



#TeamWestMidlands

A self-assessment of Local
Authority Children's Services



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Introduction

Herefordshire has high aspirations for all its children and young people. As a partnership and council we are committed to ensuring that the children and young people of Herefordshire have the best start in life and grow up healthy, happy and safe within supportive family environments.

We have been improving our delivery of effective safeguarding over a number of years and it continues to be a key priority for the council and for partners. We have seen significant improvement in a range of children's outcomes over the past three years, particularly in relation to a number of education measures. Herefordshire is a rural, unitary authority with a population dispersed between the city, five market towns and a large number of villages. Children form 20% of the population, numbering 40,000, and in June 2017 303 were looked after, 117 subject to child protection plans and 605 benefitting from a common assessment.

There are 16 secondary schools (including 1 all through school and 1 KS4 only school) and 78 primary schools, with 31 academies (including 2 free schools). There are 4 special schools, (2 of which are academies) and 1 PRU.

Early Years provision consists of over 150 providers with a mix of private, voluntary and independent settings including governor run provision, primary schools and 87 childminders. There are 8 children's centres and 15 staff employed to deliver children's centre services; there is one further commissioned children's centre.

Herefordshire Council was judged as requires improvement by Ofsted in 2014 and this following a judgement of inadequate in 2011. The local authority is committed to continuing its improvement journey and aspires to be good when next inspected. Since January 2016 the numbers of children subject to child protection plans and also those deemed to be children in need (s17) have been sustainably reduced to appropriate levels for our population. The number of looked after children continues to be higher than would be expected for our population, with 85 per 10,000 in contrast with our statistical neighbours' average of 50. During 2016 a 0-25 SEND Service was created and a subsequent Ofsted/CQC inspection reported positively on the outcomes for young people. The local authority currently maintains 865 statements of SEN or Education, Health and Care Plans.

As part of its commitment to improvement, Herefordshire has commissioned two LGA peer reviews. A short case file review and a longer safeguarding review. The short review took place in June 2017 and the full review is going to be scheduled for the beginning of 2018. The findings of the June review are appended. In essence it found motivated staff who knew the children they worked with well and had clear outcomes in mind for their work however this was not consistently reflected in case recording. An explicit relationship between referral, chronology, assessment planning, review and outcome was not evidenced.

Elected members are closely involved in the directorate's improvement. Weekly meetings take place between the cabinet lead member and the director and monthly performance challenge sessions have been in place for several years. The monthly meetings involve all political group leaders, the chief executive of the council and the directorate's senior management team. During 2016 performance scorecards were developed for children's social care and these have assisted both the member challenge sessions and the dissemination of key performance information to social work teams. Further work is currently underway to develop monthly reports on key areas of work as well as team scorecards.

Alongside Hereford's Safeguarding Children Board there is a Children and Young People's Partnership Board which oversees the delivery of an improvement plan and is chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Wellbeing.

Children's Social Care is predominantly part of the Safeguarding and Family Support Division. It includes a MASH, two assessment teams that also hold s17 cases, two child protection and court teams, one looked after children team, one 16+ team, two fostering teams and an adoption team. Two teams of family support workers support these teams. The children with a disability team is part of the 0-25 SEND service which is managed by the Head of Additional Needs within the Education and Commissioning Division. Our early help offer is overseen by our early help manager within the Education and Commissioning Directorate. Education and Commissioning is also responsible for fulfilling local authority duties regarding promoting

safeguarding and the welfare of all children in early year's settings, schools and colleges, school improvement including safeguarding, joint commission, early year's sufficiency and children centre services, targeted early help services.

1. The Local Context

- 1.1 Herefordshire has a population of 189,300. 24% of the population are aged over 65 compared to 18% nationally. Between 2001 and 2016 the population grew by 8% per annum compared with 12% nationally. This was predominantly due to inward migration.
- 1.2 The population aged over 65 is expected to grow by 3% per annum. Herefordshire's mortality rates on all indicators are above the England average. Dental health in children under five is below the England average.
- 1.3 Life expectancy is 80 for males and 83 for females. This is above the England average.
- 1.4 The local unemployment rate is 3.6% which is below the WM of 5.4% and UK 4.7% (NOMIS Office of National statistics annual population survey April 16-March 17) age 16-64. Our youth claimant count as at August 2017 for 18-24 year olds is 1.9% which is below that of the West Midlands of 3.4% and the England average of 2.8% (NOMIS). Our youth are often facing low level mental health issues (including anxiety and depression).
- 1.5 Average wages in the county are 13% lower than across the West Midlands and 18% lower than England as a whole. Women in Herefordshire earn 16% less than their male colleagues (Herefordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2017).

2. Outcome from Former Ofsted Inspections

- 2.1 Inspection of Herefordshire safeguarding arrangements for the protection of children took place in April 2014. The local authority was judged to be 'requires improvement'.
- 2.2 Private/Independent Children's Homes: In addition to those operated by the local authority, there are eight children's homes operated by private/independent providers in the locality. Overall effectiveness at the last full inspection as shown (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/quarterly-management-information-ofsteds-childrens-homes-inspection-outcomes>) were judged to be

Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	No Rating Specified	Adequate	Inadequate
0	5	2	0	0	1

- 2.3 Since the last Ofsted Inspection in April 2014, 0 serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted, 2 serious case reviews have been completed and a further 0 have been commissioned.
- 2.4 **SEND Inspection:** Herefordshire experienced a very positive SEND area inspection in 2016 with a significant number of strengths identified. Clear leadership, positive joint working leading to improved outcomes, timeliness (notably higher than the English average for EHC Plans), clear pathways and processes including transition to adulthood, high quality specialist provision, CAMHS was highlighted as exemplary in relation to time taken from referral to assessment, assessment to treatment. Areas for development included developing and ensuring that the whole system owned the SEND agenda, that EHC Plans and processes fully reflected multi-disciplinary and multi-agency involvement to improve outcomes, widening the understanding of need in older years and enabling access to a wider range of opportunities transitioning into adulthood. Herefordshire also needs to do more to listen to parental views, enable easy access to the local offer.

Joint Targeted Inspections:

- JTAI frameworks shared and discussed with operational managers, performance leads and the HSCB.
- Community Safety Partnership undertook a 'dummy' JTAI on Domestic Abuse to highlight strengths and challenges; findings shared with HSCB.
- HSCB undertook Neglect multi-agency audit to explore current situation and likely JTAI findings. Recommendations shared with HSCB and member agencies.
- HSCB undertook multi-agency Early Help Audit to assess wider professional understanding of neglect and domestic abuse. Findings subject to HSCB discussion.
- Data-cleansing has been underway for some months to ensure that accurate information available for JTAI.
- HSCB seeking assurance from police on domestic abuse triage and notification practice

3 Management

- 3.1 Herefordshire places children at the heart of the council's approach and keeping children safe and giving them the best start in life is a corporate priority. Herefordshire has a director of children's wellbeing, supported by two assistant directors and staffing to deliver statutory responsibilities. Organisational structures are attached.

4 Children and Young People

- 4.1 A total of 40,000 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Herefordshire. This is approximately 21% of the total population in the area.
- 4.2 Approximately 15% of the local authority's children and young people (aged 0 – 17) are living in poverty¹. This is lower than the national average.
- 4.3 The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
- Primary schools (state funded nursery and primary schools) – 8.7% (the England average is 14.7%)¹
 - Secondary schools (state funded secondary)² -7.5% (the national average is 13.8%)
- 4.4 Children and young people from BME groups account for 6.5% of all children living in the area compared with 25.2% in England³. Approximately 11.0% of school children⁴ are from a BME group compared with 30.7% in England. The largest BME group of children and young people in the area are of White Eastern European ethnic group.
- 4.5 The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
- Primary schools – 9.0% (the England average is 20.6%)⁵
 - Secondary schools – 5.4% (the England average is 16.2%)⁶

¹ SFR28_2017 based on Performance Tables methodology: Pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals who have full time attendance and are aged 15 or under, or pupils who have part time attendance and are aged between 5 and 15.

² Includes middle/all through schools as deemed as well as city technology colleges and all secondary academies, including free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools

³ ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 22 September 2017] Herefordshire 0-17yrs 2011 National Census. England 0-17yrs 2011 National Census

⁴ Pupils of compulsory school age

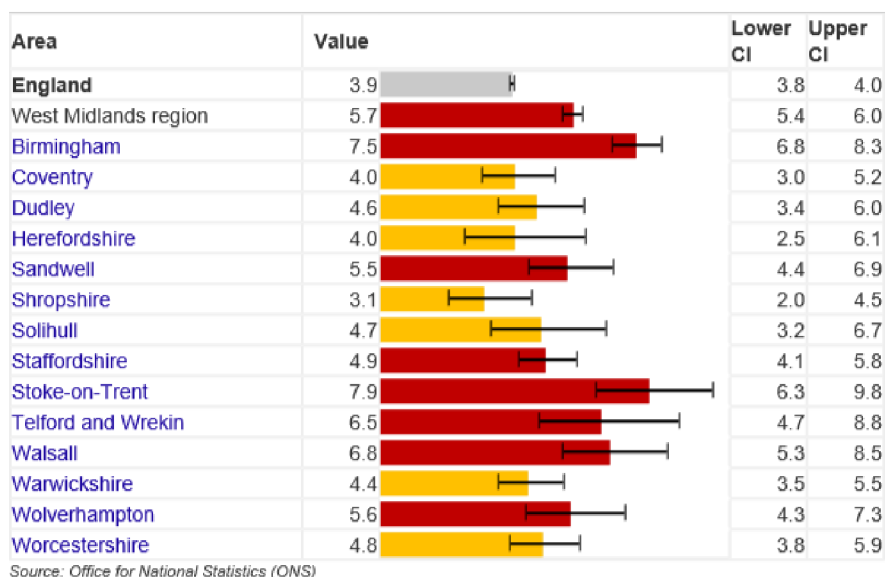
⁵ SFR28_2017 includes primary academies and free schools. Pupils of compulsory school age

⁶ SFR28_2017 includes city technology colleges and all secondary academies, including free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools. Pupils of compulsory school age

5 Health

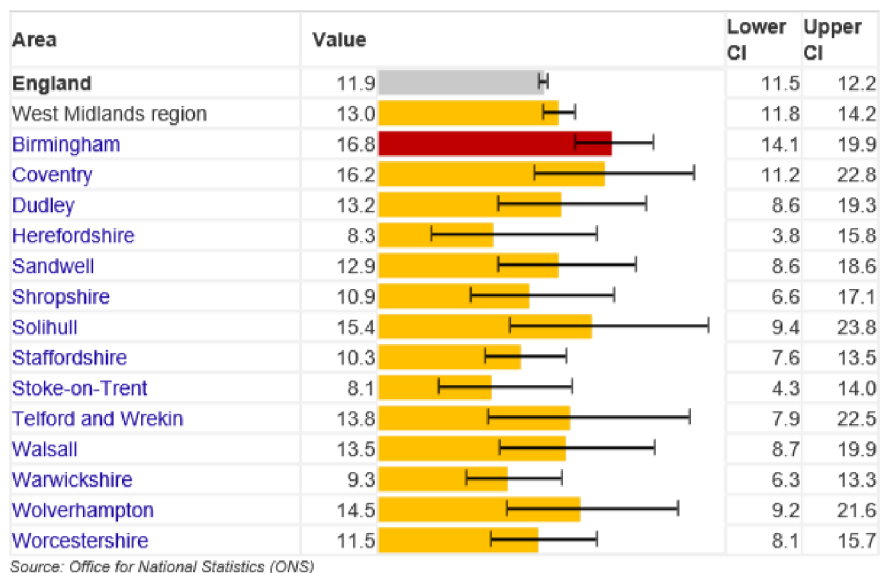
5.1 The health and wellbeing of children in Herefordshire is generally worse than the England average (information obtained from <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-overview>)

5.2 Infant mortality rates and comparison to national data (<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-overview> crude rate per 1000)



5.3 Analysis of Infant mortality is being undertaken as part of the Local Maternity Systems review and actions will be identified. Child mortality rates and comparison to national data (<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-overview> crude rate per 1000)

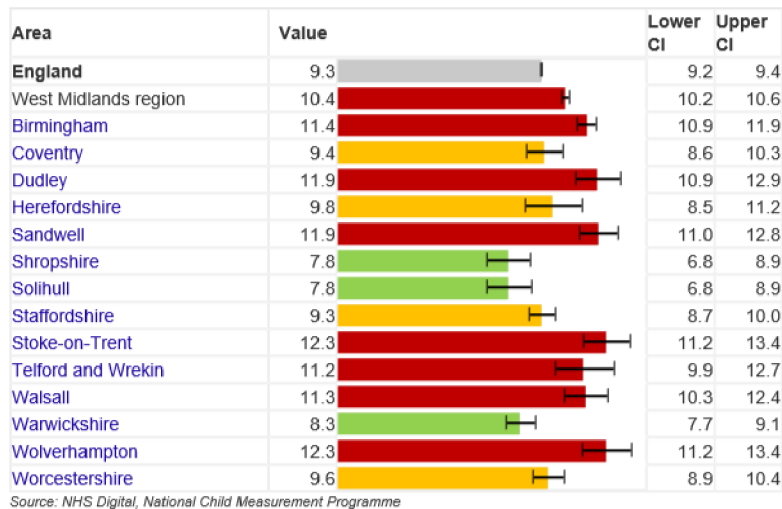
5.4 Child mortality rates and comparisons to national data (<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-overview> crude rate per 1000)



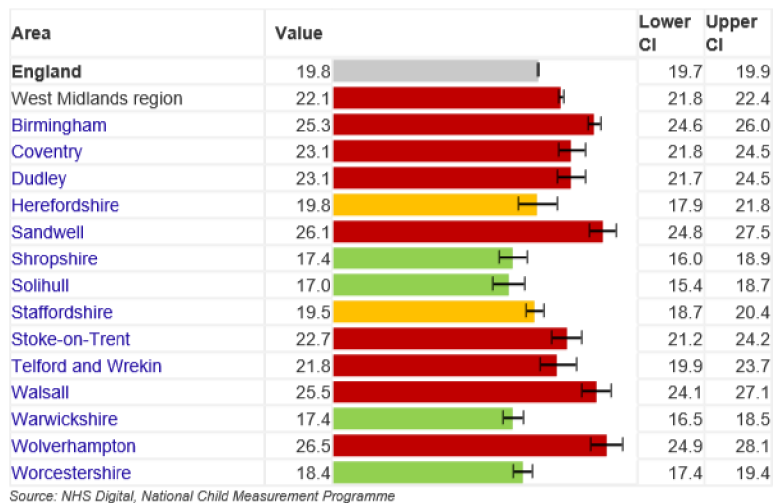
5.5 Accident prevention has a large part to play in preventing childhood injury and deaths

5.6 Child obesity rates and comparison to national data

4 – 5 Year olds (<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-overview-crude-rate-per-1000>)

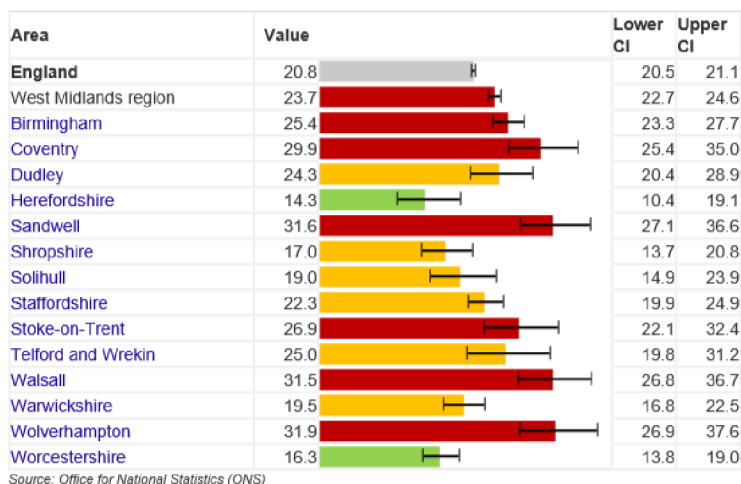


10 -11 year olds (<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-overview-crude-rate-per-1000>)



5.7 Overweight and very overweight figures for both YR and Y6 are of concern and there are plans in place to address this, including support for families and schools

5.8 Under 18 conception rates and comparison to national data (<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-overview-crude-rate-per-1000>)



5.9 Analysis of under 18 conception rates is ongoing and there are plans in place to address this.

6 Education (Early Years/Childcare/Post 16)

6.1 The Direction of Travel

Herefordshire has seen strong improvement in a range of education measures over the past three years. The local authority has adopted a radically different model of improvement that is founded on the vision for children and young people, set out in a strategy and Herefordshire School Improvement Framework which was co-produced with schools and includes a risk assessment approach. The underlying principle is that schools are responsible for their own improvement, the local authority acts as the champion for all children in Herefordshire, whatever setting they are educated in, and has the statutory duty to ensure high quality education standards are in place. As a local authority we have focused on attainment as the key measure, rather than Ofsted judgements of settings and the primary Ofsted focus on progress. This has been particularly true with our focus on the outcomes for vulnerable and minority groups compared to their peers. Over the past three years there has been some improvement in narrowing the gap at different key stages for pupils eligible for free school meals, whilst pupils with EAL have seen strong improvements.

6.2 Areas where we are making most progress

- 75% good level of development in 2017. Now top quartile performance, from being at national average two years ago.
- Key Stage 1 reading, writing, maths improved from 2016 and above national average
- 84% working at or above phonics screening threshold in 2017, above national average, top quartile.
- Key Stage 2 has trajectory of improvement
- Key Stage 4 students achieving grade 4+ in English and maths
- Herefordshire looked after children achieved above national and West Midlands average in KS4 results. A higher proportion than national and West Midlands were entered for EBacc subjects

6.3 Areas for further development

- Key Stage 2 Maths
- Herefordshire looked after children, key stage 1 and 2
- Key Stage 4 Attainment 8
- Free School Meals gap

6.4 The table below includes outcomes from inspection activity as of Sept 17 or July 17. The ambition is that by March 2018, 88% of schools in the locality will be rated Good or better when inspected.

	Total number inspected	Outstanding		Good		Requires improvement		Inadequate		% Good or Better
		Schools	Total No. of Pupils % of schools	Schools	Total No. of Pupils % of schools	Schools	Total No. of Pupils % of schools	Schools	Total No. of Pupils % of schools	
Nursery education funded settings (@July2017)	193	48	28.6%	136	59.1%	8	3.8%	1	0.1%	87.7%
Primary	77	16	20.8%	57	74.0%	4	5.2%	0	0.0%	94.8%
Secondary	16	2	12.5%	8	50.0%	4	25.0%	2	12.5%	62.5%
PRU	1			1	100%					100.0%
Special Schools	4	2	50.0%	2	50.0%					100.0%

6.5 Special Educational Needs (SEND)

6.5.1 The direction of travel

Positive with a significant number of strengths, clear awareness of what needs to improve and externally verified by Ofsted/CQC inspection in 2016.

Children with disabilities (additional needs service)

The Additional Needs Service is a multi-disciplinary service that has a focus on enabling children and young people with impairments to achieve the best start in life and to stay safe.

The service consists of children with disabilities social care team (CWD Team), the SEN Team, an independent travel team, an educational psychology team, specialist teachers for physical and sensory impairment as well as commissioning provision for specialist education places and services for social, emotional and mental health needs.

The CWD Team works with children with impairments along with their families at levels 2, 3 and 4 of the HSCB Levels of Need. The team assesses the needs of the child and family to determine whether the family is eligible for a service which will mitigate the impact of the child's disability. For those families who are assessed as requiring the intervention of a social worker, the family will be encouraged to make changes which will lead to improved outcomes for the child(ren). This work might also include some direct work from one of the team's family support workers. Where families are unable to make the necessary changes, the team will work with the Council's legal team and the courts to ensure that the child's well-being is safeguarded.

HSCB Level 2	HSCB Level 3	HSCB Level 4
Single agency response	Multi-agency response	Immediate Intervention or specialist assessment required because there is the risk of significant harm or impairment without the provision of services
Service from targeted short break with CWD team determining exceptions	Assessed for a short break via Child and family Assessment by a social worker. Case held by Family Support worker	Assessed as requiring a social worker – Statutory CIN, CP or LAC Plan
Ongoing until 18 unless demonstrated that it is not required	Reviewed as part of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Annual Review organised by school	Reviewed via relevant statutory review at required interval

6.5.2 Areas where we are making most progress

Areas of strength

- What impact is your service having for the children and young people of Herefordshire?
 - The team know their cases well and this ensures that the risks are assessed and mitigated. Management oversight at team manager level is a strength.
 - Procedures and scheme of delegation are followed consistently, e.g. Use of PLO or requests for short breaks. This ensures that appropriate oversight of decision-making.
 - Providing continuity of worker to families which allows a more complete picture when assessing need.
 - Encouraging families through expectations of good parenting and timely support to mitigate the impact of the child's disability on family life.
 - Greater transparency for families as procedures and resource allocation is developed and published.
 - Work to shift in the delivery of short breaks from a smaller number of families getting significant (and sometimes disproportionately high) numbers of overnight short breaks to a situation of earlier intervention with higher numbers of families getting support at an earlier stage in order that difficulties are not allowed to
 - Working alongside education statutory assessment team has enabled improved exchange of information.

- What outcomes is your service delivering for the children and young people of Herefordshire?
 - A number of children who have been experiencing chronic neglect over a number of years have had resolutions to their cases and either the family situation has improved or they have been taken into care.
 - Successful packages of support to families leading to a greater stability of family life.
 - More families are getting packages of support that are matched to the assessed needs of their family.
 - Improved sharing of information leading to greater accuracy of assessment which results in improved planning for the child
- What evidence do you have? (please describe or attach)
 - Reduction in staff turnover on individual cases (all staff except one on permanent contracts with permanent team manager- previous situation was only one permanent member of staff and 6 team managers in a 3 year period)
 - Changing pattern of short breaks offered and taken up. Until 2016 a number of families had over 75 overnight nights per year. Direct Payment packages offering families greater choice and control increased from 29 in 2013 to 52 in 2017. Overall number of families receiving a short break just over 100.
 - All case audits conducted by HOS demonstrate appropriate levels of manager oversight.
 - Low level of complaints

6.5.3 Areas for further development

Areas of improvement

- What does your service need to improve for the children and young people of Herefordshire?
 1. Timeliness of re-assessments and visits to children and completion of chronologies.

	Dec-16	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17
Team caseload	177	170	175	171
Open assessments out of timescales	65%	31%	21%	24%
Review assessments out of timescales	47%	52%	53%	52%
Cases with no chronologies	49%	34%	33%	30%
No up-to-date chronology (within 6 mths)	81%	75%	74%	71%
Visits out of timescales	58%	34%	39%	36%
Meetings out of timescales	37%	23%	23%	18%
Supervision records out of timescales	58%	39%	42%	33%

The table above demonstrates progress in 6 of the 7 indicators over a 6 month period except for review assessments out of timescale.

2. Implementing changes to procedures to incorporate some children receiving a service under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Act (1970). This includes a change in referral route through a multi-agency panel rather than through the safeguarding hub (MASH), the publishing of the procedures, cases being worked by family support workers and reviewing annually through the EHC Plan review. The aim is to arrive at a proportionate response in relation to need which should result in a higher proportion of time being available to work with the families with the greatest needs.
3. SMARTer objectives in statutory plans.
4. Ensuring that the voice of the child is captured more fully in assessments

- How will you know that you have achieved your identified improvements?
 1. Management reports will show the improvement in timeliness of assessments and visits
 2. Evidence of new procedures in place and being followed.
 3. Ongoing audit of cases

Areas of concern

- What areas of concern do you have in relation to your service?
 1. Recruitment of experienced social workers (including agency workers where necessary) has been problematic. New recruitment has been limited to 'grow your own' and variable quality of agency workers. This has an impact on caseloads within the team and on the few experienced workers within the team in particular and limits the recording of work on the system.
 2. Multi-agency working – There has been a lack of a shared understanding of risk and responsibility between the CWD Team and a number of other agencies. This has resulted in delay in gathering evidence and agreeing a coherent position when taking cases through the court route.
- How are you proposing to mitigate against these areas of concern?
 1. Continuing to use the recruitment team to fill the remaining vacancy and build up the experience of newly qualified staff in order that they gain confidence.
 2. Meeting with other agencies to develop greater shared understanding of different perspectives. This will include learning reviews of particular cases.
- How will this impact on your service delivery for the children and young people of Herefordshire?
 1. If caseloads remain high, there is a risk that staff will not be able to meet statutory timescales for visits and reviews which will lead to a poorer service for children and their families. In a small number of cases, this could increase the risk to individual children. There is also a risk to the well-being of staff and a threat to the stability of the team, which in turn will result in more changes of social worker experienced by the family.
 2. There is a risk that coherent court proceedings will not be possible if the evidence provided is contradictory. This could result in children continuing to live in neglectful or abusive situations.

6.6 Education Outcomes

6.6.1 Early Years Foundation Stage

- In 2017, 75% of pupils at the end of reception year were assessed as reaching 'a good level of development'; this was well above the national average. Over the past 3 years the percentage of pupils achieving a good level of development has steadily improved from below national in 2015 (65.1%) to top quartile in 2016.
- Data by pupil characteristics is not yet available from the DfE for 2017. Outcomes for disadvantaged (FSM) children in Herefordshire were ranked in the 3rd quartile of all local authorities in 2016; the percentage of boys achieving a good level of development was in the top quartile.

6.6.2 Key Stage 1

In 2017 outcomes at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics all exceeded the provisional national figures and were an improvement on Herefordshire's performance in the first year of the new tests in 2016.

- Reading: 77.8% - 2017; 75.5% - 2016
- Writing: 72.2% - 2017, 67.8% - 2016
- Maths: 77.1% - 2017, 74.4% - 2016

The percentage of pupils working at or above the phonics screening threshold in 2017 at 83.6% was above the emerging national figure. This is a considerable improvement on Herefordshire's performance in phonics (below national average in 2015) following a significant school improvement initiative with a local teaching school and a neighbouring local authority.

Data by pupil characteristics is not yet available from the DfE for 2017. Outcomes for FSM pupils in phonics testing were very low in 2016 and ranked in the bottom quartile of all local authorities. Other vulnerable groups achieved better results: EAL pupils and pupils on SEN support all achieved top quartile results in phonics.

6.6.3 Key Stage 2

At Key Stage 2 outcomes in reading and writing were above the national average in 2017. Disappointingly, outcomes in mathematics were below national and mathematics remains a key focus. Overall, the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with national average (60%), as it was in 2016 (52%). Nevertheless, the county's figure for progress in mathematics was positive (+0.1); pupils' progress in reading (+1) and writing (+1.2) was also positive.

In 2016 the percentage of boys achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics ranked in the second quartile of all local authorities. Girls in Herefordshire, by contrast, performed in the bottom quartile nationally. Disadvantaged and FSM pupils' achievement ranked in the 3rd quartile.

6.6.4 Key Stage 4

In 2017, the percentage of students at KS4 achieving a grade 4+ in both English and mathematics (65.4%) is comparing favourably with the emerging national figure. The numbers achieving a strong pass in both subjects (44.5%) is also likely to be in line with the national average. In other key performance indicators:

- 4+ En - 77.4%
- 5+ En - 62.7%
- 4+ ma - 70.8%
- 5+ ma - 49.9%
- Attainment 8 – 46
- Ebacc – 22.9%

Pupil characteristic data is not yet available from the DfE for 2017. In 2016, FSM pupils achieved results which ranked Herefordshire in the 2nd quartile for both attainment and progress 8. Herefordshire was ranked first for FSM attainment when compared with its statistical neighbours and second for FSM progress. The number of FSM students in Herefordshire achieving GCSEs in English and maths was in the top quartile nationally. Gaps between FSM and non FSM students at KS4 have improved over time and are now in line with national. EAL and SEN support students made very good rates of progress at KS4 in 2016; SEN support attainment 8 figure ranked in the second quartile of all local authorities.

6.6.5 Key Strengths

- Outcomes in EYFS, Y1 phonics, KS1 (re, wr, ma) and KS2 (re, wr) have all demonstrated steady improvement over the past 3 years and are now above national average.
- Students' performance at KS4 is typically in line with the national average at most key assessment points.
- Although gaps remain, at KS4 FSM students in Herefordshire are achieving top quartile results in English and mathematics when compared with the same group nationally.

6.6.6 Areas for development

- Below national outcomes in maths at KS2 has prevented the percentage of children achieving the expected standard in re, wr, ma to exceed the national average over the past two years.
- Students' achievement across the wider range of subjects has not been as strong at KS4 as in English and mathematics. The percentage achieving the EBacc was below the emerging national average in 2017. In 2016 students' outcomes in the 'open bucket' were an area for development.
- The gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged children and non-disadvantaged children at most key assessment points are wider in Herefordshire than the same gaps nationally. FSM achievement at KS1 of particular concern.
- Disparities between the achievement of boys and girls fluctuate year on year and at different key assessment points.

6.7 Education Outcomes- Looked after Children (see 25)

NB: In Herefordshire the numbers of LAC at each key assessment point are very small. This leads to significant fluctuation in percentage outcomes year on year. A number of Herefordshire looked after children are placed in schools in Wales and therefore do not appear in the data below.

6.7.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Following significant delay, the roll-out of the E-PEP system by Herefordshire Council is now underway. It is anticipated that this will improve the workload of the Virtual School team and better support their ability to challenge schools on the attainment and progress of looked after children.
- Herefordshire LAC achieved above the national and West Midlands average in 2016 KS4 GCSE results (5 GCSEs C+ including English and Maths) with 23.5% achieving this standard. A higher proportion of Herefordshire LAC were entered for EBacc subjects than LAC nationally and across the West Midlands

Areas of improvement

- Ensuring that all PEPs are of a consistently high quality with appropriately challenging targets.
- Ensuring that schools are held accountable for the use of Pupil Premium Plus
- Enabling children placed out of authority can access Children in Care Council meetings remotely
- Herefordshire's looked after children performed below average in 2016 at KS1 and 2

6.7.2 Areas for further development

It is anticipated that the E-PEP system will improve the workload of the looked-after team and better support their ability to challenge schools on the attainment and progress of looked after children.

6.7.3 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

In 2017 57.1% of looked after children at Early Years Foundation Stage attained a 'good level of development' (7 pupils in cohort.) This was a similar success rate to the previous year when 50% achieved GLD (8 in cohort.)

6.7.4 Key Stage 1

In 2017 58.3% achieved the expected standard in Y1 phonics testing (12 in cohort.) In 2016 100% achieved the phonics standard (3 pupils in cohort.) In KS1 assessments in reading, writing and mathematics, 16.7% achieved the expected standard (6 in cohort.)

6.7.5 Key Stage 2

In 2017 27.3% achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics (11 pupils in cohort.) This was the same achievement rate and cohort size as in 2016.

6.7.6 Key Stage 4

In 2017 10% achieved GCSE passes in English and maths (10 pupils in cohort); 40% achieved either GCSE English or GCSE maths but not both together. All of the KS4 cohort commenced college or training.

6.8 School attendance

The overall absence rate for primary schools reduced from 3.9% in 2014-15 to 3.8% in 2015-16. Across England the rate remained constant at 4.0%

The percentage of primary pupils classed as persistent absentees have increased from 1.6% in 2014-15 to 6.6% in 2015-16. Across England the same rate increased from 2.1% to 8.2%.

The overall absence rate for secondary schools has reduced from 5.3% in 2014-15 to 5.0% in 2015-16. Across England the rate reduced from 5.3% in 2014-15 to 5.2% in 2015-16.

The percentage of secondary pupils classed as persistent absentees have increased from 4.8% in 2014-15 to 12.5% in 2015-16. Across England the same rate increased from 5.4% to 13.1%

School Exclusions

6.8.1 Areas where we are making most progress

Herefordshire has been in the upper quartile for permanent exclusions for the 4 years up to the academic year 2015-16. In 2015-16 the Herefordshire rate was 0.05% compared to the England average of 0.08%.

For fixed-term exclusions, Herefordshire has been consistently performed within the 1st and 2nd quartile over the same 4 year period. In 2015-16, the Herefordshire rate was 3.45% compared to the England average of 4.29%.

6.8.2 Areas for further development

We will be working with individual secondary schools with the historically highest rates of permanent exclusion to ensure that they are able to prevent exclusions in the future

6.9 Post 16

6.9.1 Areas where we are making most progress

The percentage of Herefordshire resident young people in full time education and training is above the England average as of the December 2016 outturn:

- England 83.7%
- Herefordshire 83.8%

6.9.2 Areas for further development

The percentage of Herefordshire resident young people in education and training (to include part time education/ apprenticeships and employment with training) is below the England average as of the December 2016 outturn:

- England 91.4%
- Herefordshire 89.6%

6.10 Improving Education, Employment and Training for Vulnerable Groups

6.10.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Monthly tracking meetings focussing on vulnerable groups are held, representatives from SEN/ LAC and GRT are invited. GRT regularly attend
- Numbers of young people post 16 in a vulnerable group who are not engaging are closely monitored and information about their NEET status is passed back to their lead professional (SEND/ LAC /GRT etc)
- Pre 16 ESF funded NEET programme works closely with vulnerable groups specific mentoring programme for LAC young people transitioning to post 16 has had positive results

DATA:

- Post 16 with SEND (up to age 25) – Cohort total 180, 12% are NEET, 0% not known
- Post 16 LAC (16 – 18) – Cohort total 23, 17% NEET, 0% Not Known
- Post 16 Care leavers (16-18) – Cohort total 14, 14% NEET, 0% Not Known

6.10.2 Areas for further development

- Limited resource for young people post 16 with specific needs who are NEET
- Vulnerable young people who are NEET tend to be NEET for longer periods of time (3 months plus)
- More join up with early help approach and troubled families will be beneficial to improve outcomes for vulnerable young people

6.11 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

6.11.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Overall NEET cohort has decreased to 2.8% (53 young people) as of August 2017
- Overall Not Known cohort has decreased to 0.5% (9 young people as of August 2017)
- ESF Funded pre 16 NEET prevention programme; Live and Learn 2016/17 has seen 35 out of 37 young people on the provision progress to post 16

6.11.2 Areas for further development

- 17.4% of the Looked after cohort are NEET
- 11.2% of those with an Education health care plan are NEET
- More work needs to be done with vulnerable groups to ensure they sustain a positive destination
- The data system for tracking young people requires further development and resourcing to ensure an accurate data set and allow staff the ability to analyse the Herefordshire picture in order to influence future commissioning.

Case Study:

- NEET re engagement programme Live and Learn Case Study

Young person X was referred to the live and learn NEET prevention programme because of his total lack of engagement with education, the Herefordshire council mentor worked with X and his family to encourage them all to engage with provision. This was a slow process with relationships building starting with the parents and then unpicking with the learner what they wanted to achieve.

The following is feedback from the referrer:

“I wanted to just drop you a line to say how much I have appreciated L’s tenacity in getting X to where he is now. This family have gone from being ‘closed and unresponsive’ to suggestions of ways forward for X, to him completing a Live and Learn Course at Holme Lacy and now enrolled on a Post 16 course. This would never have happened, and X’s future prospects would have severely diminished, if L had not been so vociferous in ensuring ‘best outcomes’ for him.”

7 Social Care

7.1 Performance management

The team works with operational staff to ensure that a child’s journey can be recorded as accurately and efficiently as possible on Mosaic. This will involve updating the system to reflect changes in process, statute and also making improvements to existing workflows.

The performance staff are responsible for the production of accurate and timely information, crucial in ensuring that managers have the appropriate oversight of their teams, their performance and the timely adherence to processes. This helps to provide assurance that teams are achieving the right outcomes for the children of Herefordshire. The performance team is also responsible for the statutory annual returns, regional benchmarking and provision of information for FOI’s.

This is a shared function, providing similar support to the adults and wellbeing directorate.

Areas of strength

Following the successful upgrade to the Mosaic case recording system in April 2016, a programme of system reviews is helping to improve professional processes and ensure staff can make effective use of Mosaic. In the last 6 months, the contact/referral process has been revised to ensure clarity regarding referrals and the single child and family assessment has been introduced. These changes support improved practice for social workers in their involvement with children because the assessment of children has been simplified and streamlined alongside the new referral process which supports transparent working with families. These improved assessment forms were recognised by a peer review in June.

Working with operational professionals, the team have been able to improve the standard and accuracy of weekly operational and quarterly reporting over the last year. These reports are assisting managers to monitor timely delivery within their teams and minimising the risk of cases drifting.

In addition to internal reporting, the team have improved the quality of the information provided in statutory reports. The team have redeveloped these reports and engaged with senior managers to provide the directorate with greater assurance over its statutory returns and a more accurate presentation of Herefordshire’s performance.

The team are also developing a series of self-service reports, which allow operational managers access to a greater variety of data without having to be dependent on the performance team. There is a small number of these reports available presently and a plan is in place to develop the number of these available in line with the plans identified below.

Areas of improvement

There are three main areas of improvement required for the team; availability of reports and information within the directorate, data quality and ensuring that mosaic is as efficient as possible for practitioners.

Following the migration to Mosaic, a number of the previously available reports require redevelopment. The performance team are in the process of identifying the reporting requirements and prioritising their delivery. The plan is being developed in quarter 1, with some areas of delivery already having started, with a plan for final delivery by autumn/winter 2017 (dependent on Mosaic recording capabilities).

The introduction of this wider range of performance information will provide reassurance of effective social work, both in terms of process and outcomes which will help to identify areas of poor practice for improvement, in turn helping operational managers to improve the service provided to children of the county.

7.2 Numbers of children in need of specialist social care services

7.2.1 Areas where we are making most progress

Child in need

The Child in need service is made up of 1 x Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), 2 x Assessment teams, 2 x Child Protection/ Court teams and 1 x Family Support team.

MASH

All referrals are received into Multi –Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The referrals are screened by qualified social workers and a recommendation is made as how the referral needs to progress. The knowledge and information from multiagency staff is used to inform recommendations and decisions. The referral is then sent to a Childrens Social Work manager for a decision on how to progress the referral. Urgent, significant concerns are acted upon immediately.

The team consists of partner agencies from Health, Education, Police and West Mercia Women's Aid. Virtual partners include Probation and Youth Offending Service. MASH has 2 Senior Practitioners one who is dedicated to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Missing Children and one who is dedicated to Domestic Abuse which includes attending Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) and Multi- Agency Risk assessment Conference (MARAC).

The MASH enables a timely response to referrals and this means that the child in need of a service receives this in a timely way.

Assessment Teams

The assessment teams work begins following initial screening by the MASH who identify the level of need in line with the Herefordshire levels of need document. The teams undertake the Single Social Work Assessment. They also undertake investigations of suspected or possible abuse of children and young people under Child Protection Procedures and supports children and young people via Child in Need (CIN) plans. Where deemed appropriate following assessment of needs children and young people are then transferred to relevant teams i.e. Child Protection and Court team, LAC team, 16+ team, CWD or stepped down to early intervention services via a CAF.

The Single Social Work Assessment is a thorough timely assessment which ensure that the child receives the appropriate intervention.

Child Protection/Court Teams

The team supports children and young people subject to a child protection (CP) plan and Within Public Law Outline (PLO) and Care Proceedings, taking cases either until there is a plan for long-term Looked after Status or until the child is adopted.

When the child is subject to CP Plan the social worker undertakes fortnightly visits, hold Core Group Meetings (4 weekly) and review the CP Plan, write reports for and attend CP Conferences. The social worker also updates the Child and Family Assessments in line with the procedure (minimum 12 monthly). This process ensures that progress is monitored and that the outcomes are the best for the child.

If care proceedings are to be issued, the social worker must prepare a care plan that meets the needs of the child, a statement and an up-to-date chronology. The team support children subject to supervision orders and support children subject to private fostering arrangements

Family Support

The Family Support team offer support to families with children and young people 0-18 who are involved with social care, either in the assessment team, CP/court team or LAC team and who need an intensive, time limited piece of work to sustain change and prevent long term involvement from services.

The team complete PAMS parenting assessments for parents who have a learning disability.

They complete family group conferences (FGC) for families to avoid further family breakdown and complete missing person return home interviews for all children living in Herefordshire

7.2.2 Areas of strength

What impact is your service having for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

MASH provides a one point of contact with a professional who are able to give advice and act accordingly. There is good multi agency working and sharing of relevant information to make informed decisions on how to progress a referral. The high percentage of referrals dealt with within the 24 hour timescales have been consistent for the last eight months. Consistent use of the Herefordshire level of need pathway has reduced the number of inappropriate referrals received. This has also been achieved by the multiagency staff within the MASH supporting and advising professionals in the standard of the referrals and advising on the appropriate service a child needs without it needing to be accepted as a referral. Permanent staff provides a consistent approach to referrals whilst appropriate rotation of workers ensures that more social workers develop the skills to aid them in the journey of the child.

The strengths of the assessment team are that through clear leadership there is a focus via both team and personal objectives in ensuring assessments are completed in a timely manner, to avoid drift and delay for families receiving the services they require and children being appropriately safeguarded. Both assessment teams have a stable team with minimal use of agency staff thereby ensuring consistent allocated workers for families CIN plans evidence that there is appropriate multiagency representation to ensure that robust support plans are agreed and case records demonstrate that where concerns arise this is escalated in a timely manner.

The strengths of the CP/Court teams are, caseloads per worker in the teams are stable (15- 19) and this is enabling social workers to spend quality time to understand the needs of the children they work with.

Morale within the teams are high and the workers are working together really well

The proportion of permanent social workers within the team is higher than it was 6 months ago which allows for consistency.

The strengths of the Family Support team are stability of staff, flexibility of the team. There are clear processes in place and a positive interface with other agencies. There are a wide range of skills and knowledge i.e. different parenting programmes, Family Group Conferences (FGC's), PAMS, Speakeasy, counselling. There is a shared sense of vision in the team which is to deliver a good quality service where families feel supported.

What outcomes is your service delivering for children and young people of Herefordshire?

The referral rate progressing to assessment has decreased since November 2016. This is due to a more robust screening system which prevents unnecessary intervention, into family and children's lives, by social care. Targeted support via the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is being offered and other services signposted to. The reduction of cases in need of an assessment means that caseloads are lower and the Social Workers focus on the children in need of protection.

Child and Family assessments (single social work assessment) were introduced in October 2016; with the first ones completed within November. To date, 84% of all assessments completed within 2016/17 have been completed within the 45 day timescale (81% in Q4 alone). To date there have been no review child and family assessments completed. In addition to the above due to improved screening by MASH and interagency working there has been a reduction in re-referrals. Worker's caseloads are more manageable therefore they are able to dedicate more quality time to children and families in identify their needs and ensuring that the right services are in place to meet these.

The CP / Court team ensure that throughout their work with families and children the voice of the child is heard, this is evidenced in CP plans and Care Plans. There are no children subject to CP Plans for more than 2 years and all court cases are concluding within the 26 week period.

Areas where we are making most progress

What does your service need to improve for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

- Progression of Domestic Abuse Triage (DAT). This would enable all domestic abuse case to be triaged appropriately; appropriate referrals made and targeted service for victims. Targeted services for perpetrators also needs to be developed to stop the cycle of abuse.
- CSE has progressed significantly but further work needs to be completed with partner agencies.
- Further work needs to be completed with agencies in relation to understanding Herefordshire's level of need pathway, so that the child and family receive the most appropriate service.
- Developing our early help approach across the partnership to prevent unnecessary intervention.
- Improvement in MOSAIC performance date to ensure that children are seen with timescales and both CP and CIN plans are updated following core group and CIN
- Develop further the relationship between family support and social workers to enhance evidence based practice.
- Enhance capacity in the team to undertake more parenting assessments.
- Development of staff Training Plan.

How will you know that you have achieved your identified improvements?

- Staff will undertake training as identified and evidenced in their personal development plans.
- Evidence of the use of resources included in assessments and meetings to ensure the 'voice of the child' runs throughout the work undertaken by social care.
- Staff will be provided ongoing support to access resources such as community care direct, reflective individual supervision and group supervision.

- Assessments will record the use of evidence based practice in analysis and recommendations made in the Child and family assessments.
- Consistent high quality assessments.
- The monthly audit feedback will be used to inform both staff and managers of the areas for improvement but also recognition of good practice.
- Children and families to be fully involved in decision-making and care planning
- Case transfer meetings between the teams
- Reduction of re referrals.
- Appropriate multi agency referrals being made.
- Reduction of Domestic Abuse referrals.
- Early identification of children at risk of possible CSE and targeted of managing perpetrators/rings.

7.2.3 Areas of Concern

What areas of concern do you have in relation to your service?

- Police not submitting Multi- Agency Referral Forms (MARFs) they submit Harm Assessment Unit (HAU) paperwork, which causes inappropriate contacts.
- A high percentage of Newly Qualified social Workers (NQSWs)
- Inability to recruit experienced staff
- Capacity within Family Support team
- Lack of standardised training for family support workers.

How are you proposing to mitigate against these areas of concern?

- To continue discussions with police colleagues in relation to full time police staff being present in MASH.
- A more comprehensive and attractive recruitment campaign to attract more experienced social workers to the teams.
- Recruitment of effective Senior Practitioners to support NQSWs
- Consider training/ development for family support workers
- Transfer post from CP/Court team to Family support Team and advertise for qualified social worker to undertake court parenting assessments.

How will this impact on your service delivery for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

- Provide interventions to families and children most in need.
- Ensure that families and children are signposted to the correct support/services to meet their needs.
- Highly trained staff.
- Permeant staff allowing consistent social workers working with families and children
- Reduced waiting list for parenting assessments and PAMS assessments

7.3 Looked After Children Placements

Looked after children and corporate parenting

The service supports looked after children and care leavers. This includes ensuring appropriate decisions are made about children's admission to care, supporting families to make the changes required to achieve a plan for rehabilitation where possible, permanency planning for children who cannot safely return home and caring for children in long-term care enabling them to achieve their potential and move onto living as independent adults who are healthy, happy and financially secure.

The Fostering Service recruits and assesses prospective foster carers. Once approved the service provides training, support and supervision of foster carers. The Service supports general carers, kinship carers, overnight short breaks carers, HIPSS carers and Supported lodgings carers.

The Fostering Service is also responsible for jointly assessing prospective Special Guardianship (SGO) carers and providing support to SGO carers and for assessing Private Fostering arrangements.

The Adoption Service recruits and assesses prospective adopters, finds families for children with a plan for adoption and supports families until the adoption order is made. They assess and provide post-adoption support including the letterbox service. They provide birth counselling services for those affected by adoption. These services enable children to enjoy stable and secure lives with adopters who understand and can meet the needs of their children and adults affected by adoption to come to terms with their loss and to maintain indirect relationships with their birth children where this is agreed that are positive for the child.

7.3.1 Areas where we are making most progress

Areas of strength

Workers know their children and families and are passionate about improving outcomes (Casework peer review).

The introduction of a Threshold for Care panel and review of Legal Gateway panel have achieved a reduction in the number of children being admitted to care from 122 in 2015/16 to 103 in 2016/17. All children looked after under Section 20 have been reviewed and where appropriate proceedings issued to ensure that Section 20 is not being misused (see Section 20 review report). A further review is underway in response to recent discussions with our District Judge.

The fostering service has grown by recruiting and retaining carers from 131 to 144 during 2016/17 enabling more children to be placed within Herefordshire close to their families, friends, school and professional support network. The fostering service has increased the number of supported lodgings placements from 18 to 22 during 2016/17 enabling vulnerable care leavers to move onto independence gradually and providing placements for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (see fostering service annual report). The fostering service has consistently achieved good levels of placement stability in comparison with national averages and has improved upon this during 2016/17 (see performance scorecard).

Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) has successfully supported children to step-down from residential care to fostering during 2016/17 (HIPSS contract monitoring).

The Overnight Short Break (OSB) service has already been able to recruit carers and match 6 children providing 238 nights of care enabling children to have safe and enjoyable time whilst their families enjoy a break (Fostering annual report).

The Adoption team has successfully placed 18 children with adopters including sibling groups, older children and some with complex needs. There has been an increase in Placement Orders granted from 11 in 2015/16 to 24 in 2016/17 which will enable more children to enjoy the love and security of a forever family without the stigma of being a looked after child. Approximately £94,000 of funding has been awarded since April 2015 to enable adopters and special guardians to access specialist therapeutic support through the Adoption Support Fund.

The 16+ team is providing an effective service, producing good pathway plan assessments with a good leaving care offer (casework peer review).

A greater range of accommodation is now available to care leavers as result of an increase in supported lodgings provision and renegotiation with SHYPP enabling more young people to be supported in accommodation that meets their needs and is within Herefordshire (SHYPP contract variation).

Elected members and senior leaders demonstrate interest and willingness to support looked after children and care leavers (corporate parenting strategy).

7.3.2 Areas for further development

Areas of improvement

The number of looked after children is too high in comparison with statistical neighbours and areas with similar levels of deprivation (national dataset).

Quality of practice for looked after children is too inconsistent. The work recorded on Mosaic does not always reflect the actual work completed, chronologies are of an inconsistent standard and management oversight is also inconsistent (audit reports and case file peer audit).

The number of children ceasing to be in care has reduced in 2016/17 with fewer children being rehabilitated home and lower numbers being made subject to an SGO as compared to other local authorities.

The service does not yet have sufficient foster carers to meet the needs of our looked after children population – particularly for teenagers and those with challenging behaviour. Our aim is to have a maximum of 10% of children placed in IFA's.

Some children have experienced placement disruptions and too many children are placed in residential care. Our aim is to have a maximum of 5-6 children placed in residential care.

Children in care do not achieve as well in education as their peers and too many are not in employment, education or training (national dataset).

Development of a CPD programme for all staff within children's social care which supports them to meet the needs of children and families better and improves staff retention.

Understanding of elected members and senior officers regarding their Corporate parenting responsibilities is inconsistent.

Areas of concern

The very high number of looked after children continues to place pressure on all aspects of Children's Social Care and services provided by partner agencies. Our intention is to reduce numbers of children in care by continued focus on reducing admissions and renewed focus on permanency planning. The workforce need to be supported to take appropriate risks.

We have insufficient placements to meet need and it is proving particularly difficult to recruit carers for HIPSS which is critical if we are to achieve a reduction in the numbers of children placed in residential care. A targeted recruitment drive is planned from June 2017.

Achieving stability in the workforce is key to delivering service improvements and is challenging in Herefordshire due to geographical location and road networks.

Meeting the needs of UASC's from a range of countries is challenging. We are addressing this through collaborative regional working and planning to develop services as our numbers increase.

Wider responsibilities for care leavers up until the age of 25 will require additional resources within the 16+ team.

Need to focus upon outcomes and the council delivering on things that can make a difference to looked after children and care leavers e.g. employment opportunities.

7.4 LAC Placement Stability

7.4.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Placement stability is good overall.

7.4.2 Areas for further development

- Understanding disruption in challenging placements and devising strategies to support carers promptly.

8. Adoption (also see paragraph 29)

8.1 The Direction of Travel

The service benefits from an experienced and stable workforce. It is generally a good performing area of the service. In line with national policy the Service is working towards joining a Regional Adoption Agency and has made an application to join Adoption Central England (ACE).

8.2 Areas where we are making most progress

- The Adoption team has successfully placed 18 children with adopters including sibling groups, older children and some with complex needs.
- There has been an increase in Placement Orders granted from 11 in 2015/16 to 24 in 2016/17 which will enable more children to enjoy the love and security of a forever family without the stigma of being a looked after child.
- Approximately £94,000 of funding has been awarded since April 2015 to enable adopters and special guardians to access specialist therapeutic support through the Adoption Support Fund.

8.3 Areas for further development

- Improving the quality and consistency of practice in relation to early permanency planning across the service
- Increasing the number of foster to adopt placements
- Reducing the time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family

What is the Local Authority rating for the A1 and A2 indicators?

- **A1 Indicator –**
2012-15 – Herefordshire achieved 441 days against a target of 487 days
2013-16 – Herefordshire achieved 531 days against a target of 426 days
2014-17 – Herefordshire achieved 561 days against a target of 426 days

Performance since 2016 has been impacted by our success in placing older children for adoption and this will continue to impact on our performance until 2018/19.

- **A2 Indicator –**
2012-15 – Herefordshire achieved 150 days against a target of 121 days
2013-16 – Herefordshire achieved 251 days against a target of 121 days
2014-17 – Herefordshire achieved 238 days against a target of 121 days

Again, performance figures have been adversely affected by success in placing older children for adoption.

9. Complaints

Our learning from compliments and complaints

- 9.1 Each quarter, more compliments are recorded than complaints. Compliments are sent and received internally among colleagues, many directly from young people, and some from partner agencies. Children's Wellbeing is a forerunner in promoting and recording positive feedback in this way.
- 9.2 The majority of complaints (77%) are made by parents, with only 13% being made directly by children or young people. The vast majority (98%) are responded to within the maximum statutory timescale (20 working days), and just over half (54%) are responded to within best practice guidelines (10 working days). The introduction of a standardised letter template and good liaison between frontline managers and the complaints manager has improved the quality of stage 1 responses over the year. The vast majority of complaints (91%) are resolved at stage 1.
- 9.3 64% include complaints about poor communication, either relating to complainants feeling they aren't getting a timely response to messages and contacts they have made, or because visits and meetings have been postponed, cancelled or not kept. Only 9% are complaints relating to the attitude or behaviour of staff. The remaining 27% cover a broad range of issues.
- 9.4 In Q3 we introduced a 'learning from complaints' form for each complaint. We need to reflect on how we can most effectively use this process so that we can capture, learn from and act upon this information meaningfully.

10. Safeguarding and Performance and Quality

10.1 Areas where we are making the most progress

Safeguarding and review

The safeguarding and review service is responsible for contributing to high quality and timely planning and intervention for children and young people, and for scrutinising and challenging multi-agency practice, to ensure that children and young people are appropriately safeguarded and improved outcomes are achieved in a timely way. These responsibilities are carried out through a range of functions:

- 6.8 FTE safeguarding and review managers chair child protection conferences and LAC (looked after children) reviews, providing constructive challenge and scrutiny to multi-agency practice in child protection and care planning. Their work helps to ensure that plans are child- and outcomes- focussed and are progressed in a timely way.
- 1 FTE QA (quality assurance) manager oversees the quality assurance framework, carries out thematic quality assurance work and analyses qualitative information to inform practice and workforce development.
- 0.6 LADO (local authority designated officer) and 0.4 complaints manager oversees the management of allegations against professionals working with children and children's representations and complaints.

Areas of strength

The service has a full establishment of permanent, experienced managers, which supports the continuity of oversight and constructive challenge. Children and young people are consistently consulted prior to LAC reviews. CP conferences and LAC reviews are timely, which means that plans are agreed and reviewed at the appropriate time. Meetings are chaired well, centred on the views and experiences of children, young people, their families and carers, and focussed on improving outcomes. Recommendations and plans are generally child-centred and focussed on improving outcomes and evidence how plans should progress in order to prevent drift. Appropriate

constructive challenge is made consistently and is tenaciously followed up where needed. Tracking mechanisms help to highlight and monitor potential drift in case progression and children leaving care. Child protection thresholds are consistently applied and has resulted in a significant and sustained reduction in CP numbers.

LADO is a robust and high quality service which offers significant safeguards to children and young people and awareness raising across the professional network. The administration and oversight of complaints is equally effective and robust and ensures that complaints made by children and young people, or on their behalf, are responded to with respect and a genuine desire to provide a remedy and learning.

The QA manager is a developing role, however there are considerable strides forward envisaged over the course of 17/18 in relation to the development of our quality assurance framework (QAF), which includes a new audit programme and a supportive monitoring role in relation to key practice areas that we know from last year's quality assurance work are key areas for improvement.

10.2 Areas for further development

Areas of improvement

LAC review recommendations and child protection plans are not written in a consistent way in terms of length, detail and style. They are not always SMART or outcomes-focussed. We are planning to join with regional colleagues to undertake training in SMART planning during 17/18. We need to review the format of plans, develop practice standards for writing recommendations and plans and share completed work more across the team in order to develop a consistent, shared understanding of practice expectations.

Whilst children and young people are consistently consulted prior to LAC reviews, not all of this contact is in placement. We have had no way of recording this activity in a reportable way on Mosaic, however this has been addressed in the new LAC workflow with effect from June 2017. Consultation with children and young people is limited in terms of communication options. The development of MOMO will assist, however children and young people may benefit from the development of other technologies and forms of communication which suit individual's wishes and needs. The LAC review consultation forms are disliked by children and young people. A small group of IROs are planning to meet with a range of children and young people in care to improve the forms together.

LAC reviews need to be more consistently child-centred. We are reflecting on the principles of child-centred practice in team development days, looking at research and models from other Local Authorities to develop our practice.

The completion rate of practice evaluations fell in late 16/17. In April 2017 we revised the tool to align with the revised audit tool and the completion rate has since increased significantly and this needs to be sustained. During 16/17 capacity to monitor case progression in between LAC reviews was diminished. Since April 2017's full establishment this capacity has increased and needs to be sustained. Evidence of this oversight is not consistently recorded on children's case files and we need to see evidence through audit work of this increasing.

Our LAC population is too high compared to our statistical neighbours. IROs need to work collaboratively with social workers in considering potential SGO and other permanency arrangements, including reunification.

The QAF needs refining to make it more accessible and provide a clearer sense of shared responsibilities and priorities. Service user engagement and consultation for children and families in the child protection arena is limited. The QA manager will be developing this area as part of the revised QAF.

Areas of concern

As an established team of experienced managers and practitioners, the service has the opportunity to contribute significantly to delivering sustainable, positive outcomes for children and young people, through shaping and defining best practice. This not only involves being clear about

expectations and doing this consistently, but also requires the service to be at the forefront of innovative, proactive social work practice. This requires a whole team cultural shift to explore, refine and adopt improved practice approaches and embrace a culture of self-reflection and continuous learning.

11. Quality Assurance

11.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Development of case file audit template and process that focusses on outcomes.
- Regular reporting on QA findings to senior managers and senior members.

11.2 Areas for further development

- Revision of overall Quality Assurance Framework.
- Evidence of learning leading to improvements.

12. Workforce

12.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Recruitment of managers at all levels.
- Retention.
- Development of CPD programme.
- Support to ASYE staff.
- Sickness/absence rates low.

12.2 Areas for further development

- Recruitment of experienced social workers.
- Implementation of CPD programme.
- Adoption of social work assessment model.
- Appointment of Principal Social Worker.

13. Partnership Working

13.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Children and Young People's Partnership.
- Progress with the CYP Plan 2015-18
- Early years
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health support and pathway changes at hospital
- Implementation of SEN Reforms, positive response from parents re. changes to short breaks provision enabling wider access
- HSCB Business Plan 2017/18 – focus on neglect including multi-agency training now launched.

13.2 Areas for further development

- Multi agency leadership across the partnerships including CYP Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, HSCB (one of priorities for 2017/18 demonstrating tangible change across all priority areas.
- Development of approach as "One Herefordshire" including working with wider emerging health footprint.

14. Early Intervention

14.1 The Direction of Travel

Early Help

Herefordshire's early help is about providing services at the right time to meet family's needs and to keep them in control of resolving their own issues and problems, to reinforce and develop the families' own skills to determine their future, reducing poor outcomes and inequalities. Our aim is to provide the right support at the right time to meet a family's needs.

Our early help approach is aimed at all families with a child / children aged 0 to 19 years old or up to 25 years old for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and is linked to the Herefordshire levels of need threshold and the Families First initiative.

Early help covers level 1 – 3 on the Herefordshire levels of need.

- Level 1 is universal services for all families and information, advice, guidance and signposting. Herefordshire has the website WISH – Wellbeing, Information and signposting in Herefordshire.
- Level 2 and 3 is for children, young people and their families with emerging issues or more complex needs. An assessment of the whole family's needs helps both the family and the services supporting them to work together more effectively.

A Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is completed by a professional of the family's choice and a package of support is agreed with them, such as additional help and support via early year's settings, children's centre services, school, health visitor, school nurse, counselling, family support, Vennture4Family or a Homestart volunteer.

Children Centre services have a request for support/intervention referral pathway for professionals and partner agencies to refer into for emerging needs of 0-5 years and their families. Intervention and support can be either in group sessions or 1:1 support for example structured "Let's Play" sessions, forest school/outdoor play, Elklan speech & language courses, baby massage, direct work in the home, young parent groups, adult learning & support with employment.

Families and partners can find out what help is available through the council website or ring the early help advice and support line 01432 260261.

Herefordshire currently has 604 active Common Assessment Framework's for children managed by the Information & Assessment Coordinator team. Early help is organised in eight locality areas. In each of these areas there are six multi-agency group meetings (MAG's) held every year to discuss cases which are 'stuck', support partners leading on the support plans for families and discuss any community concerns and put a plan of action in place. The MAG's are well supported by all our key partner agencies for example primary and secondary schools, early year's services and providers, family support, health services, housing associations, DWP, Police and voluntary organisations.

Herefordshire's approach is to work with the whole family addressing the underlying needs to the presenting problems and meet outcomes set out in the Herefordshire's Family Outcomes Framework. Early help support comes from our partners and for the most vulnerable families with the most complex issues there are more specialist services available. An internal family support team made up of experienced, qualified family support workers who use evidence based programmes such as Triple P parenting standard and teen, Solihull Parenting, basic Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Solution Focused interviewing. There are also commissioned services provided by Vennture4families and Homestart. Vennture4families is an innovative service which uses a model based on a professional link worker and volunteer and Homestart is a befriending service based on volunteers.

The governments troubled families initiative is integrated into Herefordshire's early help approach with all CAF's assessments being linked to the eligibility criteria and outcomes to Herefordshire's Family Outcomes Framework. The internal team and the Vennture4families service is funded by money from the troubled families programme. DWP have seconded a worker under the troubled families programme to support families with the journey back into work and with benefit queries.

The early year's strategy in Herefordshire is streamlined with the early help strategy and is cross cutting against all six priorities in the children and young people's plan. Children centre services deliver the core purpose and work with partners to deliver universal and targeted support to children under 5 years of age and their parents. Multi-agency groups (MAGs) are based around the children centre reach areas and the health visiting service is aligned to these areas. The early years support service works closely with health visitors and midwives to coordinate and contribute to targeted work improving health, school readiness and parenting. If families require a more specialised package of support then a request for service through Children Centre Services may be appropriate or a CAF where multi-agency involvement is required.

14.2 Areas where we are making most progress

Areas of strength

The council early help family support team and the commissioned services of Vennture4families and Homestart are working very well with vulnerable families with complex needs to achieve sustainable change against the Herefordshire's Family Outcomes Framework. 124 families have achieved at least 6 months sustained change and been claimed for under the troubled families payment by results system. The troubled families programme has recently been audited by DCLG and received very positive feedback. The auditor was impressed with the innovative ways of working with families to achieve sustained change.

Clear understanding of outcomes for children aged 0-5 years in the annual early years data pack.

The managing, tracking and analysis of CAFs and understanding of the issues at the early help stage of families in Herefordshire.

In 2016 36% of closed cases had needs fully or partially met over the year, an increase on 2015 where 29% of closed cases fell into this bracket. Family disengagement in 2016 was at a similar level to 2015, with 17 cases (4%) closing in 2016 due to families or young people not wanting support via the CAF process.

No CAFs closed during 2016 due to a service not being available.

Very effective tracking arrangements of 16-18 year olds so very few are unknown and those who are not in education, training or employment with training can be signposted to services and monitored. (NCCIS data).

14.3 Areas for further development

Areas for improvement

To revise the CAF into an easier to complete assessment linked to the Child and Family assessment used by social care and to rename it the early help assessment. This process has started and will be completed by the end of the year.

To improve capturing the journey of the child if a case moves from early help into social care or vice versa. The proposal is for the early help assessment to be fully integrated into the mosaic database.

To more fully integrate the early year's services into the early help offer so families have a seamless services if they require additional support as their children grow up.

School attendance, especially authorised absence together with CME, in year fair access and elected home education would benefit by being more joined up to reduce the possibility of children falling through the net.

Areas of Concern

The Sentinel data hub implementation is progressing but the rate of progress needs to increase. When this is fully operational analysis of the unmet needs of families will be easier and more efficient, which in turn will provide better intelligence to identify and provide the most appropriate support to families.

The funding of knowledgeable, experienced professional support services for families with complex needs below threshold when the Troubled Families government funded programme ends.

Early Help case study

Work carried out: 12/9/2016 – 16/12/2016

Level of Need: CAF level 3

Identified needs

- For mother to understand and implement appropriate strategies for managing L's challenging behaviour.
- For mother to be able to implement appropriate boundaries for L.
- For mother to ensure that any adult discussions and disagreements to be had away from L so that she is not aware of adult worries.

Family situation prior to the work starting

L was 'lashing out' and E was finding it challenging to manage L's behaviour.

L lost her father in 2015 and E had a new boyfriend T living in the family home who had a violent and aggressive past. T would try and parent L and this caused tension and upset. E did not want to discipline/set boundaries for L as she has had two children removed before and wanted to 'spoil' her. E was very low in mood at the start of the intervention and would easily become upset during sessions. There were concerns around whether E was suffering from depression in the early stages of the intervention. L presented more as an annoyed child and commented on several occasions how much she hated T and felt that he was taking all of her mother's time. L was also slightly overweight.

Work completed and outcomes

- Work was completed with E around her mental health and supporting her to access her GP and receive treatment for depression.
- E was taught Triple P parenting strategies and now has a lot more confidence and understands that routines and boundaries give children comfort and structure.
- Work was completed with E around her relationship with T and 1-1 work was completed with L in school about her thoughts and feelings in relation to T neither were positive. E could see she was in a controlling relationship however needed support to end the relationship. E was signposted to Women's Aid and has completed The Freedom programme and had the confidence to end the relationship.
- L was signposted and supported to attend Phoenix bereavement counselling weekly and this has helped with L's anger around her dad passing away.
- L has spent some time 1:1 with family support throughout the intervention, L now states that her mother will protect her from negative people and she is confident to talk to professionals.
- L has been seen by the local school nursing team; her weight has been recorded and is being watched.
- Since T has left the family comment that L's behaviour has vastly improved and there are no difficulties.
- T has a detailed past in regards to Domestic Violence. Claire's Law was accessed by L to protect her from re-entering a relationship with him and to make her aware of the harassment he has caused in the past.
- E and L's property is known to the local policing team and is monitored.

15. Neglect

15.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Peer review recently acknowledged that social work teams are consistent in understanding and approach to childhood neglect.

15.2 Areas for further development

- Implementation of Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board strategy, including use of Graded Care Profile.
- Consistent application of HSCB approach evidenced in case file audits.

16. Other Specialist Support

16.1 Areas where we are making most progress

Business support

Business Support provides a crucial support service to large complex safeguarding and family support service (S&FS) areas which is inclusive of a number of elements of finite support. The importance of the child's journey is always at the forefront of our service delivery.

We are the first point of contact into the service, this includes taking requests for a service from professionals and conversing with distressed callers who are in receipt of our service or wishing to raise concerns relating to child/ren at potential risk of significant harm. This activity frequently includes a dialogue disclosing sensitive and graphic information of concerns of a child and families composition of lived experience of safeguarding nature.

Business support demonstrate a very high standard of; attention to detail, compliance to meet deadlines, quality of minutes for families, statutory and court compliance and effective distribution within regulatory timescales.

Processing of key documents swiftly to ensure no delay in information being shared with the worker who's working with the children and families.

A cohort of staff skilled with the detailed knowledge to effectively navigate around our client database (Mosaic) and corporate information sharing site (Sharepoint).

Areas of strength

What impact is your service having for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

We are committed to achieving excellence through continual improvement and the journey of the child is at the heart of everything we do. By providing an efficient service that is proportionate across all S&FS teams we are able to help shape the service children and young people receive.

What outcomes is your service delivering for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

Each team member has a key focus and understanding on how their role transforms as part of the child's journey through Childrens social care. Adhering to the work ethos to work fluidly within all areas of business support to meet the needs of fluctuating service demands.

We have a clearly defined contact centre where we receive and quickly process calls and emails from a range of different genres. We have implemented call centre software to reduce delays in calls being answered and a mechanism to leave a voicemail should a delay occur in times of high call volumes. The voicemails are responded to within a limited time period.

The production of accurate succinct minutes provides a crucial working document for all professionals and the family, with rapid turnaround for sending to the chair for approval and then through to distribution within statutory timescales.

We have a dedicated officer to receive children and families complaints in first instance, who provides preliminary meetings with complainants to fully understand the detail and seek resolution at the initial point of complaint. Co-ordinating the complaints process through each stage through to resolution.

Business support are committed to ensuring that all staff have a complete service overview complimented with a good understanding of the complex work required by business, with a true meaning of how this is beneficial to the children and families and the colleagues supported. This is conducted by a comprehensive initial training programme for all staff lasting for a period of 12 weeks, followed by subsequent refresher training carried out periodically.

The service has a solution based focus to the services supported– e.g. Mosaic, power users, SharePoint, letterbox, finance, accommodation, MASH SOP creation of tools and tracking systems for a self-serve methodology.

What evidence do you have?

Detailed tracking mechanisms are used to evidence business support workflow and tasks undertaken for performance reporting. This also has a dual purpose for use within the wider service e.g. finance, legal, S&FS work activity especially around minutes and their distribution, highlighting any bottlenecks across the service. Overseeing and monitoring the budget spend for the division as a whole.

16.2 Areas for further development

Areas of improvement

What does your service need to improve for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

Further advancing a more detailed approach to recording training requirements and schedules for all business support staff. Providing a full competency checklist to set effective and attainable goals, and enable evidence based measuring of individual and team performance and development.

A fine-tuned suite of processes and procedures which are clear and concise related to each task or workflow undertaken.

How will you know that you have achieved your identified improvements?

Staff feeling less overwhelmed with the complexity of the many tasks undertaken by business support and the knowledge base required for this. Alleviate staff anxieties when asked to carry out varying tasks within the business support model.

A strong business support quality assurance framework to be implemented which will provide evidence on the quality of business support activities undertaken to ensure work is carried out to the highest standards within the context of all relevant legislation.

Areas of concern

What areas of concern do you have in relation to your service?

Retaining a conscientious approach to the prevention of Data breaches, this is one of the higher risk areas for the service which can have detrimental consequences to both families and monetary fines from the data commissioner. We need to ensure this area of work is resourced in balance

with the fluctuating flow of work and staff attaining the skill sets and meticulous attention to detail for each set of documents being distributed.

How are you proposing to mitigate against these areas of concern?

Robust staff training particularly within data protection and clear sets of guidance and procedures to follow for each scenario across all supported service areas within Safeguarding & Family support. To be included in the business support audit framework and regular review of the business support procedures schedule.

How will this impact on your service delivery for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

The need to factor training and re-fresher training during periods where there would be minimal impact on capacity for the service to deliver daily essential workflow for all the teams and the families.

Our 2017-2018 business plan has been developed to ensure we can continue to not only to meet our purpose but build on existing strengths and exceed expectations throughout the year.

17. Missing from home or care

17.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Numbers of Herefordshire children going missing from home or care are low.
- All children going missing, including those placed in Herefordshire by other authorities, are offered a return interview.
- All return interviews are shared with the CSE coordinator to ensure patterns are identified.

17.2 Areas for further development

- Missing return interviews for LAC placed a long distance from Herefordshire are not always timely.
- Reciprocal arrangements for WRI within the region.

18. Domestic Violence and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

18.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Domestic Violence Community Safety Partnership lead the work
- New perpetrator programme being established
- Renewed training and awareness taking place over the autumn including silent victim emphasis
- Recent Ofsted JTAI informing recent action plan
- New refuge opening
- FGM Community Safety Partnership lead the work.
- Recent review identified 0.2% of Herefordshire community that may face this risk. Engagement work with community taking place.

18.2 Areas for further development

- Domestic Violence triage
- Role of police and referrals into MASH .
- Inter relationship with MARAC still to be resolved.

19. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

19.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Dedicated coordinator in post.
- All missing WRIs assessed by CSE coordinator.
- Risk assessment tool revised.
- CSE operational and strategic groups reviewed and revised to ensure effectiveness.

19.2 Areas for further development

- Greater understanding of potential victims placed in Herefordshire by other local authorities.

20. Supported Accommodation Services for Vulnerable Young People

20.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Corporate housing strategy for young adults developed with commissioners.
- Additional placements to meet needs of older UASCs and care leavers.

20.2 Areas for further development

- Sustainable supported housing provision.
- Implementation of new housing strategy.

21. Children in Need / Child Protection (see paragraph 7)

22. Children with Disabilities (see paragraph 6)

23. Looked after Children (LAC) (see paragraph 7)

24. Sufficiency Strategy (see paragraph 32)

25. Education of looked after children

25.1 Areas where we are making most progress

Virtual school

The role of Herefordshire's Virtual School for Looked after Children (LAC) is to champion the needs of children and young people, ensuring that they benefit from the opportunity to gain a good education, wherever they may be placed.

The team liaise with multiple agencies to ensure that all the educational needs of LAC are met and appropriate support is in place.

Schools are offered support and advice to enable them to meet the often complex needs of these children and are provided with regular information updates at half-termly designated teacher network meetings.

The team ensure that all looked after children have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is reviewed on a termly basis until they are no longer looked after.

Looked after young people and care leavers are provided with support to have their voice heard by the Participation and Mentoring Officer. This team member facilitates the Children in Care Council and supports them to express their wishes and feelings via a range of mechanisms.

Areas of strength

The Virtual School makes an important contribution to improving outcomes for LAC by:

- ensuring that children placed out of authority receive the same level of support from the Virtual School as those children placed locally
- intervening early when a child is not accessing appropriate education (e.g. when a child becomes LAC, moves placement, has high needs) and providing advice and support to ensure they access education quickly. As a result Herefordshire LAC are in the top quartile for attendance and exclusions.
- supporting the Children in Care Council to hold monthly meetings, deliver training to professionals, attend corporate parenting panel and interview new staff
- fulfilling the local authority's statutory duty to ensure each LAC over the age of 3 has a PEP that is reviewed on a termly basis until the child is no longer looked after
- ensuring that schools and settings receive the latest advice, guidance and research findings through communications and half-termly termly briefings
- providing training to designated teachers, carers and whole schools to enable them to have a better understanding of the barriers to achievement and how they can be overcome
- guaranteeing all LAC can access support from an educational psychologist in a timely manner when the need arises
- Herefordshire LAC achieved above the national and West Midlands's average in 2016 KS4 GCSE results (5 GCSEs C+ including English and Maths) with 23.5% achieving this standard. A higher proportion of Herefordshire LAC were entered for EBacc subjects than LAC nationally and across the West Midlands

25.2 Areas for further development

Areas of improvement

- Ensuring that all PEPs are of a consistently high quality with appropriately challenging targets.
- Ensuring that schools are held accountable for the use of Pupil Premium Plus
- Enabling children placed out of authority can access Children in Care Council meetings remotely
- Herefordshire's looked after children performed below average in 2016 at KS1 and 2

Areas of concern

Capacity is a concern with high caseloads for each team member meaning that direct support to children cannot be offered. It is hoped with the introduction of an electronic PEP system that officer time can be redirected away from writing the PEP documents to working with children, schools and carers.

26. Fostering

26.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Recruitment of foster carers.
- Kinship carer assessments.

26.2 Areas for further development

- Increase understanding of special guardianship by foster carers.
- Enable experienced, older carers, to understand current expectations and the nature of children coming into care.

26.3 During 2015/16, 9 Special Guardianship Order's (SGOs) were granted, 4 of these were for looked after children. As part of the LAC reduction work the permanency plan for each looked after child is being scrutinised and where it is assessed that an SGO is in the child's best interests then every

effort will be made to encourage carers to apply for an SGO with a negotiated support plan that meets the child's needs.

27. Corporate Parenting

27.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Revised strategy adopted by elected members in summer 2017; including explicit targets within action plan.
- New Children's Scrutiny Committee keen to lead and challenge members on actions.

27.2 Areas for further development

- Corporate Parenting Board membership requires revision to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- The engagement of younger looked after young people in the work of the board
- The Corporate Parenting strategy is in the early stages of a 3 year strategy.

28. Participation

28.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Established participation with clear sense of purpose.
- Active engagement with older young people.
- Participation of young people in staff interviews.
- Implementation of MOMO app to extend opportunity for young people to express their views.

28.2 Areas for further development

- Engagement with young people beyond social care service delivery.
- Engagement with younger children within social care service.
- Consolidation of MOMO across workforce including foster carers.

29. Adoption

29.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Recruitment of adopters and provision of post-adoption support.
- Matching of adopters to children.

29.2 Areas for further development

- Awaiting response to application to join a local Regional Adoption Agency

30. Care Leavers

30.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Quality of pathway plans.
- Quality of assessments.
- Engagement with young people in their assessments and planning.

30.2 Areas for further development

- Understanding and supporting the needs of UASCs.
- Implementation of revised financial policy for team.
- Implementation of children and social work act expectations

31. Youth Offending Team

31.1 Areas where we are making most progress:

- Herefordshire has a very low rate of custodial sentences for young people.

- Progress in lowering the rate of first time entrants to the youth justice system over the past five years with sustained performance in the last two years.
- Following the implementation of the new assessment and planning framework AssetPlus in July 2016, the framework is becoming embedded within the service.

31.2 Areas for further development

- Despite the lowering the of first time entrant rate over the past five years it remains above both the national average and the West Mercia average, more work needs to be undertaken to understand the drivers behind differential rates across the area.
- The re-offending rate is higher than for West Mercia and for England, although the number of offences per re-offender is slightly lower than for West Mercia and England.

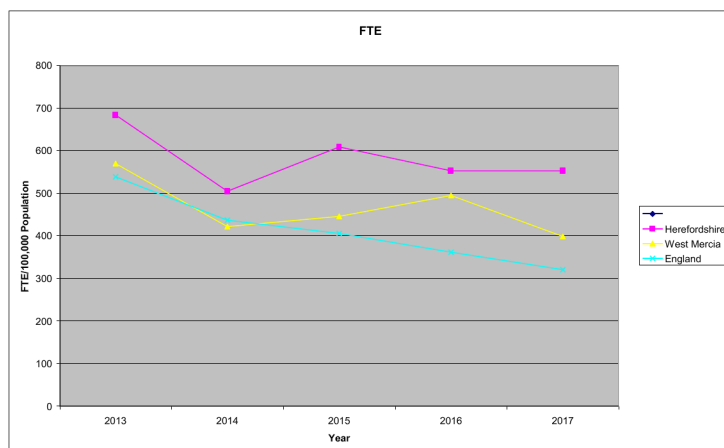
Evidence

Use of Custody (2016):

	England	Herefordshire
Custodial sentences per 1,000 Youth Population	0.37	0.24

First Time Entrants:

First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System per 100,000 Youth Population					
Year Ending	Mar-13	Mar-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17
Herefordshire	684	505	609	553	553
West Mercia	570	422	446	495	399
England	539	437	406	362	321



Asset Plus Quality Audit:

QUALITY OF ASSESSMENT	Jan – Mar 17	Apr – Jun 17
Meets Standard - Excellent	4.7% (3)	2% (1)
Meets Standard - Good	62.5% (40)	92.2% (47)
Almost Meets Standard	32.8% (21)	5.9% (3)
Did Not Meet Standard	0	0
TOTAL	64	51

Re-Offending:

(Data for year ending Sep 15)	England	West Mercia	Herefordshire
Proportion of cohort re-offending	37.4%	31.5%	40.7%
Number of re-offences per re-offender	3.35	3.58	3.26

32. Resources and Commissioning

32.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Commissioning and contracting
- Strategic commissioning for children, young people and families, including support for looked after children, care leavers, children with disabilities and children community health services.
- Contract management across a range of services, including LAC & CNS placements, advocacy, independent visitors, social care out of hours, early help, short breaks for disabled children.

Areas of strength

What impact is your service having for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

- Improving understanding of population-level needs and redesigning services to meet need while managing cost within available resources
- Placement sufficiency strategy has helped to reduce reliance on residential placements and increase the availability of in-house foster carers
- New family-based overnight short breaks scheme for disabled children established in 2016, now providing over 200 nights per year
- 151 disabled children supported in 2016-2017 with DP, daytime and/or overnight breaks. Targeted daytime activities, without a social care assessment, were accessed by 69 children. Of those children with a social care assessment, 68 children received direct payments, 40 accessed specialist daytime activities and 20 accessed specialist overnight short break in family based or residential setting.
- New targeted short breaks allowance scheme for disabled children from April 2017, targeting around 175 children with up to £350 per year to purchase short breaks activities of their choice. By mid-May, 50 applications had been approved at the maximum amount. Further applications are expected during the year ahead, and numbers are expected to grow in year two as the scheme becomes better known.
- Fewer young people remaining in custody out of hours
- Plans to provide clinical support for children with complex health needs in schools
- Initial improvements to paediatric therapy waiting times

What outcomes is your service delivering for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

- Managing placement cost at a time of growing demand
- More children placed in family settings and in-county
- Improving range of short breaks options – 2/3 families happy/very happy with the short breaks (2016 survey)

What evidence do you have?

- Placement sufficiency analysis
- HIPSS/TISS contract monitoring
- EDT contract monitoring
- Short breaks consultation and engagement 2016

- Case studies

32.2 Areas for further development

Areas of improvement

What does your service need to improve for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

- Allow sufficient time within the commissioning and decision-making cycle to involve more children and families in the improvement and redesign of services
- Systematically gather feedback from intended service users about their outcomes and satisfaction
- Undertake contract compliance visits to ensure quality and value of externally provided services

How will you know that you have achieved your identified improvements?

- Decisions and equality impact assessments are routinely informed service user voices
- Service specifications are developed in a co-productive approach
- Contract management is informed directly by service user voices, rather than relying on feedback reported by the service provider
- Contract compliance visits are undertaken and any issues are addressed or escalated as appropriate

Areas of concern

What areas of concern do you have in relation to your service?

- Very limited capacity to undertake placement and service contract compliance visits
- Ensuring sufficient time for consultation, engagement and voice
- Historic contract performance measures don't sufficiently demonstrate service impact

How are you proposing to mitigate against these areas of concern?

- Placement intelligence is shared between regional commissioning authorities, and any concern is escalated locally within social care to ensure that individual children in placement are appropriately safeguarded.
- Quarterly service contract management meetings are held with the involvement of technical experts, who bring operational intelligence about service performance and quality. Service providers submit quarterly performance reports. Intention that recently appointed contract monitoring support officer will resume site visits in 2017. Plans, subject to resources, to build-on work to contact service users directly for their personal feedback.
- Improving the commissioning forward plan to ensure timely analysis of needs, co-production, and decision-making
- Use of outcomes logic model in service specifications
- Additional staffing would provide capacity to systematically gather feedback directly from service users and conduct appropriate contract compliance visits. Some resource is available within existing team budget, and the recruitment of planned short breaks broker, would release further capacity within the team

How will this impact on your service delivery for the children and young people of Herefordshire?

- Additional capacity would strengthen opportunities for co-production in commissioning and contract management work and increase capacity to undertake contract compliance visits to help assure service quality and performance
- Outcome logic model will help to measure service impact

33. CAMHS

33.1 Areas where we are making most progress

- Managing the waiting list –
 - Referral to Initial Assessment - 100% of referrals to CAMHS are seen for initial assessment within 4 weeks
 - Referral to Treatment - over 90% of patients receive treatment within 18 weeks (national standard)
 - Eating Disorder referrals – 100% of urgent referrals seen within 1 week; 100% of routine appointments seen within 4 weeks
- Development of the duty pathway for children and young people with a mental health crisis
 - Introduction of extended hours (8-8) during weekdays and on call cover (9-5) at weekends to support WVT Childrens Ward in completing same day mental health assessments, support to WVT staff in managing patients on the ward, provision of advice, consultation and training
- Development of the Eating Disorder Pathway to meet new national standards – participation in new national training; development of a new pathway involving WVT staff to provide holistic assessments and treatment linking to Gloucestershire Eating Disorder Service
- Participation in national CYP IAPT Programme as a partnership with HCC, CCG, CLD Trust-focus on improving standards, access to services, training in evidence based practice, use of Routine Outcome Measures (ROMs), Developing Participation.
- Free training to multi agency partners across the county
- Improving relationships between social care colleagues and CAMHS to enhance referral discussions and collaborative care
- Membership of the Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing steering group as part of the Children and Young People's Partnership for Herefordshire – opportunities to collaborate and discuss key issues across the county, push to develop new or reconfigured services to match resources available, understanding how services fit together.

33.2 Areas for further development

- Improving the physical environment for CAMHS – challenges for staff and patients due to inappropriate and overcrowded accommodation, poor decoration, carpets, access and a lack of a dedicated waiting room
- More assertive management of the Referral to Treatment timescales to reduce waiting times.
- Ongoing review of the Duty and Eating Disorder pathways as they develop to ensure they are bedding in, meet requirements and reflect cross agency collaborative working
- More creative ways to support recruitment due to national shortages of trained staff
- Development of Participation with children and young people which is currently limited due to the building, facilities and lack of dedicated staff time

34. Other Initiatives/Working Groups

Human resources and organisational development

The Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR and OD) service impacts children and young people in Herefordshire by:

- Ensuring that any staff who make contact with children are well trained, properly qualified, and motivated to do a good job
- Are fit to undertake the roles we have employed them to do in terms of their personal qualities, attitude, approach and background.
- Making sure we don't give jobs to people who are not suitable to work with children and young people or who might put them at risk
- Making sure we provide a working environment which gets the best out of our staff.
- Dealing fairly and swiftly with any situations in which our staff might not be acting in the best interests of children and young people.

34.1 Areas where we are making the most progress

Areas of strength

- We are able to meet health and safety legislative requirements and comply with employment law.
- The directorate has built a good foundation for getting stable workforce in place and reducing our reliance on agency staff.
- The HR team is motivated, willing and cares about doing a good job.

34.2 Areas for further development

Areas of improvement

We need the following:

- To develop and implement a strategic resourcing plan for vacant posts (building on the work already underway in the directorate). If we have a more stable workforce, and rely less on agency staff, this will reduce the number of times children and their families have to deal with new workers who don't know them.
- A management development programme for new and existing managers. This will help make sure all our staff are well trained and able to do their jobs well.
- Develop the culture of the service which reflects organisational values.
- Better access to training in HR related topics such as managing performance and coaching skills.
- A workforce plan which focuses on talent management and succession planning ensuring a strong supply of staff leading to a more stable workforce.
- A staff engagement strategy and action plan to make sure we listen to our staff and take action to make work better where we can.
- A review of our remuneration package for key posts so we are able to attract and retain the best staff to work with children and families.

Areas of concern

- The HR&OD service has limited resources. The service is supported by just 1.0 wte part qualified HR Advisor who has access to business partner and Head of HR&OD for support, escalation and management.
- Additional resources in terms of funding for training and development and short term project management will be needed. It is understood that a business case for this will be positively received.

35. **The Local Authority Safeguarding Children's Board**

35.1 Areas where we are making most progress

Safeguarding vulnerable children/ Child protection

- Clarifying thresholds and understanding of 'significant harm' across partnership; the impact is a reduction in numbers of children subject of a CP plan, revision of MASH arrangements
- Raising awareness of impact of domestic abuse and neglect on children; the impact is an improved understanding across partnership, strengthened focus on neglect during current year

CSE and children missing

- Overseeing delivery of CSE strategy and action plan; the impact is an improved awareness across partnership, inclusion in training for all taxi drivers, more coordinated approach to identifying and safeguarding vulnerable children

- Commissioned JSNA re CSE; the impact identified significant issue re rates of sexual offences against children, raised with CSP and now adopted as a priority for understanding and addressing in coming year.

Neglect

- Neglect strategy agreed, with action plan; the impact is a collective agreement to prioritise and improve effectiveness of activity to address neglect, including adoption of common approach to assessment
- Publication of SCR; the impact has been an improved understanding of overlap between disability and neglect (with implications for professionals); identifying and addressing training needs re working with specific minority groups; developing focus on particular vulnerabilities of children with disabilities.

Early help

- Revision and promotion of thresholds document; the impact is an improving understanding, identification and early response to families needing additional help at an early stage
- Identification of problems in delivery of substance misuse services to parents; the impact is a challenge to agencies, review of contract and commissioning arrangements, improved professional awareness.

35.2 Areas for further development

Priorities for this year:

- a. Priority 1: Neglect.
- b. Priority 2: Child sexual abuse and exploitation (including children who go missing).
- c. Priority 3: Safeguarding vulnerable children.
- d. Priority 4: Early help.
- e. Priority 5: Strong leadership, strong partnership.

36. New Ofsted Framework Questions

Please provide a judgement and an overview as to how you believe you are performing against the following questions being asked within the new Ofsted Framework, please respond in bullet-point format;

Practice:

Q1. What do you know about practice?

- A well-motivated, professional service whose members know their children well and have clear outcomes for them however this is not translated into consistent case recording or good quality assessments and plans.

Q2. How do you know?

- All managers undertake monthly case file audits.
- Performance reporting.
- Quality Assurance reports, capturing a range of information including the views of IROs, complaints, compliments and audits.
- Local Family Justice Board data and discussion.
- Peer review findings.
- LSCB audit findings.
- Serious Case Review and Professional Learning Review findings.

Q3. What are you doing to improve it?

- Single, comprehensive but succinct improvement plan.
- Sharing findings above with teams, encouraging discussion.
- Embedding key findings in CPD programme.

Q4. How well are Directors following Social Workers, talking to Social Workers, and knowing what they are saying and seeing for themselves; to ensure they are creating the right conditions for children to flourish and good social work to happen?

Recent peer review recognised the strong connection and understanding of cases and casework. More could be done at a director, lead member and chief executive level. Audit approach does provide the opportunity for Director and AD to discuss individual cases being audited with the social worker.

37. Peer Challenge:

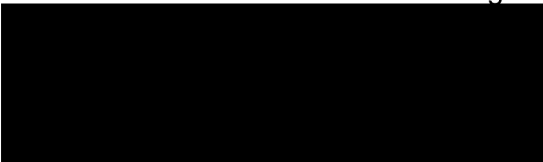
What areas of your self-evaluation would you welcome the most peer challenge on at the Regional Peer Challenge Day on 22nd November 2017?

- Journey of the child - CIN and LAC, children moving to permanency and leaving care, focus on the transitions and consistent application of internal thresholds, including CWD.
- Step up/step down from social care and partner's role in this. Is enough being done to support and prevent C&YP coming into the care system?
- Once C&YP have come into the care system what more can be done to support a return home or move on to permanency
- Education outcomes for vulnerable groups – narrowing the gap for pupils eligible for FSM. Raising attainment at Key Stage 2 and 4.

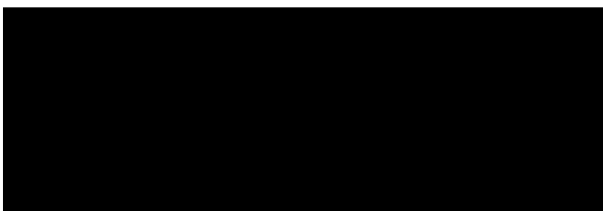
38. Self-Evaluation Approval Confirmation

This Self-Assessment has been fully approved and signed-off by:

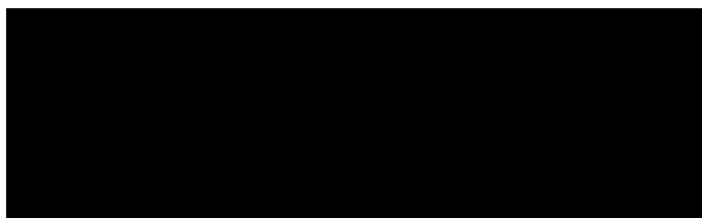
Interim Director Children's Wellbeing: Chris Baird



Chief Executive: Alistair Neill








Lead Member: Cllr Jonathan Lester



Submitted by: Chris Jones
Strategic Business Intelligence Manager

Date: 18/10/2017
E-Mail: chris.jones@herefordshire.gov.uk
Tel No: 01432 261596

Self-Assessment Evidence/Examples/Case-Studies Index

Page	Footnote	Title	Summary
1		Outcome of LGA Peer Review Report	Report that outlines the outcome of the casework peer review – Appendix 1  Appendix 1 - LGA Feedback Report Peer
1		Outcome of LGA Peer Review presentation	Presentation given by the peer review team following their time onsite in June 2017 - Appendix 2  Appendix 2 - Outcome of peer review
4		Childrens Wellbeing Directorate Senior Management team structure	Structure chart Appendix 3  Appendix 3 - Childrens Wellbeing Directorate
4		Education and Commissioning Structure chart	Structure chart Appendix 4  Appendix 4 - Education and Commissioning
4		Safeguarding and Family Support Structure chart	Structure chart Appendix 5  Appendix 5 - Safeguarding and Family Support