarding Children

During the reporting period 1st April 2021-to 31st March 2022, the Joint Case Review Group (JCR) has conducted one Rapid Review (Rapid Review 1).

There have not been any child safeguarding practice reviews commissioned during this reporting period.

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) published a serious case review and a child safeguarding practice review on February 7th and February 21st respectively. Their publication had been delayed due to on-going criminal proceedings.

Learning and Impact

Rapid Review 1

Following the death of a baby in March 21, a rapid review was completed in April 21 and a decision was made that a CSPR was not required; this decision was supported by the National Panel.

The early single agency learning identified, from the rapid review has been disseminated within agencies so that improvements can be made to the safeguarding system.

- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (HWHCT) have shared the learning from the review, particularly that which related to the Public Health Nurses in Herefordshire, with Worcestershire Public Health Nurses and asked them to use the learning in their practice reflections. A wider discussion was held in the internal Integrated Safeguarding Committee about what needs to trigger a discussion around Positions of Trust – extended to consider those working with adults. Specific training delivered to new associate nurses and named nurses who may take advice calls from staff.
- Following the Rapid Review, Police identified a gap in how intelligence was being managed across the different force areas and as a result the process was changed: ‘Crimestoppers’ are received into the processing unit and assessed. If the Risk appears immediate this will be shared with the Force Control room for the appropriate risk assessment and deployment where required. If the risk is deemed not immediate this will be shared via Police internal crime system (Athena) to the relevant vulnerability team. The team assess and deem appropriate action, such as recording Child/Adult Incident and sharing it to the relevant department and the Harm Assessment Unit for onward sharing to partner agencies for referrals- to ensure no safeguarding concerns are missed.
- Wye Valley NHS Trust- Developed a home visiting trigger list which is a supportive tool to encourage a more thorough assessment of the home environment. This was sent to midwives and health visitors. In addition, at least one visit is completed antenatally for any vulnerable families and ideally with midwife and health visitor.

Further learning related to the Rapid Review process and a JCR leadership reflective session was undertaken to explore how to strengthen how statutory and relevant partners analyse their individual and multi-agency practice in serious child safeguarding cases (See below- Challenges for the JCR Group).

There was additional learning in respect of the multi-agency system. The Scrutineer was asked to chair a multi-agency audit to provide assurance relating to subsequent decision making in relation to other children in the household and improve future multi-agency working in Herefordshire. A series of events were held to seek to understand what had happened and why. A series of recommendations were made to address the findings.

Key learning themes arising from the review are:

1. The value of collaborative working e.g. Joint s47 visits, joint Police and health visit as part of Joint Agency Response (JAR) and strategy discussions to make plans to assess and safeguard children.
2. An agreed approach to assessing and safeguarding children exposed to living in neglectful home conditions - What is agreed best practice?
3. Proportionate and evidence-based practice, decision making and management oversight that delivers a balanced as well as effective safeguarding response to the assessed needs of child/ren.

NB. Due to the delay in undertaking this audit, the learning has only been shared with Partners at year end, therefore, we are unable to evidence improvements or impact at the time of reporting.

CSPR Peer-on-Peer Abuse

Peer on Peer abuse was already an area of focus in Herefordshire prior to the Review. The response at the time was predominantly driven through Education. However, there has since been a shift to a focus on the multi-agency response to Peer-on-Peer Abuse and a Peer-on-Peer Abuse Task and Finish Group was established in 2020.

Recommendation 1

The safeguarding partnership seeks assurance that learning points identified by this review are addressed by the implementation of action plans in response to: (i) learning from previous safeguarding reviews and (ii) to improve the multi-agency response to peer-on-peer abuse. There should be a specific focus on the areas listed below, and further actions agreed should gaps be identified.

- Recording and processing of referrals to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Development of a culture within the MASH to foster collaborative decision making and effective partnership working
- Multi-agency response to peer-on-peer abuse
- Promotion of working practice where professional challenge is fostered and welcomed.
- Effective use of professional escalation and disagreement policy
- Clarity among partners about process to convene a strategy meeting
- Development of critical reflection and managerial oversight when working with young people who have alleged peer-on-peer abuse
- Provision of support to all young people involved in peer-on-peer abuse including alleged perpetrators
- Professionals work creatively to communicate directly with young people rather than through a parent or carer
- All professionals provide an opportunity to see young people alone without parent and carers and ask clear and direct questions when exploring sexual activity
- Education- Revised Peer on Peer guidance published and disseminated to education establishments.

Recommendation 2

The safeguarding partnership seeks assurance that the views and experience of young people involved in peer-on-peer abuse and their parents/carers inform practice improvements.

In the year since these reviews were completed there has been a focus on improvement in areas of work which were highlighted in the reviews:

- Family Front Door (FFD)-Review of Decision making. All Multi-Agency Referral Forms (MARFs) now overseen by a Social Work Manager-Comment from a WVT Team Leader-‘...whilst there has been an increase in Strategy meetings, these do seem to be about the right children.’
- Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)/Decision Making-A MASH Strategic Group has been established. Plans in place to co-locate MASH- building identified and Partners have agreed to fund move.
- Challenge and Escalation-Raised awareness and collate data on use of resolving professional differences policy
- Right Help Right Time (RHRT)-Training has been delivered across the multi-agency workforce. A rolling programme of training continues.
- Culture-professional development work across the system with a focus on Leadership

These areas of improvement are part of the development work which is being undertaken through the various priority work streams of the Partnership. In addition, Neglect is a priority for the Partnership.

SCR Matthew

Matthew was 19 months old when he ingested medication while he was at home in the care of his parents. Whilst Matthew survived the incident, a Serious Case Review (Working Together, 2015) was commissioned due to the serious harm that occurred to Matthew when he ingested the medication.

Recommendations were made respect of:

1. The Framework of need and pathways- understanding and agreement in the application of thresholds of all levels of need and that referral pathways are clear and understood. That both Child in Need and Child Protection Plans and processes are robust, outcome focused and clearly understood and owned by all agencies.
2. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub – to develop one access point, that there is robust and consistent management oversight. That the functions are collaborative and there is a clear and understood collective responsibility. To ensure that information is shared to make effective and safe decisions including in domestic abuse cases. (See CSPR Peer-on-Peer).
3. Neglect – The multi-agency responsibility to identify and respond to all aspects of neglect. To include educational and emotional neglect and the effect on children of non-dependent alcohol use in the parents; domestic abuse; and understanding the role of fathers/males in the household.

How do we know we have made a difference?

Development Work in respect of the recommendations and learning points from SCR Matthew and CSPR Peer-on-Peer Abuse has included the following actions to improve practice and improve outcomes for children:

- Awareness of specialised agencies relating to harmful sexual behaviour and peer on peer abuse is raised amongst external professionals, via the Herefordshire Safeguarding Newsletter and webpages; and dissemination via agencies:
 - West Mercia Women’s Aid Crush Programme is commissioned to support children and young people in developing healthy relationships The group’s purpose is to expand young people’s understanding of unhealthy relationships, the impact of abuse and gender-based bullying. WVT have implemented CRUSH training for the Public Health Nursing Team.
 - Safer Streets 3 Home office funding has been awarded to Herefordshire of £515k. Over £105k is dedicated to a full-time Purple Leaf West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRASASC) worker and a full time Women’s Aid worker to provide inputs to university, sixth form colleges, high schools and some primary year groups. These will feed into the Child Exploitation/Contextual Safeguarding group to shape and influence any learning.
 - Purple Leaf is a resource designed for children and young people aged from 8 to 18 years. The Purple Leaf Education Programme (funded by West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner) increases young people’s awareness of sexual abuse and exploitation, both on and offline. It equips them with the skills, knowledge, and tools to be able to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships and behaviours, including Peer on Peer abuse; and to know where to go for help and support. Training is offered to professionals to enable them to support young people as part of the programme.
- Seeing young people alone:
 - Within education it is standard practice when dealing with disclosures to see the child alone.
 - Health professionals, such as GPs, have been sent the learning regarding creating opportunities to see young people alone and to ask clear and direct questions when exploring sexual activity. Also, to consider pregnancy testing if possibly indicated from questions, and if clinically indicated in relation to abdominal pain/discomfort, urinary issues etc. GP Practices have given examples where this learning is shared in the practices vulnerability meetings and where it has been used to change practice.
 - HWHCT developed protocols around virtual consultations to minimise risk and maximise opportunities for disclosure.
 - WVT have implemented a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) related to pregnancy testing and questioning of young people who present as pregnant.
 - A Herefordshire and Worcestershire wide conference looking at Exploitation was held in May 2021. Feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees making commitments to how they will use in their practice and how they will share the learning.

Domestic Abuse and Domestic Homicide Reviews

- Building on previous learning regarding Domestic Abuse, presentations have been made at the Practitioner Forums held during the last year.
- During the White Ribbon Campaign a multi-agency domestic abuse conference was held using HWCCG funding to commission nationally renowned speakers.
- Piggybacking onto the work HWHCT have done around asking about Domestic Abuse asking if children feel safe at home and looking at interactions within the home for anything that will raise alarm bells. So far has led to an increase in DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour'-based violence) risk assessments being completed.
- Multiagency Domestic Abuse Training has been commissioned.
- Learning briefings, and presentations have been shared at the Practitioner Forums to raise awareness of the learning from SCR Matthew and learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs).

Case Reviews and the Voice of the Child

The voice and views of the child and family feature strongly within the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) process. Where children are not able to express their voice themselves, then their lived experience and 'voice' are threaded throughout the report. The JCR Group ensure that engagement with children and families is central to the review and that their voice and views are sought and properly reflected within the final report and conclusions.

As aforementioned the HSCP was successful in its application to the DfE in July 2020 for a grant to enable the partnership to have a dedicated resource to seek the views and experience of young people to inform its work. This project used a range of online platforms increasing the number of perspectives heard-over 300 children completed the survey. It is too early to evidence impact from this project at the time of writing.

Children and young people along with HSCP Leads took part in a Takeover Challenge Day on December 3rd. Its purpose was to seek the views of children and young people and involve them in the work of the partnership.

National Learning

The influence of the work of the JCR Group on the development of our services to children and young people, and the systems for keeping them safe, is evident in the collective approach to the wider 'Keep Me Safe' strategy:

In September 2021 the National Review Panel published a report titled, '*The myth of invisible men: safeguarding children under 1 from non-accidental injury caused by male carers*'. The review set out the findings from its thematic review on safeguarding children under one from non-accidental injury caused by male carers.

This will be incorporated into our multi-agency approach to safer sleeping and the on-going work related to a *National Panel report: Out of routine: A review of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) in families where the children are considered at risk of significant harm*, published in July 2020.

This will form part of a wider '**Keep Me Safe**' strategy. It is important to note the development of which is joint work with Herefordshire and Worcestershire Child Death Overview Panel and Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership. Colleagues from across both counties have been meeting to develop the strategy and themed work but have ensured key information and free resources have been disseminated to parents and practitioners whilst the funding and additional resources were being sourced. The **ICON Programme - 'Babies Cry, You Can Cope'** - will be purchased by 31st March 2022 and implemented in the following months-free resources are already in use. ICON is a recognised programme with training and resources for multi-agency practitioners to support parents of babies under one with brief interventions.

What do we need to do now?

- Ensure MASH is co-located-Joint work is ongoing with Police, HWCCG and Local authority regarding the IT infrastructure is in place.
- The Partnership acknowledges we need to embed a model of early help across partnership.
- Continue to address peer on peer abuse through multiagency contextual safeguarding (existing work stream of the HSB Group).

- The revised local multi-agency guidance for peer-on-peer abuse was published in December 2021. An implementation plan for awareness raising commenced in January 2022.
- The findings from the Audit, have been taken forward as part of the Improvement work within the Family Front Door (FFD) and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). A follow-up Audit later in 2022 will review whether Strategy meetings are consistently being convened for all children, whether victim or alleged perpetrator.
- Further work will be undertaken through the Quality and Effectiveness subgroup to ascertain whether the learning shared at the Practitioner Forum in February 2022, the updated multi-agency peer-on-peer guidance and other improvement work have led to the desired practice change and to provide evidence of impact.
- Improve engagement with Father's and Men (Linked to the work streams in respect of the Keep Me Safe when I'm Crying Strategy, including ICON; and Dad's Pad and work within the Local Maternity Neonatal System-LMNS).

Challenges for the JCR Group

Throughout the year, the partnership has implemented the recommendations and taken action to address the learning from these reviews, as well as continuing to monitor progress of actions relating to recommendations from earlier reviews. However, implementation, progress, traction and pace has not been where we would have wanted.

The JCR Group, as part of the wider partnership, has faced challenges and difficulties:

Application and interpretation of Working Together 2018 Guidance:

The application and interpretation of the Working Together 2018 guidance around conducting Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, led to challenge from the Independent Scrutineer. The JCR members contributed to a reflective learning and development session, led by the Independent Scrutineer, JCR Chair and Interim Safeguarding Partnership Policy & QA Lead. The session was undertaken to explore how to strengthen how statutory and relevant partners analyse their individual and multi-agency practice in serious child safeguarding cases; to provide clear guidance on roles and responsibilities and improve how all members contributed to the Rapid Review and CSPR processes, in meetings and outside of formal meetings; including contributing to the Rapid Review Report sent to the National Panel.

Action taken to address:

- Governance processes have been strengthened, including updating the Terms of Reference,
- Review and revision of the rapid review and CSPR processes,
- Revision of the media and communications protocol; strengthening the planning for publication of reviews.

Evidencing the effectiveness of learning:

Evidencing the effectiveness of learning from reviews has remained a significant challenge for the partnership. The Partners asked the Scrutineer to focus on this area of work as one of the actions in the Annual Scrutiny Plan. As a result, the Independent Scrutineer reported to Safeguarding Partners, that where the safeguarding partnership has implemented multi-agency recommendations, the evidence to demonstrate progress and impact of changes made due to the learning, was not always evidenced. There was a lack of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of learning from previously published reviews and there was a challenge to the closure of some actions. In addition, many recommendations relate to process, rather than meaningful change to practice that will lead to improvements that have a positive impact for children, young people and families.

The Safeguarding Partners recognised that learning from case reviews, as well as performance data, audit activity, scrutiny activity and feedback from children, young people and families; was not robust. For example, planned audits were overdue, or did not reflect accurately the effectiveness of the safeguarding system, the annual plan of scrutiny had not been developed until mid-2021; and performance data was either of poor quality or not routinely shared by relevant agencies. Therefore, the information could not be triangulated to provide an overall view of the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding system and we were unable to consistently provide evidence of the effectiveness of the learning and improvement cycle, particularly following learning from reviews.

Action taken to address:

- The Quality and Effectiveness Group, has assumed responsibility for oversight and monitoring of the multi-agency recommendations and the action plans from the reviews.
- Developing a meaningful data set has continued to have challenges.
- A new approach is being taken to seek data to establish the level of assurance in the priority areas and using audit to triangulate data and address gaps in data.
- This area of work also has one of the 3 Partners as a 'sponsor', to provide leadership, support and oversight.
- The JCR Chair and Quality and Effectiveness Chair have met and reviewed the multi-agency action plans to ensure there are clear work streams and ownership of actions from reviews. There is one 'Master' copy with all reviews in one place.
- Single-agency recommendations and actions taken are threaded throughout the JCR section of the Annual report. However, the group is working to better evidence partnership effectiveness through improvements made and evidence of impact.
- Improved timeliness of producing and disseminating learning briefings following completion of reviews. These are published on the Safeguarding Partnership webpages and in the Partnership Bulletin.
- Single Agency and Multi-Agency Learning is disseminated by JCR members within their individual agencies/organisations.
- Bite size learning presentations produced (to add depth to the learning briefings) along with presentations at the Practitioner Forum.
- The Section 11 Audit will capture internal governance of individual agencies for dissemination of learning.

Some of these issues were compounded due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of the High Court Judgement on the system (including several changes to Leadership of children's services, interim consultants, difficulties recruiting to the general workforce and resultant changes to the long-standing membership of the JCR group). Whilst these impacted across the partnership, and the work required to support learning from reviews; the Partnership recognises that we need to improve in these areas.

Learning from Child Death Reviews

In line with the new guidance Herefordshire and Worcestershire CDR Partners made arrangements for all deaths of children normally resident in both counties to be reviewed by a single CDOP. From September 2019 the Herefordshire & Worcestershire (H&W) CDOP began operating as a combined CDOP and provided the structural framework for the independent review of all child deaths.

In the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire the current child death review partners are:

- Herefordshire Council (Public Health)
- Worcestershire County Council (Public Health)
- NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group

Child Death Notifications in Herefordshire 2019-2021

- Between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2021, a total of 27 child death notifications were received for Herefordshire resident children.
- 48% of notifications were male and 52% were female.
- 56% of the deaths were expected and 44% were unexpected.

The modifiable factors identified are as follows:

- Smoking (parent/carer) or in household.
- Unsafe sleeping arrangements (such as not adhering to safe sleep guidance, smoking and substance misuse).
- Substance/alcohol misuse (parent/carer).
- Maternal obesity during pregnancy.
- Poor communication and information sharing.

- Quality of service delivery.
- Domestic abuse.

13. Learning and Development

Between April 2021 and end of March 2022, there were over **630 training spaces attended** on HSCP multi-agency safeguarding courses. When events and additional multi-agency courses (Early Help Assessment, Solihull Approach, and Domestic Abuse) were added, there were **1400 training spaces attended**.

In 2021/22, four new courses were added to the HSCP training programme, these were:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Level 2)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Level 3)
- Delivering substance use brief interventions with young people
- Signs of Safety

The HSCP currently offers the following courses to multi-agency professionals, which professionals can book through the online Learning Management System.

HSCP training programme 2021/22

	Course Name	About	Trainers
1	Contextual Safeguarding*	Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding and responding to, young people’s experiences of significant harm beyond their families.	Multi-agency trainer pool, led by Early Help & Child Exploitation team
2	Exploitation and Vulnerability	Understanding child exploitation and modern slavery, how to respond, record and report, and the use of non-victim-blaming language	Funded trainers from West Mercia police
3	Graded Care Profile 2	To understand, recognise and address child neglect, and to instruct delegates on the use of the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) tool.	Multi-agency trainer pool, accredited for GCP2
4	Meet the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Herefordshire's LADO will explain his role, and the policies and procedures involved when an allegation has been made against an adult who is in contact with children while in a position of trust.	LADO
5	Right Help, Right Time	Introducing Herefordshire's Right Help, Right Time procedure and the thresholds need – 4 levels of need that services and professionals will use to ensure the right help is provided at the right time to the right children, young people and families.	Multi-agency trainer pool

6	Signs of Safety 2-day multi-agency course	To get to know the Signs of Safety approach in children's social care	SofS consultant
7	Signs of Safety refresher courses	For multi-agency practitioners who have attended Signs of Safety training, to have a refresher on the basics of the approach and opportunity to discuss and reflect on where they have used the approach with children & families	SofS consultant
8	Delivering Substance Use Brief Interventions for Young People	A discussion-based course learning specific skills to engage young people around their substance use and work with ambivalence.	Turning Point
9	Working Together to Safeguard Children (Level 2)	An introduction to the different types of neglect and abuse, the legislative framework for child safeguarding, making a referral, challenge, curiosity, information-sharing, and much more!	Funded trainers from West Mercia police
10	Working Together to Safeguard Children (Level 3 DSL / Named Person)	A more advanced training on child safeguarding for Designated Safeguarding leads and Named Persons	Funded trainers from West Mercia police

*Contextual Safeguarding courses were cancelled in 2021/22 due to a lack of trainers. A trainer pool has now been identified and the course materials are being reviewed, with an expectation that the course will resume from June 2022. The courses below are also available to multi-agency professionals via the Learning Management System, although they are not HSCP-led.

Additional courses offered by single agencies to multi-agency professionals

	Course Name	Content	Lead
11	Early Help Assessment Support and Guidance	A chance for practitioners to receive support to write an early help assessment via the Early Help Portal.	Early Help
12	Early Help Assessment - Assessment Skills and Guidance	Additional training, following EHA - Support and Guidance, to support practitioners to write good quality Early Help Assessments	Early Help
13	Fabricated and Induced Illness	Full interactive multi agency study day covering all aspects of fabricated and induced illness in practice. Includes current guidance, international practice, legal cases, child practice reviews and case studies.	H&W NHS CCG
14	Solihull Approach 2-day foundation course	For any practitioner working with babies, young children and school-aged children, young people and their families	Public Health
15	Domestic Abuse Multi-agency Training "Curiosity Saves Lives"	For practitioners, professionals and those that wish to learn more about the impact of domestic abuse and how to initially support a victim/ survivor.	Community Safety Partnership

The HSCP, Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, and Community Safety Partnership, also run **learning events** during the year:

- **Practitioner Forums:** 3-4 times per year, ½ day virtual event covering different safeguarding topics to help multi-agency professionals stay informed of new development and reinforce safeguarding messages. Typically attended by 70-100 professionals.
- **White Ribbon Domestic Abuse Conference:** November 2022 Once per year, 1 day virtual event, joint with Worcestershire, about new developments, services and supporting victims of domestic abuse. Typically attended by 150-200 professionals. In 2021, this event will expand its scope to include Violence against Women and Girls (not only domestic abuse).
- **Child Exploitation Conference:** May 2022 Has run once per year for the past 2 years, 1 day virtual event, covering contextual safeguarding topics, new developments, prevention, services and support for victims of child exploitation. Typically attended by 200-250 professionals.
- **Serious Organised Crime Professional Development Day:** July 2021 Led by the Community Safety Partnership, this event highlights the threat serious organised crime poses to vulnerable people, young and old, and how everyone has a responsibility to identify, report and jointly combat serious organised crime. In 2021, 72 professionals attended this event.

The HSCP also publishes learning resources (7-minute learning, learning briefings, etc.) on its website and via the fortnightly Partnership Bulletin, with a mailing list to over 700 contacts. In 2021/22, the HSCP published thematic learning resources about:

- Peer on Peer Abuse
- Routine domestic abuse enquiries
- New partners in a caring role
- Safeguarding children from non-accidental injury caused by male carers
- Abusive Head Trauma in children

Attendance at multi-agency courses and events 2021-22

Events (01-04-2021 to 31-03-2022)	Number of courses run	Attended	Offered Places
Contextual Safeguarding	1	11	20
“Curiosity Saves Lives” – Domestic Abuse Multi-agency Training	4	93	116
Delivering substance use brief interventions: Working with Adults & Young People	3	17	27
Early Help Assessment Support & Guidance	11	59	220
Early Help Assessments - Assessment Skills and Guidance	3	47	120
Exploitation & Vulnerability	8	63	370
Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) Training	6	52	88

Joint Herefordshire and Worcestershire Child Exploitation Conference	1	226	300
LADO Training	6	45	120
Learning Briefing - Voice of the Child	1	37	100
Practitioner Forum - September 2021	1	80	200
Practitioner Forum - February 2022	1	80	200
Right Help Right Time	7	96	140
Signs of Safety Refresher Workshops - For Multi-Agency Professionals	2	4	40
Signs of Safety training for multi-agency professionals	12	186	300
Solihull Approach 2-day Foundation training	4	26	58
White Ribbon Domestic Abuse Conference 2021	1	153	400
Working Together to Safeguard Children – Herefordshire (Level 2)	6	114	180
Working Together to Safeguard Children - Level 3 for Designated Safeguarding Leads / Named Professionals	1	19	23
TOTAL	79	1408	3022

The focus of work through 2022-2023 is to strengthen processes to be able to ascertain the impact of training on improving practice and outcomes for children.

14. HSCP Strategic Priorities and HSCP Business Plan 2022-2023 Year 2

Use the link to see more details in relation to the 3 year [HSCP Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#). The HSCP priorities for the second year of the strategic plan remain the same. A separate business delivery plan has been agreed and will be implemented by the HSCP sub-groups. The following plan on a page summarises the agreed business plan.



15. Evaluation of effectiveness of the HSCP



Kevin Crompton
Independent Scrutineer
From September 2022

As the new Independent Scrutineer my comments below are based on the content of this Annual Review rather than any observation of the partnership at work over the period of this annual review. I have where possible though included views based on evidence from other written documents and regulators reports on the work of the HSCP.

‘The role of the Independent Scrutineer is to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area ...’ (Working Together 2018). The exercise of this function sits alongside the wider system of inspection and regulation of such services. The arrangements for independent scrutiny are made locally by the Safeguarding Partners and in Herefordshire this is through the appointment of an individual. One of the functions of the Independent Scrutineer is to provide scrutiny of the annual report to ensure that it:

- Sets out what partners have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice,
- Evidences the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked-after children and care leavers,
- Provides an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities,
- Details the decisions and actions taken by the partners in the report’s period (or planned to be taken) to implement the recommendations of any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including any resulting improvements,
- Sets out the ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.

Comments on the Effectiveness of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

The partners acknowledge the hard work of all those involved in the work of the partnership particularly in the post covid period which has left some challenges in terms of children’s needs and working patterns.

Overall, the report recognises that there is a need to 're-set' this partnership in order to improve its effectiveness in meeting statutory responsibilities and the overall requirement that local arrangements are effective in safeguarding children. To this end the partnership made changes during the year to governance by revising its sub-group structure and introducing an Executive Support Group – chaired by a senior officer from the partners to be the 'engine room' of the partnership and ensure that the priorities of the safeguarding plan are delivered. The report accepts that the impact of these arrangements has yet to deliver the expectation that the pace of change will accelerate.

There is little analysis of the effectiveness of the partners' arrangements in safeguarding children. There is, for example, no data on attendance at key meetings e.g., Strategy meetings. This makes it difficult to formulate a judgement on effectiveness of the arrangements as described in this report.

Section 8 is however more open and honest about key challenges facing the partnership and provides much more insight into the work in parts of the system. The section on early help and the Conference and Review Service report (including Independent Reviewing Officers) both illustrate some reflection on what is working well; what needs to be improved; and set a useful benchmark for work in 2022/23.

Similarly, the partnership has yet to resolve the issues identified in the review of the Partnership Team concluded in December 2021, indicating that this will be addressed during 2022/23.

Progress against Priorities

This pattern of the outcomes of work done in the 2021/22 year having impact in 2022/23 is repeated in respect of the neglect priority. Whilst the focus provided by a neglect subgroup is an improvement, Partners acknowledge it has yet to make an impact on practice and the lived experience of children, young people, families and carers.

More progress is identified in respect of 'Right help – right time' and that 93% of MASH decisions meet threshold is indicative of improvement during the year. Even so there are further changes identified as being needed to improve the workings of the MASH e.g., co-location of key agencies.

A range of activity is identified against Priority 4 – Child Exploitation, but little is said about the impact of this activity in keeping children and young people safe from exploitation.

Partners' assessment of the effectiveness of arrangements is set out in the report and the picture provided of safeguarding in schools is positive. The use of audits in schools where safeguarding concerns are reported is good practice.

The No Wrong Door project is a really encouraging part of this report as it illustrates that partners recognise the necessity to respond to children and young people's needs particularly during this post Covid period which has seen for example the mental health concerns of young people rise to an all-time high. It is unfortunate to note that the project has now concluded as funding for an extension could not be found.

Individual sections about the safeguarding partners evidence some thinking about what is working well and what needs to change. It is not clear though how many of the activities mentioned in these sections are single rather than multi agency actions deriving from the Working Together 2018 governance arrangements.

The report outlines the work undertaken to listen to and understand the voice of children and young people, includes links to podcasts, and provides other examples of direct feedback from them.

Conclusion

Overall, the report meets the requirement as set out in Working Together 2018 but the key conclusion that I draw is that there is much work either in progress or about to start that is trying to address the challenges to the partnership, some of which are identified in this report. I think the report indicates that partners understand that there is a need to improve the effectiveness of the partnership and whilst some work has commenced this is the beginning of a journey.

The introduction to the report makes mention of the ‘much anticipated Ofsted inspection of children’s services.’ This took place in July 2022 and is outside the timescale for this annual report. Nevertheless, it is relevant to this annual report in that Ofsted’s findings reflect the period covered in this report. Ofsted have judged children’s services to be inadequate in all four areas and make a number of findings that challenge the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements and practices of partners. In brief:

- Partnerships are underdeveloped and ineffective
- Multi agency arrangements governance is ‘weak’
- Multi agency arrangements within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) are not effective
- Partner participation in key processes is not good enough
- Data, including that on the effectiveness of partnership working, is poor
- Collective responsibility for the effectiveness of arrangements needs to be improved

Taken together, these two reports confirm that the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership is not as effective as it should be in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. The partnership will, in 2022-23, need to reflect on whether the priorities identified in this report remain appropriate in the light of the Ofsted report and whether the partnership has the right governance, capacity and capability to effect meaningful and rapid change that will improve the lived experience of children in the County especially those who are most vulnerable.

Kevin Crompton
Independent Scrutineer
From September 2022



Progress Report

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 13th December 2022

Report by: The Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose:

This report provides a brief summary update on issues previously considered by the committee, including responses to information requests made by the committee, updates on resolutions made by the committee, including reports and recommendations to the executive and the Executive Response and executive decision made in respect of scrutiny reports and recommendations.

Recommendation(s)

- i). That the progress report on scrutiny information requests, scrutiny reports and recommendations and other matters raised by the committee be noted.
- ii). That those information requests where a response has been received be agreed as completed and request that any other outstanding items be requested for the next meeting.

Alternative options

The alternative is for the committee not to receive a Progress Report to update on matters since the last meeting, which would provide less clarity and transparency on the progress of issues since the last meeting.

Key considerations

- a) Scrutiny committees have statutory powers to make recommendations to the Executive, as appropriate, and the Cabinet has a statutory duty to respond to scrutiny recommendations. They may also make reports and recommendations to external decision making bodies.
- b) In tracking scrutiny recommendations, it is important that it is clear that the recommendations are addressed to the Cabinet, as the Executive decision making body of the council (or, where appropriate, external agency), and to track the decision of the Cabinet and thereafter the implementation status of the Executive Response and Cabinet decisions.
- c) Scrutiny committees also have the power to request information from council departments and certain other external organisations, from who they should expect a response. Scrutiny committees should be clear why they are requesting information and when they need the response by. Scrutiny committees may therefore wish to keep track of information requested at the previous meeting and for this to be received at the next ordinary meeting of the committee.

Scrutiny Committees at Herefordshire

- 1. The council has five scrutiny committees, established by full Council on 20 May 2022;
 - i). Scrutiny Management Board
 - ii). Environment & Sustainability Scrutiny Committee
 - iii) Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
 - iv).Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
 - v). Health, Care & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.
- 2. The general role of the scrutiny committees is set out in Article 6 – Scrutiny of the Herefordshire Council Constitution, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. Part 3, Section 4 of the Constitution sets out the specific remits for each of the scrutiny committees. This includes a strategic management and coordination functions for the Scrutiny Management Board, as well as the thematic remits of the four other scrutiny committees. The Scrutiny Management Board is also responsible for the scrutiny of corporate cross cutting functions of the council.
- 3. Although scrutiny committees do not have any executive decision making powers, they do have statutory powers to make recommendations to Cabinet, as appropriate, and Cabinet has a statutory duty to respond to scrutiny recommendations. The scrutiny committees may also make reports and recommendations to external decision making bodies.

Progress from the Previous Meeting

Inspection of Herefordshire Children's Services

4. At the last meeting on 11 October 2022 the committee considered the findings of the Ofsted Inspection of Herefordshire Children's Services. With oral evidence from Councillor David Hitchiner – The Leader of the Council, Councillor Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Paul Walker – The Chief Executive, Darryl Freeman - Corporate Director, Children and Young People / Chair of the MASH, and Phil Bullingham - Service Director, Safeguarding, QA and Improvement.
5. The committee also considered a report from the Corporate Director, Children and Young People to present the recently published report detailing the findings of the inspection by Ofsted inspectors of Herefordshire Council children's services in July 2022 and to outline both the action taken immediately and since the inspection to address some of the concerns raised, and the implications of the Statutory Direction issued by the Secretary of State.
6. The committee questioned the Cabinet Member and chief officers on key themes and issues arising from the Ofsted inspection report;-
 - i). Leadership
 - ii). Corporate responsibility
 - iii). MASH - multi-agency response
 - iv). Support services
 - v). Performance and quality assurance
 - vi). Monitoring and tracking
 - vii). Voice of Children and Families.
 - viii). Quality of practice
 - ix). Management
 - x). Workforce
 - xi). The Human Rights Act
 - xii). Scrutiny
7. At the end of the session, the committee resolved that the Committee Work Plan be reviewed at the next meeting to ensure that the work of the Committee is focused on the main areas for improvement in children's services as evidenced by the Ofsted report and the renewed improvement plan. Members of the committee have met informally to review the work plan and a revised work plan is included in the agenda for agreement at the committee meeting on 13th December 2022.
8. The committee also made the following information requests:
 - (a) A copy of the Children and Young People directorate Risk Register;
 - (b) Clarification from the Monitoring Officer regarding what access social workers have to expert legal advice to embed quality in social work practice; and
 - (c) A workforce profile for Herefordshire to benchmark against other local authorities the level of staff churn and the proportion of permanent and interim staff working in social care.
9. This information has been requested from the Children's Services department to be provided to the committee. The response from the Monitoring Officer as been included in the Information Requests tracker table at Appendix 1.

Progress Report

10. At the last meeting, on 11 October 2022, the committee received a Progress Report which provided a brief summary update on issues previously considered, including for the period 2021-2023. Upon reviewing the progress of actions, information requests, recommendations and suggestions, the committee noted the progress on scrutiny information requests, scrutiny reports and recommendations and other matters raised by the committee and resolved that those information requests where a response has been received be agreed as completed.
11. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Information Tracking Report 2022-23 attached at Appendix 1 to this Progress Report provides the information requested and pending responses for the 2022-2023 municipal year.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Annual Work Plan 2022-2023

12. At the last meeting the committee agreed to review its work plan for the rest of the municipal year to ensure that it is refocused on the Ofsted Improvement Plan and it has been reviewed and an updated version include for consideration by the committee on its agenda for 13th December 2022.
13. The Committee may now wish to review its Work Plan for the remainder of the municipal year and in response to the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services to consider how it should prioritise its time and responses.

Previous Requests for Information and Response

14. Attached to the minutes of previous meetings there was an "Action Log" and a "Recommendations Tracker" table to track the progress of information requested by the committee, recommendations made and other actions arising from previous committee resolutions.
15. These requests have been brought together into one table and categorised according to whether they are information requests, recommendations, suggestions or committee actions, attached at Appendix 1: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Resolution Progress Report 2021-22. This table also identifies whether these have been completed.
16. A response to outstanding information requests has been requested to be presented to the committee either at its meeting on 11th October or at the next meeting thereafter to bring this table up to date. It is suggested that the committee agree those items where a response has been received as completed and request that any other outstanding items be requested for the next meeting. Thereafter the committee should discontinue tracking historic requests and recommendations and should focus on receiving information requested for current scrutiny inquiries and the progress of any recommendations made to the Executive (Cabinet or Cabinet Member), including obtaining an Executive Response and executive decisions on any actions agreed to be taken by the Executive in respect of scrutiny recommendations made.

Scrutiny Recommendations and Executive Response

17. In accordance with Part 4 Section 5 of the Herefordshire Council Constitution, the council's scrutiny committees may make recommendations to the full Council or the Cabinet with respect to any functions which are the responsibility of the executive or of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive, or on matters which affect the borough or its inhabitants. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee may also make recommendations to the relevant NHS bodies or relevant health service providers or full Council.
18. Scrutiny committees may not make executive decisions and scrutiny recommendations therefore require consideration and decision by the appropriate decision maker; usually the Cabinet, but also full Council for policy and budgetary decisions and the NHS where it is the decision maker.
19. The Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker table will provide a summary of scrutiny recommendations made during the municipal year, so that the scrutiny committee can track the progress of the recommendations made.
20. The Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker table includes each scrutiny recommendation made and the date it was made, (which will be as is recorded in the committee minutes), identification of the decision maker (e.g. Cabinet), the Executive Response (the actual Cabinet decision), which may be different from the scrutiny recommendation and which will be minuted in the Cabinet minutes, the date the Executive Response/decision was made and an implementation review date.
21. The Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker enables the scrutiny committee to track whether their recommendations have been agreed, what actually was agreed (if different) and ask about any outcomes arising from the scrutiny recommendations, for example, service improvements, value for money savings and outcomes for residents.
22. If the relevant respective executive decisions and actions have been implemented, they will not be referred over to the scrutiny recommendation tracker report for the next municipal year, but that any that have not been implemented may be referred to the scrutiny recommendation tracker for the next committee cycle.

Procedure for Recommendations from Scrutiny Committees

23. Where scrutiny committees make reports or recommendations to the Cabinet, as soon as this has been confirmed, these will be referred to the Cabinet requesting an Executive Response and the issue will be published on the council's Forward Plan. This will instigate the preparation of a report to Cabinet and the necessary consideration of the response, the technical feasibility, financial implications, legal implications and equalities implications etc.
24. Where scrutiny committees make reports or recommendations to full Council (e.g. in the case of policy and budgetary decisions), the same process will be followed, with a report to Cabinet to agree its Executive Response, and thereafter, a report will be prepared for Council for consideration of the scrutiny report and recommendations along with the Cabinet's Response.

25. Where scrutiny committees have powers under their terms of reference to make reports or recommendations external decision makers (e.g. NHS bodies), where they do this, the relevant external decision maker shall be notified in writing, providing them with a copy of the committee's report and recommendations, and requesting a response.
26. Once the Executive Response has been agreed, the scrutiny committee shall receive a report to receive the response and the committee may review implementation of the executive's decisions after such a period as these may reasonably be implemented (review date).

Community Impact

27. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, the council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review. Topics selected for scrutiny should have regard to what matters to residents.

Environmental Impact

28. Whilst this is an update on the work of the scrutiny committees and will in itself have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made in the consideration of Executive decisions and the Executive Responses provided by the Cabinet.

Equality Duty

29. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:
30. 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.
31. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Whilst this is an update on the work of the scrutiny committees and will in itself have minimal equalities impacts, consideration has been made in the consideration of Executive decisions and the Executive Responses provided by the Cabinet.

Resource Implications

32. The costs of the work of the committee will have to be met from existing resources. It should be noted the costs of running scrutiny can be subject to an assessment to support appropriate processes.

33. The councillors' allowance scheme contains provision for co-opted and other non-elected members to claim travel, subsistence and dependant carer's allowances on the same basis as members of the council. If the committee agrees that co-optees should be included in an inquiry they will be entitled to claim allowances.

Legal Implications

34. The council is required to deliver a scrutiny function. The development of a work programme which is focused and reflects those priorities facing Herefordshire will assist the committee and the council to deliver a scrutiny function.
35. The Scrutiny Rules in Part 4 Section 5 of the council's Constitution provide for the setting of a work programme, the reporting of recommendations to Cabinet and the establishment of task and finish groups within the committee's agreed work programme.
36. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report which provides a progress update on recommendations made to Cabinet and subsequent Cabinet decision. Any legal implications arising from Cabinet Decisions will be detailed in the relevant Cabinet report.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
There is a reputational risk to the council if the scrutiny function does not operate effectively.	The arrangements for the development of the work programme should help mitigate this risk.

Consultees

The Chair of the Children and Young People Committee.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Information Requests Tracking Report 2022-23

Background papers

None identified.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Information Requests Tracking Report 2022-23

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 11th October 2022

Subject & Date	Information Request	Department Responsible	Response	status	Date updated
Inspection of Herefordshire Children's Services CYPSC 11th October 2022	(a) A copy of the Children and Young People directorate Risk Register.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	<i>Response pending.</i>		2/11/22
Inspection of Herefordshire Children's Services CYPSC 11th October 2022	(b) Clarification from the Monitoring Officer regarding what access social workers have to expert legal advice to embed quality in social work practice.	Governance and Law, Corporate Services	<p>“Social workers at Herefordshire Council have access to expert legal advice at all times. The Children’s Legal team promote an “open door” policy and have fostered positive working relationships with the service so they are seen as a supportive and approachable legal service.</p> <p>During office hours, the Children’s legal team operates a duty system; this enables social workers to email their legal queries direct to a specific mailbox. This inbox is monitored by a senior member of the legal team and every day a different member of the legal team is “on duty”. If a query is more urgent and requires a phone call for immediate advice, there is a dedicated duty number for social workers to call. The legal team are also available to convene urgent legal planning meetings as appropriate.</p> <p>Presently there are two Heads of Law and three Senior solicitors in the Childcare legal team. This ensures that there is a senior and experienced lawyer available to social workers at all times,. Furthermore, if an issue is complex, and requires a piece of specialist legal advice, a senior member of the team would seek counsel’s opinion. This culture of seeking a second opinion is promoted within the legal team, and is supported by a protocol which requires a second legal opinion to be sought as and when required.</p>		2/11/22

			Furthermore, outside of normal office hours (during the evenings, at weekends and bank holidays), an out of hours legal service is provided by Weightmans solicitors, meaning social workers working outside of hours have the same opportunity to access expert legal advice when necessary".		
Inspection of Herefordshire Children's Services CYPSC 11th October 2022	(c) A workforce profile for Herefordshire to benchmark against other local authorities the level of staff churn and the proportion of permanent and interim staff working in social care.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	<i>Response pending.</i>		2/11/22

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 26 July 2022

Subject & Date	Information Request	Department Responsible	Response	<i>status</i>	<i>Date updated</i>
Children's Social Care and Early Help Improvement Plan 2022-2024 CYPSC 26 July 2022	Baseline key performance measures to enable the Committee to scrutinise delivery of the Improvement Plan be prepared by the Children's Services department for the next meeting.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	<i>The baseline key performance measures to enable the scrutiny committee to scrutinise delivery of the Improvement Plan are anticipated to be included or derived from the Children's Services Improvement Plan report to be considered by the committee on 13th December 2022. Thereafter the Key Measures are proposed to be included on the revised committee work plan.</i>		2/11/22

Key

Items marked with a tick ✓ are marked "completed". Once items have been agreed as completed by the committee they may be removed from future updated versions of the tracker table.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2022-2023

Agreed by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 26th July 2022. *To be agreed, as amended by the committee on 13th December 2022*

Tuesday 26th July 2022

Agenda item	Cabinet Member/s	Officers	External Witnesses
<p>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - Autism provision and nurture hubs To consider the provision offered for children with autism, within the context of the wider services for SEND in Herefordshire, service developments and any new Government directives, any new Government Guidance, key challenges facing SEND services more broadly and the preparedness of this service for a potential external inspection or review.</p>	<p>Councillor Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p>	<p>Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People</p>	
<p>Social Care Recruitment and Retention To consider Social Care Recruitment and Retention.</p>	<p>Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p>	<p>Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People</p>	

Children's Social Care Improvement Plan 2022-2024 - Key measures	Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People	
---	--	---	--

Tuesday 11th October 2022

Agenda item	Cabinet Member/s	Officers	External Witnesses
Inspection of Herefordshire Children's Services To receive the recently published report detailing the findings of the inspection by Ofsted inspectors of Herefordshire Council children's services in July 2022 and to consider the action taken immediately and since the inspection to address some of the concerns raised, and the implications of the Statutory Direction issued by the Secretary of State.	Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People	

Tuesday 13th December 2022

Agenda item	Cabinet Member/s	Officers	External Witnesses
<p>Corporate Parenting To consider the Council’s Corporate Parenting Strategy, the plans for the review of the Strategy in 2023 and opportunities for policy review and development of the strategy with any recommendations to the Cabinet.</p> <p>www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/21412/achieving-the-best-for-our-children-herefordshire-s-corporate-parenting-strategy-2020-23</p> <p><i>Reports deadline: 2nd December 2022</i></p>	<p>Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p>	<p>Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People</p>	<p>Liz Murphy - Independent Chair of Herefordshire Safeguarding Partnership</p>
<p>Children’s Services Improvement Plan To consider the revised Draft Children’s Services Improvement Plan.</p> <p><i>Reports deadline: 2nd December 2022</i></p>	<p>Children’s Services Improvement Plan – Implementation Review Update (Key Measures)</p>	<p>Children’s Services Improvement Plan – Implementation Review Update (Key Measures)</p>	<p>Children’s Services Improvement Plan – Implementation Review Update (Key Measures)</p>
<p>Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership To consider the Annual Report of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (MASA).</p> <p><i>Reports deadline: 2nd December 2022</i></p>	<p>Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p>	<p>Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People</p>	<p>Liz Murphy - Independent Chair of Herefordshire Safeguarding Partnership</p>

		Head of Service Safeguarding and Review, Children and Young People	
--	--	--	--

~~Tuesday 10th January 2023~~

14th February 2023

Agenda item	Cabinet Member/s	Officers	External Witnesses
<p>SEND Strategy</p> <p>To consider Herefordshire Council Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Reports deadline: 2 February 2022</i></p>	Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families	<p>Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People</p> <p>Liz Farr - Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning</p> <p>Les Knight – Head of Additional Needs</p>	<p>The National Autistic Society (NAS)</p> <p>https://nas-herefordshire.co.uk/</p>

<p>SEND – Results of LGA Peer Review & preparedness for a SEND inspection To consider Results of LGA Peer Review & preparedness for a inspection Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Reports deadline: 2 February 2022</i></p>	<p>Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p>	<p>Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People</p> <p>Knight, Les – Head of Additional Needs</p>	<p>The National Autistic Society (NAS)</p> <p>https://nas-herefordshire.co.uk/</p>
<p>Herefordshire Council - Children’s Wellbeing Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2021/2022 To consider the Herefordshire Council - Children’s Wellbeing Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report 2021/2022.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Reports deadline: 2 February 2022</i></p>	<p>Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p>	<p>Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People</p> <p>Head of Service Safeguarding and Review, Children and Young People</p>	<p>Liz Murphy - Independent Chair of Herefordshire Safeguarding Partnership</p>
<p>Children’s Improvement Plan Transformation Funding To consider Children’s Improvement Plan Transformation Funding.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Reports deadline: 2 February 2022</i></p>	<p>Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p>	<p>Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director, Children and Young People</p>	
<p>Children’s Services Improvement Plan – Implementation Review Update (Key Measures)</p>	<p>Diana Toynbee – Cabinet Member for Children and Families</p>	<p>Freeman, Darryl - Corporate Director,</p>	

<i>Reports deadline: 2 February 2022</i>		Children and Young People	
--	--	---------------------------	--

Reserve Items

1. Fostering (and Adoption) Services
2. Family Group Conferences/Family Advocacy Services
3. Signs of Safety
4. Adoption Central England (ACE) report
5. Pastoral Care in Schools.
6. All Ages Commissioning - To consider Herefordshire Council all ages social care commissioning strategy.
7. Placement Sufficiency - To consider the Council's strategies for ensuring sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority are looking after.
8. Herefordshire Council Strategy to Safely Reduce Numbers of Children in Care. To consider the Council's strategy to safely reduce the number of children in care.
9. Proposed Education Legislation (the Education White Paper) - To consider the planned legislative proposals for Education and its impact on local authorities roles in supporting education, multi-academy trusts, school placements planning and schools improvement. MOVED TO LONG LIST from 22nd Nov 2022.
10. Electively Home Educated Children/Children Missing Education. - To consider electively home educated children and children missing education in Herefordshire. MOVED TO LONG LIST from 10th January 2023.
11. Child Exploitation. - To consider Herefordshire Child Exploitation and prevention strategies.