

Executive Summary

Action Plans have been implemented across the safeguarding, family support, early help and support services, including performance and recruitment to deliver the Ofsted Improvement Plan and are monitored monthly by the Director and Assistant Directors. Action plans are updated on a monthly basis, with a clear indication of progress and the monitoring of areas of challenge. A number of key operational indicators have improved during the first three months of the improvement plan; these include the reduction in social worker caseloads, timeliness of visits to children who have a child protection plan, and an increase in levels of supervision taking place.

There has been a number of key achievements across the service; there has been a reduction in the number of children referred inappropriately into MASH, as a result of the reintroduction of the MASH Partnership forum and multi-agency audit activity in MASH. There has been an improvement in the completion of assessments within timescales; as at the end of December 2018, 100% of assessments were carried out within timescale, an improvement from 39% in September 2018.

There has also been a concerted effort to improve the quality of assessments by auditing work, providing social workers with feedback and learning opportunities to increase their skills and competence when completing assessments. In January there will be a further audit of assessments to measure improvement in practice.

Child in Need (CIN) guidance has been developed and signed off, following a review which included the auditing of approximately 40 CIN cases, which will give clarity on the approach to CIN work in Herefordshire. Strategy Meeting guidance has also been reviewed and implemented.

Schools have been set attainment targets for Looked after Children (LAC) and ePEPs are being audited to ensure standards and targets are being met. In addition, various training has been delivered, including life story work and case recording, and a reporting mechanism has been developed in order to monitor the effectiveness of training. To ensure the resource issue was specifically addressed, a retention package was implemented, which included a market forces supplement and individual learning accounts.

The key issues for Herefordshire children and families remain, frequency of supervision, quality of assessments and plans, timeliness of visits, evidencing management grip and permanent recruitment. Whilst we now have more social workers in post via the regional scheme, these are agency posts and recruitment to permanent posts remains a challenge. Permanent social work vacancies being filled by agency staff leaves the authority at risk in terms of periods of notice and continuity of workers. Other vacancies are also proving difficult to recruit to, these being QA Manager, Principal Social Worker, and Advanced Practitioner.

Performance - Directorate

Key Operational Indicators

	Current performance	Improvement/ Decline	Commentary
Worker caseloads (average no. per worker – operational social work teams, excluding fostering & adoption)	17	Improvement	16+ max caseload – 24 Assess (1&2) max caseload – 20 CP max caseload – 20 CWD max caseload – 22
Virtual School	46	No change	LAC max caseload – 23

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Supervision – case (%) (within 3 months – 16+, assessment teams, CP & Court, LAC and children with disabilities)	61%	Improvement	46% (end of September 2018) 45% (end of October 2018) 54% (end of November 2018)
Virtual School	14	Improvement	
Supervision – worker (%) (Social work teams, including adoption, fostering, Early Help, Family Support, LAC Support & Business Support)	75%	Improvement	79% (end of September 2018) 87% (end of October 2018) 68% (end of November 2018)
Virtual School	5	Decline	
Visits in timescale (%) (target 85% by end Dec)	CP – 85% CIN – 59% LAC – 74%	Improvement Improvement Improvement	Visits in time (some reports have data quality issues inc. LAC and CIN visits in terms of the report not picking up the correct information. This is being addressed). CP 69% LAC 65% CIN 41% (end of September 2018) CP 79% LAC 54% CIN 46% (end of October 2018) CP 67% LAC 77% CIN 45%
ePEP meetings overdue	3	No change	(end of November 2018)
Cases unallocated (no. of cases unallocated to a worker, but allocated to the team – operational social work teams)	0	Improvement	1 September 2018 5 October 1 November
Virtual School	0	No change	
Recruitment and Retention (HC8 & HC9 social workers registered with the health care professionals council)	Amber	Improvement	Regional Scheme - 8 workers appointed and further CV's received. I People Project - 1 worker appointed. Permanent Head of Service recruitment to begin in January 2019.

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Delivery		
Key Achievements this period (November/December 2018)		
Deliverable	Completion date	Comments
Implementation of performance report suite of reports and used on a weekly basis to review team performance	01/10/18	AD reviews performance with heads of service and this is then reviewed at Directorate SMT. Accuracy of performance reports needs further improvement.
Group supervision and reflection	15/11/18	Twice monthly to assessment teams. Will be rolled out to other service areas.
Life story work training delivered to Looked After Children (LAC) Team.	29/11/18	
Reporting mechanism developed to monitor the effectiveness of training.	30/11/18	Heath check reported 75% effectiveness of training over the past 12 months.
Strategy meeting workshop and guidance revised.	30/11/18	Guidance completed and revised agenda in use.
Retention Package	30/11/18	Implemented market forces supplement and individual learning accounts.
Family Support Workers recruited to complete backlog of life story books and later life letters for children who have been adopted.	30/11/18	2 permanent and 3 fixed term workers have started in post.
MASH and Assessment - improvement in quality and timeliness of assessments.	30/11/18	Assessments performance – 39% September 2018. 62% November 2018.
School LAC data scrutinised and key issues and trends identified.	01/12/18	KS4, 3 year trend (2016 – 2018) at Hereford Academy where both A8 and P8 scores have declined.
Virtual School Team undertaking robust conversations with schools regarding the progress their pupils are making.	03/12/18	All LAC education officers have now activated their FFT accounts.
Schools set appropriate and rigorous attainment targets for LAC.	03/12/18	6 ePEPs audited – 2 were below standard and included poor targets for pupils. This is being followed up with the respective schools.
Case recording workshops delivered to all front line staff.	03/12/18	Workshops delivered monthly (20/11/18 and 03/12/18).
Reduction of strategy meetings and Section 47.	14/12/18	Performance Report for November 2018 indicates a 22% reduction in strategy meetings since July 18.

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A decline in the number of children referred to MASH.	14/12/18	780 contacts in September 2018. 520 contacts in November 2018.
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Risks and Issues		
Description	Impact	Action/Mitigation
MASH and Assessment - poor quality assessments, plans and intervention.	Limited outcomes achieved for children, young people and their families. Possible increase in number of children subject to child protection plans and care proceedings.	Continue to run assessment training workshops and develop the role of the Senior Practitioners within the teams.
Quality of practice and compliance in Child in Need (CIN) cases.	Herefordshire Council unable to evidence improvements.	Implementation of CIN Guidance. Weekly performance meetings to focus on visiting and planning.
CP and Court Team - case supervisions not taking place.	Herefordshire Council unable to demonstrate management grip on cases.	Weekly performance meetings to focus on supervisions. Review Supervision Pathway in order to enable easier recording of case supervision.
Interface between Children's Social Care and Early Help is unclear, step down process in particular.	Increased risks to children and young people, due to lack of interventions following Children's Social Care closure of cases. Increase in referral rates.	Develop a robust, fluid and effective step up/step down process. Provide additional capacity within the Early Help Team. Review current engagement between Children's Social Care and Early Help and embed a robust interface.
Delegated Authority Forms not embedded in practice.	Delays in making day to day care decisions for children.	10 cases audited monthly to monitor compliance and progress. August 2018 – 35% completed delegated authority on file. September 2018 – 70% October 2018 – 70%
Delay in embedding Early Help assessments in Mosaic.	Unable to ensure consistent reporting in line with the other operational teams.	Workflow developed, awaiting upgrade of Mosaic to be completed by Hoople ICT before can be embedded.
Increased demands on the Performance Team for ad hoc reports.	Stretched resource will impact on agreed timescales.	Requests for data and reports to be discussed/prioritised with senior managers prior to submission to Performance Team. Revised timescales plotted and will be monitored closely.
Virtual School - national data for external measures in 2018 not yet available.	Comparisons between LAC and non LAC cannot be made.	Continue to chase for data.

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Number of pupils on track to achieve expected grade in English and Maths (KS4) is low.	Herefordshire Council LAC outcomes fall below the national for LAC.	Virtual Head and/or LAC Education Officer will visit all schools by the end of the term where pupils are not on track.
ePEPs are of varying quality and do not contain focused rigorous academic targets.	Some schools ePEPs might not meet requirements.	Virtual Health continue to monitor ePEPs.
LAC Health Nurse on long term sick and Lead Nurse for Paediatrics leaves 31/12/18.	Development of LAC health passport for care leavers delayed.	Continue to work with LAC Health Nurse and await appointment by WVT.
CP and Court Team vacancies not recruited to.	Caseloads increase. May lead to poor decision making.	Interviews scheduled for January 2019. New staff member commences 02/01/19.
Principle Social Worker and Advanced Practitioner vacancies not recruited to.	Training and policy development may be delayed if vacancies not filled.	Recruitment has commenced internally and externally. Remaining Advanced Practitioner given early increment.
Performance Officer vacancy not recruited to.	Increased workload within the team may result in delays in providing performance data.	Mosaic Development Plan - priorities agreed with AD.
Recruited agency workers do not commence work.	Caseloads increase. May lead to poor decision making.	Use of the regional scheme has reduced risk. Workers appointed have arrived and contracts have been extended.
Demotivation of staff not receiving market forces supplement leads to resignations and a gap in workforce.	Caseloads increase. May lead to poor decision making.	Issues discussed with staff, but a degree of dissatisfaction remains in those not receiving the market forces supplement.

Decisions and Sign Off

What?	By whom?	By when?	Outcome/comments
Family Meeting Procedure	AD/HoS	21/12/18	Procedure has been drafted and agreed and is being implemented
Early Help revised pages on Herefordshire Council website.	Chris Baird	21/12/18	Implications would require significant changes to website. Checks being made on whether this will provide an increase in accessing early help. Early help assessments currently increasing significantly under current system.
Selection of provider for urban to rural recruitment programme.	Andrew Kerry	07/01/19	
Reporting Development Plan (Performance Team) to be reprioritised.	Performance Lead/Service Manager/AD/HoS	14/01/19	To be reviewed and re-prioritised at AD / HoS meeting.
International recruitment.	Chris Baird	21/01/19	Preparatory work has been undertaken and will be taken

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			forward depending upon the success of the urban to rural recruitment initiative.
MASH's Sharing Information Agreement.	Local Safeguarding Children's Board	31/03/19	Legal requirements for sharing information within the MASH is being progressed and is due to be taken to the MASH Partnership Forum