

Overview: - (Chris Baird Director for Children and Families)

Herefordshire children's safeguarding self-assessment has been produced to broadly reflect the child's journey across service areas. It also incorporates reflections on quality assurance, performance management, systems and development and workforce including recruitment and retention.

The self-assessment is updated on a quarterly basis with each head of service/service manager taking an active role in producing the assessment for their area. This continues our approach of developing our performance management culture. This self-assessment is up to the end of the fourth quarter for the 2019/20 financial year.

Herefordshire has been rated as requiring improvement for overall effectiveness by Ofsted in the 2018 inspection of local authority children's services. Within this the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection and the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection were judged as requiring improvement. The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families was judged inadequate, overall in not securing an environment within which good quality social work can flourish, whilst recognising that some areas had improved since the last inspection insufficient progress had been made in a number of key areas.

The Ofsted focused visit of January 2019 looked at the local authority's arrangements for receiving referrals about children who may be in need or at risk of significant harm, children transferring to and from Early Help services, the effectiveness of child protection enquiries and the quality of assessments and interventions for children in need of help and protection. From a very low base action taken by senior leaders had improved the overall stability of the social care workforce and that this had been achieved over a relatively short period of time. Plans for improvement were appropriately focused, with a realistic view of quality of practice which was too variable and not yet good. Revised performance management and quality assurance approaches were starting to show some early impact. The pace of progress was hampered by staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting to key management posts including the lead officer for quality assurance. There continued to be strong political and corporate support for children's services.

These themes were echoed in the Ofsted focused visit of December 2019 which looked at our arrangements for children in need and children subject to a child protection plan. This included elements of contextual safeguarding, particularly peer on peer abuse. Little progress had been made in improving the quality of practice, including the quality of management supervision and guidance and timely recording and response to audits. Work was affected by recruitment. There was recognition that we know ourselves well, that the quality assurance framework provides appropriate and in depth knowledge, that there is senior leadership commitment to the service including resourcing and further plans for development. There was recognition of the work in the children with disabilities team which was noted as being demonstrably different. There was also strong recognition of the extensive strategic and operational work regarding peer on peer abuse, including the work with education settings.

Herefordshire has continued to implement the recommendations from external high-performing Partners in Practice (PIP), from both Doncaster and Essex Councils in 2019. Using PiP support was planned to continue to in 2020 to support our improvement and has the commitment from the DfE. However the international coronavirus pandemic is now fundamentally affecting the way we work, including the ability to meet colleagues from Essex. We will be working with the DfE and Essex to take forward improvement work virtually where this is possible.

Summary: Early Help (Nicky Turvey – Early Help Manager)**What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)**

The Early Help approach in Herefordshire is 'Working towards Stronger Families and Connected Communities'.

Early Help has developed considerably over the past two years since the introduction of Herefordshire's Early Help Assessment (EHA) which replaced the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). There are 1287 EHAs compared with 500 CAFs in January 2018.

Families with emerging or more complex needs below the threshold of requiring statutory intervention are identified and assessed using the EHA. The assessment is of the whole family and identifies their unmet needs then an outcome focused support plan is drawn up with the family to bring about sustainable change and leave the family stronger for the future. Each family has a 'Key Worker' who is the main link for the family and coordinates the agencies required to bring about the sustainable change.

Partnership working is strong within Early Help in Herefordshire. Data for the year 2018/19: The Key Worker for EHAs - Primary Schools 23.4%, Health Visitors 21.4%, Secondary Schools 16.4% and Local Authority staff 14.1%.

Early Help is fully integrated with the Troubled Families programme, the EHA is linked to the troubled families criteria and outcomes for families to the Herefordshire Family Outcomes Framework, recently updated in line with the new Troubled Families Financial Framework 2020/21.

Early Help Assessments are managed by the Early Help Coordinator team who administer the assessments, support key workers and organise and facilitate Family Network Meetings (FNMs). FNMs are multi-agency meetings where partner agencies meet to discuss cases which are sticking (with the consent of the family), share good practice and discuss any community concerns. These are usually held twice termly in eight locations throughout the county and are well attended by representatives from schools, health professionals, mental health workers, housing associations, Police and voluntary agencies but due to Covid 19 they have been suspended and early help coordinators are following up cases by telephone and giving advice and guidance as required. The FNM's are usually chaired by an experienced Early Help Manager and social care provide a senior social worker at every other meeting to give advice and guidance on cases. The presence of a social care representative since November 2018 has been appreciated by partner agencies.

Early Help internal support services are trained in Make Every Contact Count (MECC) so are equipped to talk to, signpost and support families about healthy eating, oral health (childhood obesity and dental health are both issues in Herefordshire), physical activity, smoking cessation, alcohol consumption, sexual health and mental wellbeing. Early Help delivers Solihull and Triple P parenting programmes to mixed groups of parents from those accessing just universal services to those with children on Child Protection Plans. The programmes are Solihull for parents of children 0-5 years, Triple P standard for parents of children 2-10, Triple P Teen for parents with teenagers, and Stepping Stones Triple P for parents of children with additional needs. The programmes are delivered throughout the county where the needs are and at times to suit parents.

There are three specialist family support services working with the whole family with EHAs. They go into the family home and work with individual family members and families as a whole. The three services are; an internal, experienced Early Help Family Support team which works with families with the most complex needs and those families stepping down from statutory intervention; Vennture4families, a commissioned service using a professional link worker and volunteer model; and Homestart, also commissioned and which uses a volunteer model. Vennture work with families who are lower level three on the Herefordshire level of needs and Homestart with families with less complex needs. The specialist services seek to address the core issues affecting families systemically such as parenting issues, mental health issues, domestic abuse, problem debts, parental conflict, drugs and alcohol abuse, with a strong focus on worklessness using the Troubled Families Employment Advisor.

Implication to the services of COVID-19 and the work rounds:

The three specialist services have suspended visits to the vast majority of families but are all continuing to work with families by phone or using 'WhatsApp' video facility. Visiting families is only completed if a family is at risk of escalating to social care, the family agree to the visit and the Public Health latest guidelines are followed.

These specialist services continue to close cases with a 'Family Wellbeing Plan' which leaves the family with information on the success they've achieved and where to go within their family, friends and community if they have a 'wobble' rather than perhaps letting things slide and requiring specialist services intervention again. The plan can have a photo of the family on it and be laminated so it can be put on the fridge for easy access.

The link between Early Help and MASH continues to develop and there is a plan to move towards all level 1, 2 and 3 cases to automatically be sent to early help. An Early Help coordinator still sits in MASH to complete MASH checks. Early help continues to follow up cases from MASH which includes: identifying with the family the most appropriate agency to complete an Early Help assessment and so starting the process of getting a package of support in place for the family, to signposting to a single agency for support without requiring an Early Help assessment e.g. Grandparents who were looking after their grandchild were concerned they could no longer do this as they couldn't afford to - they were put in contact with Pension Credits.

Children Centre services was restructured in June 2019 in order to target resources to support the most vulnerable families with children 0-5 years and use some resource to engage and map community assets for families with children 0-18. The service now has a team of early years support workers who deliver one to one support in families' homes using evidence based intervention such as Let's Talk with your Baby, Communication Steps, Bookstart Corner, Solihull Parenting, and they can give guidance and support on, for example, healthy eating, dental health and immunisations. During Covid 19 this service is mainly working remotely with families by phone and WhatsApp video conferencing.

The Solid Roots programme is an investment to improve outcomes for foundation (0-5) children and families. This includes training for early years professionals to ensure children have adequate speech, language and communication skills so that they are ready to engage in school. Training early year's professionals in the Solihull Approach and purchasing Solihull licenses so all parents in Herefordshire can access Solihull parenting courses on line and training the early year's workforce in a range of areas to ensure all children reach a good level of development. During Covid 19 the training for early years professionals has been suspended but the Solihull on line parenting courses continue to be promoted.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Early Help Assessment data is collated and analysed on a monthly basis. The data has shown the increase in the number of families being identified, assessed and supported to achieve sustainable change. In 2018 there were 500 Early Help cases with evidence of approximately 30% making sustainable change, in February 2020 there were 1287 early help cases. The current conversion rate is 76.8% of families who meet at least two Troubled Families criteria and making sustainable change for at least 6 months (Troubled Families data).

Early Help assessments are quality assured when received by the Early Help Coordinator (EHC) team. Key workers from partner agencies are supported by the EHC team to improve their assessment skills if required.

The support work of the Early Help family support team is audited on a monthly basis, any actions are addressed within a month through individual supervision sessions or any trends at team meetings. Feedback from families about the service is collated and analysed quarterly in order to develop the service and address any issues. The feedback is almost always positive and compliments about the work of the team is regularly received from families and partner agencies. The two Early Help commissioned services are regularly reviewed at quarterly monitoring meetings.

Areas of strength, evidence

1. Identifying and assessing families in need of Early Help by partner agencies is well established. 500 cases in January 2018 and 1287 in February 2020.
2. Children Centre Services became integrated into Early Help and the EHA is used to access the service in 2019. They now supporting the most vulnerable families with children 0-5 years. The measure will be through Troubled Families payment by results.
3. Two primary schools are paying for the 'added value' of having an EH FSW linked to their school as they see the benefit of the work they do.
4. All three specialist family support services are trialing the closure of cases with a 'Family Wellbeing Plan' This leaves the family with a plan of who to go to within their own network of family, friends and the community before requiring any specialist services, leaving them stronger.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. To further develop the Early Help work in MASH through a single front door. October 2020.
2. To develop a strength based approach within Early Help – Signs of Safety to be rolled out over the next three years.
3. To develop the use of Mosaic as a database for all Early Help partners. It is used as a caseload management system by internal council teams which allows information to be shared easily when cases are stepped up or down. The development will be through a portal - Finestre with controlled access for partners but allowing information to flow both ways. March 2021.
4. To improve the knowledge of Herefordshire's community assets available to families and share this knowledge on WISH (Wellbeing, Information & Signposting for Herefordshire) and with partner agencies. Phase 1 completed. Regular checking of information and sharing at Family Network Meetings.

Thinking about practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that the early help practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being early help practice has just lost its and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: MASH and Assessment Service (Sue Rogers – Head of MASH and Assessment)**What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)**

The June 2018 OFSTED inspection identified that the “Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is responsive and ensures that good-quality information sharing results in strong decision-making”. The January 2019 OFSTED focused visit commented “effectiveness of responses in the MASH has been maintained and improved since the last inspection”.

Previously MASH were using data measuring contacts completed in a one day timescale. This was not compliant with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. MASH are now reporting on contacts completed within 24 hours. Performance data for MASH indicates that an average of 44% of all contacts were completed within 24 hours. This is well below the target of 95%. To ensure all contacts are completed within 24 hours the MASH Team now receive a report 3 times a day which provides them with a rag rate determined by timing. Additional Social Worker capacity has been provided. Development of the Early Help Hub will improve the timeliness of contacts being completed.

All contacts have a chronology of past risk, concern and involvement with Children’s Services. Every attempt is made to contact the parents/ carers for consent for multi-agency checks which are routinely requested. It is an expectation that the threshold document will be used by partners to inform making referrals to MASH, and by MASH social workers to determine the best course of action required for that child/family. There is also an expectation consent will be sought by the referring agency prior to a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) being submitted.

There continues to be a strong multi-agency commitment and engagement with the MASH. Police, Health, Early Help and Education are the main agencies based within the MASH and Probation, Youth Offending Service (YOS) and West Mercia Women’s Aid are our virtual partners.

Strategy discussions take place within the MASH at the point of referral if required and immediate actions are taken to safeguard children.

OFSTED noted that a significant number of contacts are signposted away from children’s social care, which would indicate that too many children were being referred that did not reach threshold for intervention. The amount of contacts received have remained the same, there has been a slight increase of re-referrals received, and an increase of cases being referred to the Early Help Team. However, once Early Help have been referred to there is a delay for some family support going into place. Q4 has seen consistency in contacts converting to referrals. Data evidences that between 20% and 13% of contacts progress to referrals and the need for intervention. This is in line with our statistical neighbors. Monthly multi agency performance meetings are held to consider cases and ensure a consistent and appropriate threshold is applied.

The Head of Service for MASH and Assessment and Early Help visited Redbridge Local Authority in December 2019. Redbridge Local Authority are Ofsted rated “outstanding” and are achieving their target of 95% of contacts being completed within 24 hours. We are strengthening our approach, learning from Redbridge to develop the front door. Currently we have a system that all Multi agency referral forms come through the MASH which could be diverted to

Early Help. Work has been done between the Head of Services of MASH and Early Help to present options to the Senior Management Team with an aim to ensure children and families receive the most appropriate and timely support they need to prevent Social Care involvement. The implementation of the Early Help Hub is planned for September 2020. This will ensure a timely response from the most appropriate service to ensure children are safe and supported.

The Emergency Duty Team (EDT) service is commissioned by Herefordshire Council. Worcestershire Children First provide the out of hours services for Herefordshire. There is a senior manager from Herefordshire available to make decisions when required.

OFSTED noted that Domestic Abuse notifications are not triaged prior to them arriving into MASH and that the process potentially could have left children at risk or not responded to in a timely manner. Work has been undertaken with partner agencies to develop a process that effectively manages the Domestic Abuse notifications. Domestic Abuse meeting take place on a daily basis with partner agencies on DASH assessed standard and medium risk to ensure appropriate information sharing and support is provided. DASH high risk are investigated by MASH. Further development is being undertaken to enhance the Domestic Abuse Hub with all partner agencies. Contact has been made with Safelives to consider their models and utilizing their training opportunities.

The OFSTED report of July 2018 outlined an inconsistency in the quality of assessments. During the summer of 2018, much work was undertaken, led by the then Quality Assurance manager to develop skills in completing assessments within the service. It was noted that this was not consistent and the historical concerns were not routinely considered. The focused visit in January 2019 evidenced some improvement in the quality of assessments, but identified some children were not being seen in a timely manner. To address this, there is now an expectation children will be seen within 3 days of a case being allocated for the purposes of an assessment being completed, and this is reported on. Data evidences that 62% of children are seen within 3 days of the assessment being initiated. This is an improvement but below the target of 95%. Smaller caseloads and weekly reporting will drive this forward.

Time frames for Children and Family Assessments being completed are set at 95%. The Assessment Service are standing at an average of 90.66% completed within timescales. This is a significant improvement from Q3 but still falls below target.

Whilst the Assessment Service has seen a significant decrease in caseloads. This is due to the recruitment of staff and consistent thresholds being applied in MASH. ASYE's hold no more than 10 cases. Experience Social Workers hold no more than 20 cases.

Child in Need cases remain in the Assessment Teams. There are 9 full time equivalent Family Support Worker posts within the Assessment Teams who provide support and direct work with the children and families who are subject to a Child in Need plan. Team Managers are chairing the first Child in Need meeting and devising the Child in Need plan. Case supervision is provided by the Team Manager and the Family Support Worker to ensure consistency and that the plan is progressing appropriately. Senior Practitioners chair the Review Child in need meetings.

To address the timeliness of 3 day visits, Children and Family Assessments and caseloads, the Head of Service and Managers have weekly performance meetings and daily briefings to ensure targets are met.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

A weekly performance report measures the overall rate of contacts that the service receives and the outcome of all contacts following the initial screening process. This is measured in terms of the percentage of referrals passed to children's social care, advice and information provided or cases diverted to early intervention. Multi agency audits are completed to review cases that have not progressed from contact to referral to scrutinize decision making. The outcome of these audits is fed into the MASH Partnership Forum.

The weekly performance report provides details of all strategy meetings, s47s, and Child and Family Assessments. The reports provide information on timeliness and outcomes. Staff performance is recorded and challenged if required. The Monthly Information Booklet provides information regarding trends, challenges and volume within the service and what is working well.

Social work practice in the MASH and Assessment Service is monitored through management oversight. Every MASH record, Children and Family Assessment, and s47 is signed off by a manager. Challenge of threshold is used as a learning mechanism both in supervision, team discussions, group supervision and multi-agency performance meetings. The Head of Service observes 2 supervision each quarter to consider the quality of the supervision being provided.

EDT have operational processes and procedures in place which ensures a high level of performance out of hours. Quarterly monitoring meetings take place to provide scrutiny of the service provided.

Areas of strength, evidence

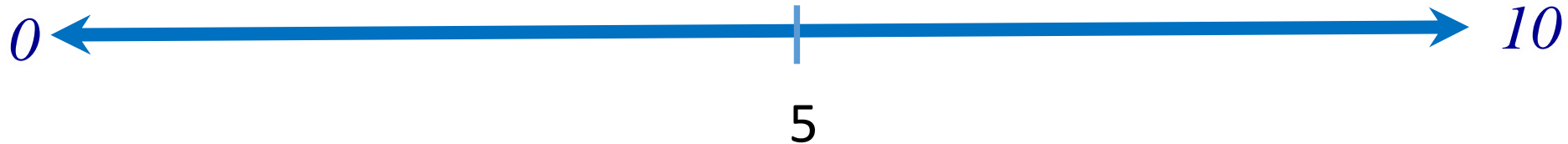
1. The MASH works to a well-established multi-agency model.
2. There are experienced social workers collating information from partner agencies to provide clear recommendations and defensible decisions.
3. Good responses to immediate harm to children between Police, social services and our multi-agency partners.
4. Strong threshold decision-making with good impact of social work and early intervention services.
5. Monthly case audits are undertaken across the management structure and recommendations put in place
6. The Domestic Abuse Hub is embedded and plans put in place to enhance.
7. Regular supervision is taking place and recorded. HoS has observed supervisions to ensure quality of supervision provided.
8. Audit activity is evidencing that improvements have been made.
9. Caseloads are low and consistent

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. We will explore options for best retaining social workers within the MASH and Assessment teams. This is ongoing. Workers, children and their families will benefit from the consistency of experienced and permanent Social Workers.
2. Contacts to be completed within 24 hours. Additional Social Work capacity has been put in place with immediate effect.
3. Development of the Early Help Hub will improve the timeliness of contacts being completed which will provide children and their families with the most appropriate support and safeguards. 1st June 20.
4. Work between MASH and Early Help needs to develop to provide a consistent and fast response to ensure safety and provide appropriate support for children and families.-1st June 2020
5. Work with partners to reduce the level of inappropriate Multi Agency Referral Forms. Monthly performance meetings with partner agencies will continue. This scrutinizes the quality of Multi Agency Referral Forms, the quality of work within the MASH, decision making and

	<p>timeliness of contacts. Findings are presented to the MASH Partnership Forum.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. 100% case supervisions recorded within 3 months by end of Q1. HoS will observe 2 supervisions by 30th June 20. 7. Senior Practitioners will provide reflective supervision individually and within a group. This will improve practice to be completed by end of Q1. 8. Thematic audits will be completed. Child Exploitation May 2020, Pre-birth Assessments April 2020. 9. Completion of strategy meetings, s47's, Child and Family Assessments to meet targets of 95% within timescales. – HoS and Team Managers will drive forward the consistency of the work being completed. This will ensure the safety of children and that the appropriate support is provided-Consistency will be seen by the end of Q1 10. Development of Child in Need (CIN) work with the support from Family Support Workers within the Assessment Teams to ensure all children and families will receive the right services at the right time dependent upon the level of need. Family Support Workers will provide direct work with Children and families. Children's views wishes and feelings will be heard and support provided to reduce the need for children to move to alternate accommodation-Family Support Workers will be recruited and trained by the end of Q1 2020/2021 11. Signs of Safety implementation-a multi-agency approach to working with children, young people and their families to identify and manage needs, risks and family strengths where children are in need of help and protection. Some training has taken place but further training has been delayed due to COVID-19. 12. Embed the learning culture. Thematic audits will continue for MASH and the Assessment Teams. The learning from the audits will be shared by way of reflective workshops, supervision with the Social Worker and Managers and support from the Academy. Social Workers will have support from Senior Practitioners within the teams. Evidence of improved practice will be seen through further audit activity through Q1 2020/2021.
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being that MASH and Assessment practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: Safeguarding and Review (Barb Langstaffe – Head of Safeguarding and Review)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

There are two distinct teams and two further roles within the Safeguarding and Review Service. The two individual roles are that of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who is responsible for responding to allegations against professionals / those in a position of trust who work with or come into contact with children, and the Case Progression Officer, with responsibilities for support and oversight of children's cases progressing to a permanent outcome through the court process or pre-proceedings interventions.

The two distinct teams are the Safeguarding and Review Managers (IROs and Conference Chairs) and the Child Exploitation Team, who provide support and advice to social workers and partner agencies in relation to matters of child exploitation and undertake 1:1 direct work with families and children in this vulnerable group. This service is subject of a separate SEF.

At the end of Quarter 4 there are 7.6 Safeguarding and Review Managers (with mixed Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and CP Conference Chair caseloads) allocated to and with direct case review responsibility for 464 children; undertaking IRO duties for 352 Looked After Children and Conference Chair duties for 112 Child Protection cases. This represents a caseload average of 61. This is a reduction from the caseload average of 67 at the end of the last quarter. A significant change is the ending of one full time fixed term post due to the responsibility for chairing CIN reviews returning to Social Workers. The Safeguarding and Review Managers are line managed by the Principal IRO, who took up their six month fixed term contract post in mid-February, who is in turn line managed by the Interim Head of Service Safeguarding and Review. The team has moved from nearly 50% agency staff twelve months ago to, when the final newly appointed IRO starts their position at the end of June, 100% permanent IROs.

All staff within Safeguarding and Review receive two hours reflective supervision each month in line with supervision policy, with year to date supervisions completed at 90% at the end of quarter 4, within recommended levels but a reduction from previous quarters due to three members of staff being on sick leave at various points since the beginning of the year.

IRO Service:

All Looked After Children are allocated an IRO on completion of the first LAC notification and wherever possible any brothers and sisters also Looked After have the same IRO. A new monitoring system through the 1st Lac Review convening form is being introduced to ensure this is the case and where it is not possible the reasons for this are clearly recorded. LAC Reviews are scheduled in accordance with statutory timescales and when there are proposed changes to a child's care plan. Quarter 4 saw a slight improvement in Lac Review minutes being written and distributed within timescale compared with Quarter 3, although this remains an area for improvement and is being addressed through the use of case action trackers to identify work which remains outstanding at each supervision.

LAC Review minutes are written addressed to the child in the large majority of cases (and where this is appropriate to do so) and IROs evidence the developing relationship with the child through LAC Review minutes and consultations with children. An increasing number of LAC Reviews are undertaken as a series of meetings. Parents of children who are Looked After are kept informed of the progress of their child and have opportunity to contribute to care planning through the Lac Review process. Letters are now sent out to both the child and to parents inviting them to the first Lac Review and introducing them to the child's IRO, providing contact details, information about the frequency of Lac Reviews, how to contribute to care planning and how to make complaints or compliments. Parents are informed that in the very rare event they are not to be invited to their child's Lac Review at some point in the future they should be informed of this in advance and have a right to provide challenge to this through the Independent Reviewing Officer.

The restrictions arising from the Coronavirus pandemic have meant that since the end of March, in line with many other local authorities, all Lac Reviews and Child Protection Conferences are now conducted via video conferencing until further notice. Every effort has been made to ensure children and parents can be fully involved within Webex video based Child Protection Conferences and Lac Reviews, with invitations sent via email and phone to participants who can access meetings by laptop, tablet and smart phones. Where parents / carers do not have access to these they are supported by the child's social worker / fostering social worker in person to access the meeting with the social worker via the webex link. Although there have been some technical issues due to broadband capacity, getting used to the new technology has been relatively straightforward for many parents, children and partner agencies. Where there are difficulties, IROs/Conference Chairs ensure there are preparatory and follow up telephone calls to support child and parent contribution. Due to the same restrictions, IRO Consultations with children prior to Lac Reviews are also conducted via video calls or telephone calls.

IRO Oversight in between LAC Reviews is clearly evidenced on children's files with IROs raising both informally and formally issues in respect of children's care planning and welfare and having improved significantly throughout the year remains a strength. This does requires regular management from the Principal IRO to maintain as the slight dip of 2% this quarter when the PIRO role was not in place has evidenced.

A significant drive has been undertaken at the end of Quarter 4 to identify children with a plan of long term foster care who need an assessment of whether their current placement can become their long term home, what support they and their carers need may to achieve this if a match is not assessed as

appropriate at the time, or what next steps may be needed to move on to other opportunities to achieve a long term, stable placement. This work will be the focus of IRO oversight and escalation in the coming months.

IROs are now accessing independent legal advice where required. Although no independent legal advice was accessed this quarter (this was undertaken twice last quarter), two IROs with similar queries in relation to case progression within court proceedings discussed these cases with the Principal IRO and the intention was to proceed to independent legal advice; at which point the case took a different turn and the independent legal advice was no longer required.

Child Protection Conference Service:

Within the Conference Chair role outline plans are largely recorded in a timely way and plans are becoming SMARTer, although 30% still require improvement to be more specific, measureable and outcome focused. This was picked up by Ofsted in their focused visit in December 2019. In accordance with the Neglect Strategy the use of the Graded Care Profile is part of planning for children on Child Protection plans because of neglect and provides a quantitative and qualitative measure of the daily lived experiences of children and how parents are able to meet their needs or where they struggle to do so. A review of Child Protection Plans in Quarter 4 identified Chairs are ensuring this is part of the Child Protection Plan for neglect cases on 88% of plans, and this has contributed to an improvement of the Graded Care Profile being completed on the majority of neglect cases by or shortly after the first review Conference.

Minutes are read and approved for distribution by Conference Chairs within timescales and Chairs will provide some oversight on the progression of CP plans. This is however an area which requires monitoring measures and targets to be established which recognize both the need not to impede time required to fulfill IRO duties and yet provide case oversight, particularly for cases where there is high risk to the child, risk of drift or non-compliance. With a current reduction in caseloads, this will be an area for development over the next six months.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

IRO activity:

Quarter 4 - 1st LAC Reviews held in timescale = 100%. 2nd and subsequent Lac Review (total 169) held in timescale = 92%.

LAC review minutes in timescale = 67%, down from 76% for quarter 3.

Participation of children over 4 years of age in their LAC Review is at 98%. This includes attendance, completion of consultation forms, or their views being represented by someone advocating on their behalf. The use of the Mind of My Own app which is an additional means of participation is currently under evaluation with an extension of the contract being considered.

IRO Oversight case notes – 99% of children who are Looked After for longer than 3 months have at least 1 oversight (the 1st Review captures oversight prior to three months); 88% of all children Looked After have at least 2 (and usually many more) oversights within a twelve month period (this is also additional to the Lac Review process).

IRO Dispute Resolutions:

There were 7 formal dispute resolutions undertaken in Quarter 4, an increase of 1 on quarter 3. All 7 were resolved within timescales. None required

escalation to Assistant Director level.

IRO access to Independent Legal Advice:

This system is now established with two identified external designated family solicitors providing a service. In Quarter 4 there were two cases which IROs were about to access independent legal advice and this was no longer required due to a change in case direction.

CP Conference Chair / Independent Chair activity:

Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) within timescale – the figure for the year to date is 75%, the same as at Quarter 3 but not yet meeting the Improvement target of 90%. The reasons behind these delays have been looked at and a report provided to the Assistant Director. There are multiple reasons, with the largest contributors being delays in completion of S47 reports and Social Workers' reports to ICPCs.

The new duty system for Conference Chairs was implemented in full from 30 December 2019 to establish availability throughout the week for booking in ICPCs and 1st Lac Reviews. 100% of RCPCs are completed within timescales.

LADO and Case Progression Officer

The LADO annual report and the work of the LADO continues to receive positive feedback from partner agencies. A peer audit with Shropshire to share best practices and explore process learning was scheduled for March 2020 but has had to be temporarily postponed as it requires audit in person as no access to each other's IT systems. This will be rescheduled for the Autumn.

The case progression officer has provided close monitoring of cases in PLO, court proceedings, the now limited number of S20 cases (which are almost entirely within the Children with Disabilities Team) and children with placement orders awaiting adoption. The support to social workers to establish a good standard of court statement has been well received and Herefordshire has continued to maintain its timeliness within court proceedings, particularly where the challenge has been provided by the court to conclude within 16 rather than 26 weeks.

Learning Activity

The Head of Service has undertaken thematic audits of ICPCs and RCPCs, use of the Graded Care Profile, monitoring of Delegated Authority documents and achieving permanence through long term fostering in Quarter 4 and inform action plans. In order to establish matching is assessed in a timely way IROs have been tasked with informal and formal escalation on 75 cases if timescales are not met and this is now monitored each fortnight by the Head of Service to ensure progression.

Improving the robustness of challenge within the IRO service: The Dispute Resolution process has now been built into Mosaic and will go live in May 2020. This will enable Mosaic reporting on timescales and responses without the need for a separate tracking mechanism. Further thematic auditing work by the Head of Service will inform further target areas for informal and formal escalation, including challenge to any drift and delay in health / mental health interventions as well as the provision of regular reports from foster carers and fostering agencies on the day to day welfare of children in placement. These will take place in June and July 2020.

Learning from Complaints and Compliments:

There has been one complaint received, at the end of March 2020, which related to a family member having difficulty accessing the Webex video meeting for a Child Protection Conference and when arriving late into the meeting found themselves being referred to in the third person. The Principal IRO has responded to the complaint with timescale. Chairs have been advised to be vigilant to late arrivals and a welcome note on arriving into the meeting can be automated to ask people to introduce themselves and their relationship / role to the child if they are late to the meeting.

Compliments have received from schools and parents about the quality of direct work with children at risk of exploitation. The personal adviser position has now been confirmed as a permanent role within the CE Team. There have also been compliments for Conference Chairs from both professionals and parents in their fair conduct of conferences and enabling views to be listened to when previous people felt unheard.

Areas of strength, evidence

1. Conference Chairs have increased the application of Graded Care Profiles (GCP) and review GCPs in Child Protection Plans; this is now on 88% of neglect case CP plans, with then GCP being completed either before or shortly after the first review conference on 64% of cases. While this still has further to progress, it is a growing area of improvement.
2. Feedback from partner agencies including schools, health and police is the training and support provided by the CE Team, information sharing through mapping and at Prevent and Disrupt multi agency meetings, as well as the direct 1:1 work with young people, has been extremely helpful in identifying and responding to reduce risks of exploitation in Herefordshire.
3. New duty system for Conference Chairs for ICPCs and 1st Lac Reviews was implemented during Quarter 4 and has worked well, with no problems identified by either business support in convening or for Conference Chairs. It has however been a period of very significant reduction in ICPCs so is as yet to be fully tested.
4. At the end of June 2020 the IRO/Conference Chair service will have 100% permanent staff. At the end of June 2019 this was 50%.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Ensuring outcomes for children are linked to the tasks required of parents within Child Protection planning needs further development. Following this being addressed within team training days and supervisions with Conference Chairs, change will be achieved most directly with the implementation of Signs of Safety. Conference Chairs have completed two days general SOS training and will be undertaking two half days on Conference Chairing with SOS at the end of May and June 2020 via Webex. Although the implementation of SOS has been delayed due to the impact of Coronavirus restrictions, and further 5 day training will still be required, this maintains the momentum of learning the principles and applications of a social work model which is fundamentally outcome focused.
2. The role of IROs in providing high challenge as well as high support continues to be an area which needs cultural shift. Recommendations and informal escalations are made appropriately, then drift in escalation can sometimes arise from consideration of workloads and staffing changes rather than be formally escalated on behalf of the child. To address this the Head of Service and Principal IRO will implement action plans which include formal escalations by set dates. This has begun with the Matching Assessment action plan for 75 cases and will continue with escalation action plans arising from thematic audits of drift in health / mental health interventions and the absence of recordings from foster carers / fostering agencies.
3. Compliance with statutory timescales for completion of Lac Review minutes remains an issue for two IROs, one of whom is agency and will

	<p>be leaving mid-June with a permanent IRO coming into post. For the other IRO a tracker is now in use at each supervision to examine date of completion of minutes (this is still not yet able to be captured within Mosaic reporting as delay only identified once the workflow is completed). This will aid time management. Lac recommendations had previously been an area of good performance and dipped over the last two quarters, specifically for the agency IRO who will be leaving in mid-June. All IROs will use the tracker to present completion of lac review recommendations and minutes each month in supervision.</p> <p>Lac reviews in timescale dipped to 85% from 100% in quarter 3, due largely to cancellations caused by the extensive floods in February.</p>
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being early help practice has just lost its way and everyone is working makes you so unhappy.

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Summary: Child Exploitation/Contextual Safeguarding (Barb Langstaffe – Head of Service Safeguarding and Review)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

Children and young people identified as being at risk of all forms of exploitation have an Exploitation Risk Assessment, from cases opened to assessment, on CIN, CP and Risk Management Plans, children who are Looked After and Care Leavers experiencing challenging transitions to adulthood and independence. For all children and young people open to Children's Safeguarding their Social Worker will complete the Exploitation Risk Assessment with oversight from an Exploitation Coordinator prior to being authorised by the relevant team manager. The revised assessment document now not only captures the signs and likelihood of various forms of exploitation to assess the level of risk, it locates the context in which it takes place and the impact of experiencing or being at risk of exploitation in a wider variety of domains of the child's life. These eleven domains include family relationships and where they live; emotional, physical and sexual health; education; criminality; substance misuse and exposure to risky people and environments. Prioritizing partnership understanding and input into Exploitation Safeguarding across agencies over the last twelve months through the work of the Safeguarding Partnership and multi-agency training means

the risks, strengths and impact of exploitation across these areas of children's daily lives can be more comprehensively understood and more targeted actions taken to meet the needs of children and young people who would otherwise be exposed to the controlling relationships which enable exploitation.

All children and young people at moderate or significant risk of / actual exploitation have a multi-agency Safety Plan which is reviewed on a multi-agency basis through Risk Management Meetings (RMMs), their frequency being determined by the level of risk for each young person. The level of risk is also reviewed at every RMM as a shared multi-agency decision. The Safety Planning guidance supports the development of robust Safety Plans for young people at risk of exploitation and young people who go missing, and supports effective application of the Home Office Disruption Toolkit. Return home interviews are offered to all young people who go missing in Herefordshire, within 3 working days in most cases or within 24 hours in cases where children are not already receiving a service at Level 4. This means that the content of return home interviews can be shared with the MASH prior to a decision being made following a missing incident, which is now always responded to as a MASH Contact.

At the end of Quarter 4 the Child Exploitation (CE) Team consists of two qualified social workers as CE Coordinators, one Family Support Worker and one Personal Adviser. CE Coordinators are qualified social workers experienced in the area of Child Exploitation. Their role is to provide advice, support and oversight to social workers assessing and intervening with children and young people at risk of or experiencing exploitation. In addition to chairing subsequent Risk Management Meetings, they liaise with partner agencies to share information, identify links between networks of children and perpetrators and track case progression. This work includes weekly meetings with police and attendance at the monthly Prevent and Disrupt multi agency forums. The Family Support Worker undertakes Return Home Interviews for children who have gone missing and direct work with children, parents and families to recognize signs of exploitation and strategies to reduce risk. The Personal Advisor also undertakes direct work with children and young people to explore the cause and effect of exploitative relationships and networks. In addition, CE Coordinators, the Family Support Worker and the Personal Advisor contribute to the Safeguarding Partnership Contextual Safeguarding training, community awareness raising and learning events for social workers.

The structure is due to change with the introduction of a Managing Practitioner role, reflecting the development of the CE group from a single CE Coordinator 18 months ago into a bespoke service supporting both Children's Safeguarding and wider partnership agencies. The Managing Practitioner will line manage the CE Coordinators who will in turn provide supervision to the Support Worker and Personal Advisor. The Managing Practitioner will be line managed by the Head of Service Safeguarding and Review. This change in structure consolidates the development of the service area into a team with maturing organization structure and responsibilities. These will be clearly set out by the end of Quarter One 2020/21 with a defined referral mechanism, job specifications, case allocations, duties and finally the criteria for completion of work and case closure to the CE Team. This in turn will allow for evaluation of the impact of the service both for individual children and for the efficacy of the service delivery for Herefordshire children and young people.

The impact of Covid-19 has seen Risk Management Meetings, weekly police liaison and monthly Prevent and Disrupt forums being undertaken through video conferencing in the last few weeks of Quarter 4. The necessary adaptations to working remotely went well and the systems allow for continuity in these service areas with little disruption for agencies. The participation of parents and young people has been maintained although for some getting access through the technology has proved more problematic. Where this is the case social workers have supported children and families directly. A greater impact has been on the direct work with young people, with this direct work and Return Home Interviews being conducted through Whatsapp. Feedback is this

presents greater challenge in engaging children. As a consequence the frequency of shorter Keep In Touch calls has been increased and will continue for longer to support the relationship building which is at the heart of engaging young people directly.

The launch of The Children's Society direct preventative work with children and young people at level 3 or below (not open to Children's Safeguarding as CIN, CP or Lac) was delayed in March due to Covid-19. This has been rescheduled to the 11th May. The CE Team will coordinate step up advice and step down preparation work with the two workers of The Children's Society.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Quantitative information

Performance data collection has very recently been refined and identifies delay in progressing to Risk Management Meetings (RMM) chaired by Team Managers where an outcome of risk of exploitation is identified as moderate or above. The new weekly reporting will enable this drift to be managed by the CE Team to press for convening forms to be completed and sent to business support by social workers. Further refinements to the Mosaic system will also help improvements, such as requiring the date of the RMM to be set at point of Manager Authorisation of the assessment, and adjustments have recently corrected data to ensure Return Home Interviews are recorded where these can be achieved and not when a child has returned and gone missing within a matter of hours, generating a subsequent Missing incident.

Qualitative information

Feedback from communication with schools identified teachers really impressed with the direct work being undertaken by the personal advisor working with young people.

Areas of strength, evidence

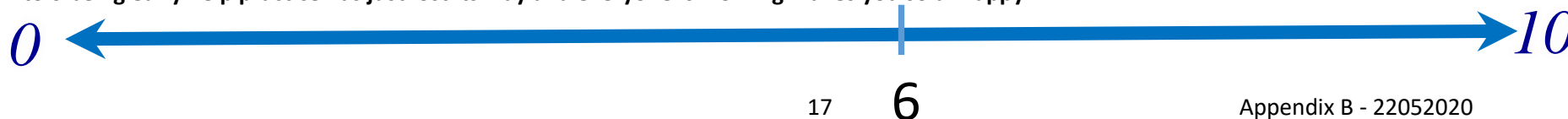
1. Tracker expanded in March 2020 to identify networks of risk and support between the young people/families, agencies involved, multiple risk factors, completion of RMMs, locations, use of CAWNs and Missing Trigger plans. This will be updated every four weeks, covering current cohort of 50+ children and young people.
2. Ability to provide advice and support to social work teams and partner agencies, skilling them up to more effectively recognise and respond to exploitation.
3. Providing the same level of service to care leavers at risk of exploitation – not many local authorities appear to be doing this.
4. Resources pack available to all social work teams to share with other professionals, young people, parents and carers.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Exploitation Risk Assessments need to be completed within timescales. Changes to Mosaic to incorporate a next actions step to trigger CE Risk Assessments arising from strategy meetings, RMMs, conferences and assessments, which can then be reportable on, are scheduled for build and implementation by the end of July 2020. This will identify to the CE Team when a CE assessment is required by the child's social worker and they can support and push the completion of this within timescales or escalate if this is not achieved.
2. The NSPCC Self-Service Audit on Harmful Sexual Behaviour has been completed by the Head of Service for Safeguarding and Review. Unfortunately the NSPCCs presentation bringing together findings

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Multi-agency Contextual Safeguarding training embedded with good attendance and feedback. 6. Effective joint working with Police including weekly briefings, 2 days co-location and revised Prevent & Disrupt arrangements including significant risk case reviews. 	<p>across partner agencies and moving to next steps has been postponed due to the current restrictions. However, the self-service audit highlighted numerous areas for development, with some clear pathways already emerging for future work both within Children's Safeguarding and across partner agencies. Dependent on the rescheduling of the NSPCC presentation, this may be progressed from the summer of 2020. There will be significant roles to be played by Conference Chairs / IROs and the CE team within new approaches.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Safeguarding Partnership Exploitation Group remains committed to raising the profile of exploitation across communities and agencies; pace has however slowed and requires an injection of vigour. Branding and development of communication strategy will be developed at the next group meeting, now to be monthly to ensure progression of goals. 4. Develop links with The Children's Society to improve preventative and step down interventions and provide continuity from level 4 to level 3 work. This will be starting from 11.05.20. 5. Increase understanding of the NRM criteria, process and its benefits across the professional network and provide training to first responders – originally scheduled for March 2020, this training to be scheduled in to an extended Prevent and Disrupt multi agency forum in June 2020. 6. Extend the remit of contextual safeguarding to incorporate peer on peer abuse and harmful sexual behavior. This will be informed by the NSCPP multi agency audit outcomes – due to be fed back in April 2020 but postponed. There are however learning pathways emerging from the self-audit of Children's Safeguarding that inform future planning and this will be included in proposals for Improvement planning by August 2020.
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being early help practice has just lost its way and everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: Child Protection & Court Service (Cath Thomas – Head of CP and Court)**What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)**

Some improvement has been achieved during Q4 in a number of key areas in the CP and Court Service, with a focus on recruitment and effective throughput of casework, both of which have resulted in lower caseloads across all 3 social work teams. Quality of work and case recording is now starting to improve, however this remains inconsistent, as does the frequency and quality of management oversight. 2 permanent Senior Practitioners were appointed at the end of Q4 which means we now have a fully staffed, permanent management / Senior Prac team. The service continues to struggle to recruit permanent, experienced social workers and excluding the Seniors, there are only 6 permanent social workers, 2 of which are ASYEs and only 2 social workers who have more than 2 years post qualified experience.

Agency staff turnover continues to be high, however with concerted effort to remain in regular contact with recruitment agencies we are able to recruit agency social workers relatively easily, using the daily rate scheme. Recruitment of ASYEs continues to be slow and links with Universities appear weak. Further work is planned in Q1 20/21 to attract ASYEs into the service and we have invested in an additional resource to support 6 further ASYEs in CP and Court over the next 12 months.

Work has taken place to improve the throughput of work in the service, including the effectiveness of case transfers and closures and applying appropriate thresholds, and when added to the improvements achieved in the Assessment service by retaining and strengthening practice in relation to Child in Need plans, this reducing the number of cases transferred to the service where children are made subject to a CP plan, the overall number of cases held in CP and Court has reduced from 331 at the end of Q3, to 256 at the end of Q4. At the end of Q4, only 2 social workers had caseloads of more than 20 (21 cases each) and the average caseload was 15. ASYE caseloads are appropriately protected with reference to the ASYE policy. With the exception of the continual turnover of agency staff, the service now has the right conditions in which high quality social work practice can flourish. Performance data indicates that compliance with statutory timescales and local practice standards are improving, however this needs to be demonstrated consistently and improve in quality in a number of key areas. In order to counteract the impact of staff turnover, two areas we will be focusing heavily on in Q1 20/21 are the quality of management oversight and developing the Senior Practitioner role, including a robust induction for all new staff.

In Q4 a number of improvements were made to increase the effectiveness of performance management and to enable each team to share responsibility for statutory timescales being met in a planned and proactive way. Each team meets twice a week for a brief performance meeting to review the work planned for that week and the week ahead and ensure there is sufficient resource to cover this across their team. Performance data is used on a daily and weekly basis and shared by team managers with all social workers to ensure that activity is undertaken within timescales and promptly recorded.

As a result, the early indications of improvement in Q3 for statutory visits being completed and recorded in timescales has continued to be built upon in Q4 and at the end of Q4 performance was very close to the 95% target for all 3 social work teams across CIN, CP and LAC visits. Fewer strategy discussions and s47 investigations are now taking place as practice expectations have been clarified, however the service has continued to struggle to complete s47

investigations and Child and Family Assessments within timescales. The small number of s47 investigations undertaken in the service makes the performance data very 'spikey'. Both of these areas of performance will be revisited in Q1 20/21 and the service will be adopting the same approach used in the Assessment service to ensuring that Child and Family Assessments have a clear purpose, plan, and managers and social workers discuss their progress regularly to ensure they are proportionate and completed within statutory timescales.

The regularity of personal supervision has improved however the way this is currently reported makes the data 'spikey'. In March 3 personal supervisions were not completed within the month, with 2 of these being 1 day later. In 20/21 the data will also be reported as a YTD figure which will provide more meaningful information. The frequency of case supervision has also improved, however following an issue in the reporting method being identified and corrected in February, the data for March shows a decline in performance. In Q1 the target is for 100% of cases to have a case supervision recorded within the maximum timescales of 3 months. The quality of case supervision continues to be inconsistent and poor in some instances. Managers rarely record their oversight of cases through ad hoc discussions, which happen daily, as observed by the HoS. This means that they have much more oversight of cases than the case records indicate. We urgently need to find a solution to this in Q1 20/21, including the development of group supervision and the Senior role, and planned, protected time for managers to record their oversight.

Response to audit actions has continued to be a challenge in some teams, however overall this is an improved picture. In February there were 16 cases with outstanding audit actions and this has now reduced to 2. There is now greater compliance with completion of the Graded Care Profile for children who have a CP plan due to neglect, however this continues to be completed mainly by family support workers and currently there is no mosaic workflow or reporting available to promote the use of this tool more widely. An audit of GCP was undertaken in January 2020 and identified 27 children subject to a CP plan due to neglect who did not have a GCP completed. This has now reduced to 3 outstanding and a further 5 in the process of being completed. However, this improvement only relates to those children identified in the January audit as there is no mechanism currently to monitor this using contemporaneous data.

Improvements have been made to the HoS oversight of cases in PLO and care proceedings, however there continue to be some examples of drift and inadequate care planning which risk causing delays for children. Further improvements are currently under consideration for implementation in Q1 20/21, to further streamline processes and ensure our work in PLO and proceedings is clearly planned, proactive, structured and completed within timescales. Q4 has seen a net reduction of cases in PLO from 40 to 33 due to cases being progressed more effectively within timescales. Most care proceedings conclude without difficulties and following a significant increase in care proceedings being initiated in Q3, Q4 has seen a net reduction of children subject to care proceedings, from 52 to 34.

A review of family support services was concluded in January and in March 2020 changes were implemented so that family support workers were realigned into either the Assessment service or the CP and Court service. The ECHO (edge of care and reunification) team has been implemented however the appointment of internal family support workers to this team has led to delays in fully implementing the revised family support model. As a result there are 4 families currently awaiting family support work in the CP and Court service, however the ECHO workers are now being allocated reunification work from the LAC service. FSW interviews are due to take place w/c 20th April 2020 to recruit to 7.3FTE vacancies across the Assessment service and CP and Court service. During Q1 and Q2 we will continue to work with commissioning colleagues and partner agencies to develop the multi-disciplinary elements of ECHO, including

training for ECHo workers in domestic abuse perpetrator work and NVR (Non Violent Resistance), co-located substance misuse support, and the appointment of a systemic family therapist.

The following areas of development identified for Q4 have been completed:

1. Mailshot targeted at agencies included in the higher rate agency scheme – why their clients should consider Herefordshire including direct quotes from current agency staff – this has been completed and alongside a concerted effort from Hoople colleagues, business support staff and the HoS we continue to receive a steady stream of agency CVs, using the higher rate scheme.
2. Revised duty system arrangements and proscribed time for social workers and managers to complete case recordings - this has been completed with the result that case recording of visits has improved, evidenced in the improved performance data. Managers still struggle to identify protected time to record their oversight.
3. Caseload management reporting and process implemented to ensure personal supervision consistently takes places and is recorded and to ensure an understanding of the nature of caseloads in addition to the numbers – Jan 2020 – completed, we now have a clear understanding of the complexity of work across the teams to ensure that individual workers are not overwhelmed and to ensure that ASYEs have appropriate caseloads. Managers now always record their personal supervision data in time for monthly reporting.
4. Implementation of twice weekly performance meetings for each team manager with their team to ensure all visits are completed and recorded within timescales and to promote teams supporting each other at times when court work demands are higher for individual workers. HOS to observe 1 per month for each team manager – this has been implemented and is now working effectively across all 3 teams, with the resultant impact that social workers support each other and activity such as visits can be planned and prioritised proactively.
5. Review of family support services – this has been completed and FSWs realigned to the Assessment service or will be aligned to the CP and Court service following recruitment to vacancies.
6. HOS to provide clear expectations for staff with implementation of a core group / CIN review agenda and visits recording – completed.
7. Revised transfer checklist to be implemented in all teams – completed.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Please refer to Q4 improvement plan for all data relied upon for the above narrative.

Areas of strength, evidence

1. There are a core group of permanent staff – both social workers and family support workers in the CP/Court team who are skilled and committed to staying in Herefordshire.
2. The family court which sits in Worcestershire is one of the best performing courts in the country for completion of care proceedings with 26 weeks.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. PLO task and finish group took place in Q4 and has now concluded. Final amendments to an Early Permanence Handbook and relevant procedures and templates to be completed by end of April 20 with changes being implemented at the beginning of May 20.
2. Embedding the use of case summaries – throughout Q1.
3. HOS to observe a minimum of 2 supervisions per quarter – this needs to be embedded in Q1.
4. HOS to develop practice standards for case supervision – May 20.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Both Essex and good Ofsted found, as have we, that the service consists of quality social workers who know the children and families they are working with. 4. The family support service provide consistently high quality support to children and families and recent realignment will allow for greater responsiveness to need. 5. ECHo has been established and reunification work is now being allocated. 6. Morale in the service is high and there is significant enthusiasm, energy and commitment to achieving change. 7. Social Work Academy support is helping to improve the confidence and competence of social workers in completing more complex work. 8. We now have a full establishment of permanent managers and Senior Practitioners. 9. Throughput of cases is now largely effective and caseloads are more manageable. ASYE caseloads are appropriately protected. 10. Teams use performance data on a daily and weekly basis to ensure each team is able to undertake activity (primarily visits) within statutory timescales. 11. The vast majority of social workers have personal supervision every month 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Find a solution to allow managers to record their daily oversight of cases – May 20. 6. Focus on case supervisions with a target of 100% case supervisions recorded within 3 months by end of Q1. 7. Implement Assessment service approach to conducting Child and Family Assessments – May 20. 8. Define and develop the Senior Prac role, with lower caseloads to enable them to fulfil their roles – commencing 28th April and to be completed by end of Q1. 9. Implement group supervision approach led by Senior Pracs – by end of Q1. 10. Introduce social worker-led practice develop sessions into service meetings to share direct work tools, research and best practice – May 20. 11. Robust induction for all new staff – by end of Q1. 12. Recruit an additional 6 ASYEs and implement dedicated resource for ASYE practice development – June 20. 13. Implement revised team model to enable the separation of CP work from care proceedings and co-allocation of PLO to ensure PLO is fully frontloaded – by June 20, however this is also dependent on recruitment. 14. Introduction of Genopro genogram software – May 20. 15. Transfer and closure checklists and processes to be built into Mosaic – May 20. 16. Develop GCP Mosaic workflow – by June 20. 17. Recruit to all FSW vacancies – April 20. 18. Continue to develop multi-disciplinary dimensions of ECHo
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 that child protection and court practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy



Summary: LAC Service (Gill Cox – Head of Looked After Children)**What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)**

The local authority continues to have a very high number of looked after children. At the end of quarter 4 there were 352 children in care which equates to 98 per 10,000, which is significantly higher than the national average (64 per 10,000) and that of statistical neighbours (53 per 10,000). The number of looked after children has been fairly stable over recent months but has reduced slightly during the quarter.

An Alternatives to Care panel which is chaired by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding was introduced in September 2018. This panel decides whether care proceedings should be initiated, whether children should be admitted to care under Section 20, and reviews decisions to admit children to care in an unplanned way.

The local authority has had a lower rate of children leaving care than statistical neighbours and our focus is upon identifying children who could safely return to their parents care or who could be cared for under a Special Guardianship Order. Progress was slow with continued drift and delay in the progression of assessments and applications to Court which is further impacted by a risk averse culture. This is now being robustly challenged and care orders were discharged for 8 children during quarter 4 with applications for a further 17 children with legal services or already issued.

Staff teams within the looked after children's team are relatively stable which enables Social Workers to get to know children well and establish trusting relationships. Performance within these teams improved significantly during 2019/20 following the appointment of a second team manager allowing for increased management support and challenge. Both teams are now consistently meeting targets for visits and supervision.

The 16+ team has had a significant change in Social Workers following a period of stability. Performance in this team has improved during quarter 4 although is not yet consistently good for visits and further improvement is required to meet targets for supervision. Pathway plans for looked after children have not always completed to timescale or updated prior to LAC reviews as they should be. This is being addressed and the team are on target to have all Pathway plans updated by the end of April 2020.

Placement stability for children in care is good with the numbers experiencing more than 3 placements in the last 12 months at 8% at the end of March, which is below the rate nationally and for statistical neighbours. The service is not complacent though and we continue to work to reduce this further by improving the quality of support, supervision, and training provided to our foster carers. 74% of children have been in the same placement for over 2 ½ years which is in line with national indicators although this will be affected by our high numbers of children in care and so is likely to reduce as our plans to reduce the numbers of children in care are progressed. Despite good levels of placement stability too many children have not been formally long-term matched with foster carers and this is focus for improvement.

There are not enough foster carers to meet demand and so there has been a refreshed focus upon recruitment activity which has seen an increase in the number of enquiries during 2019/20 that is resulting in more applications. A new fostering workflow within Mosaic was implemented in September. Initial performance reports have been completed that need further development but will enable greater scrutiny and management oversight of this area of the service. The number of children and young people placed more than 20 miles from home is relatively low.

Not all children and young people in care have an up to date delegated authority agreement in place. A performance report is now available that is enabling more effective oversight but requires amendments before reporting can be accurately relied upon.

At the end of March 37 adopted children were waiting for their life story book and/or later life letter which is slightly reduced in comparison with quarter 3. Additional resource has been agreed for the service and the current pandemic is offering an opportunity for the service to deploy staff who usually supervise contact for children with their parents to focus on this area of work. It is anticipated that the backlog will be cleared by the end of June 2020. A centralised system for monitoring this work on an ongoing basis is established and if there is evidence of a backlog building up then remedial action can be taken urgently.

Our adoption service joined Adoption Central England (ACE) on 1 July 2019 a smooth transition for children with a plan for adoption, prospective adopters, and adopters was achieved. Our “early permanency hub” based within the Child Protection and Court team supports Children’s Social Workers in adoption work and provide a very helpful bridge with ACE. Already there has been a welcome increase in children who have been placed in Foster to Adopt placements which we hope to further build on as our pre-birth planning work improves.

Virtual School

The Virtual School in the Education and Commissioning Directorate is a strong and stable team that supports the education of looked after children and previously looked after children. The team feels that social workers and schools value the work they do; feedback from both is positive. One social worker has recently stated “in my time in Hereford I have never met more dedicated, passionate or hard working professionals for looked after children! they do their absolute best with every case I have come across and they know each case inside out”.

There are close links between the Virtual School team and the CWD, LAC team and 16+ teams. The links with the CP Court teams and Assessment teams is improving. Because the Virtual School team have taken the responsibility of organizing and chairing the Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings for the last 9 years there can be occasions when social workers and their managers do not prioritise attendance at PEP meetings, knowing that a member of staff from the Virtual School will attend.

In the last quarter, 18.8% of PEP meetings for statutory school age and early years children had no social worker in attendance. This is a slight improvement on the previous quarter. However, for children in post 16 provision, the number of PEP meeting with no social worker in attendance increased to 35%. This issue is raised with team managers. The LAC education team are attending team meetings to remind social workers of the importance of attending PEP meetings and their responsibilities.

The Virtual School team feels strongly that social workers (especially in the CWD and LAC teams) know their children well and are passionate about getting good outcomes for them.

The Virtual School piloted a project (SEEdS) to support school stability since January 2019. This has mainly been through Multi-Element Planning Meetings (PEP+) and Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). The input from social workers at the PEP+ meetings has been very good. The first year evaluation demonstrated that 41 children were supported directly, 17% in out of authority placements. 100% of the participants felt the experience was positive. 50 foster carers were also provided with training through the project. The project has now moved into a second year.

The challenge offered by the Virtual School, including more robust internal scrutiny and quality assurance has led to an improvement of the quality of PEPs completed by schools. The contribution from social workers has declined in the last quarter. For statutory school age and early year children, social workers did not complete 31% of documents this rose to 68% for young people in post 16 provision. This issue is raised with team managers.

Provisional end of Key Stage education outcomes (2019) for children in Key Stages 1, 2 are above those for looked after regionally and nationally. Provisional Key Stage 4 outcomes in key assessment measures e.g. Attainment 8 (A8) are above regional and national outcomes for LAC in England in 2019. Further analysis shows that the attainment gap between Herefordshire's looked after children and 'all' Herefordshire children reduced in 2019, most notably at Key Stage 1.

Local placement availability is not impacting on school placements so significantly in the last quarter. Only 2 children (siblings) have experienced an unexpected school move because of a placement move in the last quarter. Of the 21 young people in year 11 who have been in care for more than 12 months, 4 have moved school and care placement in the last 12 months.

Health

Compliance with meeting timescales for completion of Health Assessments has improved during Quarter 4. 100% of initial health assessments were offered within statutory timeframes with 76% completed within statutory timeframes. 100% of children and young people placed in County due a review health assessment were offered an appointment within statutory timescales with 86% completed within timescales. One young person refused a health assessment.

Challenges remain in ensuring children and young people placed out of County receive a health assessment within timescale. Where children and young people are placed close to Herefordshire then the Herefordshire team continue to provide health assessments and the team completed 3 during quarter 4 for children and young people placed out of County.

Performance indicators for registration with a GP (100%), immunisations (96%) remain high. Children seeing a dentist within 6 months needs to improve further (85%). The LAC health team has now been expanded and this is enabling more support to foster carers, children and young people and in particular a focus on emotional and mental health.

Corporate Parenting

The Corporate Parenting strategy has driven improvement with much achieved since it was agreed. All elected members attended Corporate Parenting training as a mandatory part of their induction training and during this made a personal offer of support to Looked After Children and care leavers which now provides a directory of interests and skills that the Service can call on. The training was developed jointly with Your Voice Matters (YVM), our children in care council, and was co-delivered with them.

Corporate Parenting panel meets bi-monthly and has a work plan for the year based on the priorities within the strategy.

Work is underway to refresh the Corporate Parenting strategy which will be presented to Cabinet in July 2020.

YVM meet monthly and are active members of the Corporate Parenting panel. They meet monthly themselves and are involved in recruitment for all Social Worker and Personal Advisor posts within the service. It is acknowledged that further work is required to ensure that children in care and care leavers are able to contribute and affect change at a service level.

An annual celebration event was held in September which was well attended by children, young people and their foster carers and where the achievements of many were recognised and celebrated.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

- Monthly performance data shows performance and trends in comparison with national and statistical neighbours (where available)
- Themed monthly audits are completed which show areas of strength and those for improvement
- Regular team meetings and managers meetings provide forum for open discussion and reflection upon what is working well and what needs to improve

Areas of strength, evidence

1. The number and rate of children being admitted to care has reduced
2. Improved compliance with timescales for statutory visits
3. Improved performance in providing personal and case supervision
4. Placement stability
5. Increase in children leaving care via SGO or reunification
6. SEEds is providing an intervention that is valued by Social Workers and schools
7. Provisional data shows that outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 are above those achieved nationally by LAC in England.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Reducing the number of children in care by progressing care plans for reunification or SGO where this is assessed as in the best interests of children
2. Sustaining improvement in performance in relation to statutory visits and supervision so that targets are consistently met
3. Increasing the number of children who are long-term matched
4. Completion and review of Pathway plans within timescales
5. Increasing the number of foster carers
6. Ensuring all children have a regularly reviewed delegated authority form completed

8. LAC health team has been expanded.	<p>7. Reduction in the number of adopted children waiting for later life letters and life story books</p> <p>8. Attendance and contribution of Social Workers to PEP meetings</p> <p>9. Timeliness of LAC health assessments, particularly those placed out of County</p>
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being that looked after children practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.



Summary: Care Leavers Service (Gill Cox – Head of Looked After Children)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

Care leavers are supported by the 16+ team and for a small number of young people the Children with Disabilities team. There has been a significant turnover of social workers within the team recently although there has been stability amongst personal advisors enabling relationships young people to develop trusted relationships with their workers.

Mark Riddell, National Implementation Advisor for care leavers, visited Herefordshire in September 2018 and again in May 2019 to review our progress. Mr. Riddell reported that our care leavers told him that “it is good to be a care leaver in Herefordshire”. In May 2019 we were able to demonstrate that we had taken forward many of his recommendations to us.

Our published performance data in relation to care leavers has been very poor in past years and did not accurately reflect the work of the team. Much work has been done to understand and rectify the issues impacting upon this which have been partly recording and partly reporting. This is much improved although further work to embed this and ensure that the service has accurate and accessible data on a weekly basis continues. At the end of March 85% of care leavers are reported to be in touch with the service which is slightly lower than either national or statistical neighbours.

Care leavers in suitable accommodation is reported as 83% which is slightly lower than national and statistical neighbours. Much work is being done to improve the accommodation options available to our care leavers. We are focusing upon growing the number of in house supported lodging providers as well as commissioned alternatives in Herefordshire. Citizen Housing provides 30 bed foyers across the County which the service and Housing Solutions Team can refer directly to. The overall contract for this service will be re-commissioned in 2020 and work is underway to assess what would best meet need of our care leaver population. This has established that we have a large cohort with low needs, a small group with moderate needs but a large cohort with complex needs and a small cohort with very complex needs which the foyers are not the right service for. The Council has invested in purchasing a building which will provide 5 beds for care leavers with complex needs. The unit is based in the city centre and a 24/7 support service has now been commissioned with the service planned to commence in July 2020 with building works having been delayed due to Corona virus.

A growing number of care leavers with complex needs arising from poor mental health, risk of exploitation and substance misuse are placed with supported accommodation providers. There are limited providers within Herefordshire and so some young people are placed out of County. Together with commissioners we are working to develop the local market. Currently we are concerned that the quality of support provided to some of our care leavers has been very poor. Our Placements Team are completing regular monitoring visits and together with the 16+ team concerns are addressed robustly and young people moved where necessary.

At the end of March only 43% of care leavers were reported as engaged in education, employment or training. This is very low and is a priority for improvement. Training options in Herefordshire are fairly limited and this impacts on the choices available for young people especially if they are excluded from attending a provider. The 16+ team work with Landau who are funded to reduce the number of young people who are NEET in the County. Landau provide a weekly drop-in based at the office and it is hoped that this will help to increase the number of our care leavers engaged in education, training or employment. During the last year the Council has employed 3 care leavers as apprentices which is positive however this needs to develop into a rolling programme and commitment.

The Council has a published [Care Leavers covenant](#). The Council provides council tax exemption for care leavers up to the age of 25. The Council is keen to progress its own Care Leavers covenant and is likely to be an early adopter working with the national lead.

Audits have evidenced improvement in SMART planning by the team.

Pathway plans for care leavers have not always been completed to timescale or reviewed as they should be. The team is on target for all care leavers to have an up to date pathway plan by the end of April 2020.

Additional resource has been agreed for the LAC health team and staff have now been recruited. This will enable a service to be offered to care leavers and greater time to engage with older looked after children who are reluctant to meet with LAC nurses.

Relationships with Adults Social Care are improving although there remains concern that some very vulnerable care leavers are not eligible for a service. This is particularly true of young people at risk of exploitation, some of whom are care leavers, and the best way to meet this need is being considered.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

- Monthly performance data shows performance and trends in comparison with national and statistical neighbours (where available)
- Themed monthly audits are completed which show areas of strength and those for improvement
- Regular team meetings and managers meetings provide forum for open discussion and reflection upon what is working well and what needs to improve

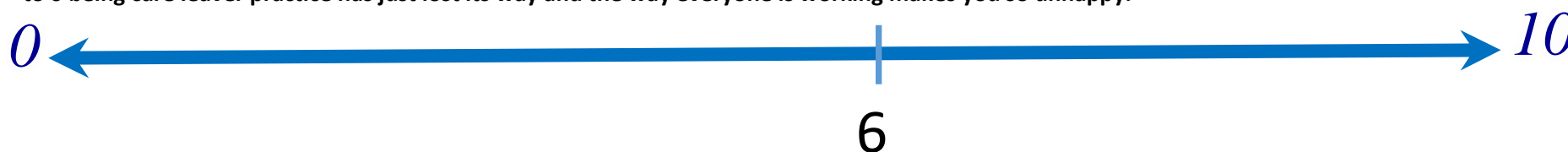
Areas of strength, evidence

1. Investment into the service to reduce caseloads and increase management capacity
2. Central office that provides drop in service
3. Published data shows improvement in performance in relation to “in touch” and “suitable accommodation”
4. Availability of crash pad and taster flat options
5. Purchase of building and commissioning of support to provide new 5 bed unit for care leavers with complex needs from July 2020
6. Partnership with Landau to increase number of care leavers in education, training or employment.

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. Need to ensure data accurately reflects performance in the team and that further improvement is achieved and sustained through weekly review of data by managers and planning with staff
2. Number of care leavers in education, training or employment needs to increase
3. Quality of pathway plans
4. Services for vulnerable care leavers who don’t meet criteria for adult social care or mental health services

Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being care leaver practice has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.


Summary: CWD Service (Les Knight – Head of Additional Needs)

What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local area? (including comments on learning activity this quarter and impact)

The ILACs inspection in June 2018 recognised that the quality of help and protection offered to children by the disabled children’s team is a strength. It observed that workers know the children they are working with very well and they ensure that children’s views are evident in their reviews and assessments. A recent internal focussed audit on ‘the child’s voice’ also viewed this in a positive light.

The recent Ofsted focussed visit (Dec 2019) confirmed that CIN plans are tailored and responsive to children's needs. Packages of support are appropriate to needs identified and social workers are quick to ensure these are adapted if children's needs change or in response to crisis. Children's and carers views are consistently recorded and influence planning. Social workers know the children well and are skilled at communication with children using a variety of different methods and applying observational skills to ascertain children's wellbeing. Supervision is qualitatively better in this team, is well recorded and includes elements of reflection helping to ensure timely progress.

The Children with Disabilities (CWD) Team has been part of a 0-25 multi-disciplinary SEND service which has seen the CWD and SEN Assessment Team co-located since 2016. This has improved communication and joint working between the teams. Families requesting a statutory Education, Health & Care (EHC) assessment are now screened using an Early Help Screening Tool to establish whether there are any unmet care needs, which should improve the quality of the care advice into EHC Plans and ensure families get the appropriate support.

The CWD Team is fully staffed with permanent staff and has appropriate caseloads. The team is rapidly gaining experience having recruited the majority of its staff as newly qualified workers 2-3 years ago. The team receives regular positive feedback on the quality of its work from IROs, the legal team and education staff.

The ILACS inspection report also commented on strong and effective work with partner agencies (which) results in effective support to children and their families. Most of the team's referrals come via the multi-agency Single Point of Referral team which the team attends. Working relationships are strong with the transition team in adult well-being and the revised transition protocol describes expectations for cases transferring.

The Ofsted Joint Local Area SEND Inspection was undertaken in September 2016. No written statement of action resulted and inspectors commented that the local area has clear procedures in place to check that children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are safe. They also commented that leaders 'have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the different partners who contribute to the implementation of the [2014 Children and Family Act] reforms'.

There is some further learning for the team around the Mental Capacity Act, Deprivation of Liberty and Liberty Protection Safeguards. The team has undertaken training from The Edge Training, a national leader in this area of work and one of the team has recently been trained to be a 'Best Interests' Assessor. However, recent cases in the Court of Protection have highlighted further learning is required.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Weekly and monthly performance reports are shared with Head of Service, Team Manager and the Director. These include CWD specific performance information. Performance concerns are addressed through supervision and are intended to be proactive rather than just reactive comment when performance has slipped. Feedback from HOS/AD Performance meetings

Team Managers sign all assessments. Court documentation is subject to Team Manager and Head of Service Quality Assurance.

A horizontal number line with arrows at both ends. The left end is labeled '0' and the right end is labeled '10'. A vertical tick mark is placed on the line, and the number '6.5' is written below it.

Summary: Children and Families Performance team

What do you know about the quality and impact of your work on social work practice in Herefordshire?

Quality

- Timely, regular reports are being produced and distributed to appropriate colleagues in children's' services.
- Accurate data is being produced and distributed.
- Performance analysts aligned with teams to ensure that their reporting needs are met and that queries on accuracy of data are resolved.
- Performance team lead attending monthly AD/HoS meetings to keep informed/up-to-date with the service and to respond to and get feedback on the reporting.
- Annex A/ChAT tool updated weekly and distributed monthly.

Impact

- Informs improvement plans. The Heads of Service have an accurate picture of their service area to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Enables measurement of performance against targets and regional and national data in key areas.
- Gives each service area clear quantitative picture of where performing well and where improvements are needed.
- Embedded analysis of performance as business as usual.
- Regular reporting can now identify trends within the service, which helps to measure the impact on children of decisions made.
- Helped to establish Herefordshire on a regional basis as an organisation that wants to work with others to improve outcomes for children.

How do you know it? (including outputs being measured)

Quality

- Work/Reports are sensed checked before they are distributed. We do not send out any report which we are aware has inaccurate or questionable data.
- Close working with Heads of Service and teams to ensure data is accurate. Heads of service have a key worker in the team who they meet with regularly to discuss the monthly reporting and data to ensure quality of the data.
- Culture of checking any queries about accuracy of data and responding to those queries quickly and efficiently, keeping people informed of progress.
- Reduction in e-mails/queries that reporting is not accurate which indicates an increase in customer satisfaction that the reporting is accurate.

Impact

- Performance information provided is being used to measure performance improvement in individual areas and the overall performance in the Children and Families Directorate.
- Increased confidence in accuracy and presentation of information being distributed regionally and nationally.
- Increasing requests for more information to inform practice improvement e.g. requests for performance information for fostering & family support
- Every service area has weekly/monthly information as to measure its performance against key performance indicators e.g. visits/supervision
- Assisting to embed a climate of support and challenge within individual teams, based on accurate performance information.
- Enabling the organisation to measure performance against expected targets. These may be internal targets set by the service or comparisons to other authorities or Government expectations.

Areas of strength, evidence

1. Ability to meet core business requirement of producing clear accurate reports (we know this as the visit to Doncaster evidenced Herefordshire data reporting similar to their more established performance reporting)
2. Reporting and outcomes is online with a number of West Midlands colleagues (know this by attendance at West Midlands regional forums)
3. Skilled, stable team (no turnover, proficient SQL programming)

Areas for development, intended impact, timescales

1. To integrate more fully into the service generally; team managers, social workers. This will give a greater understanding of social work practice/challenges. (timescale: April 2020) Progress: Shadowing or teams had been scheduled in for March/April. These will be postponed and rescheduled for June/July (assuming current social distancing restrictions have been lifted)
2. Establish performance reports for areas of service not yet supplied e.g. family support, child exploitation/missing. (separate improvement plan with detail of all areas for reporting developments and timescales) Progress: CE/missing have now been signed off and regular oversight of reporting and Mosaic developments are now in place.
3. Develop team and team culture from reactive to proactive. Identify areas of reporting that could be developed to support the service (timescale: January 2020), create a system for reporting requests that encourages dialogue and collaborative planning of reporting (timescale: January 2020). Progress: this have not been fully achieved in the timescale. New deadline May 2020.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Integrate more into Children and Families Directorate ethos (e.g. pictures in reports to embed Herefordshire aims/values). Progress: Colour schemes and images are being trialed. (timescale: May 2020) 5. Establish a pre-emptive self-service approach to performance indicators to support team managers in managing workers performance improvement of the key areas (e.g. visits due, timeliness of activities). 6. Create a 'Performance Team Improvement Plan' to structure the progress and goals of the team in a way that has rigor, challenge and evidence of progress.
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Thinking about social work practice across your service and your reflection above – where are you on a scale of 0 – 10? With 10 being that social work practice within Children and Families is exactly where you want to be at the moment, in fact you could not be happier about the way everyone is working; to 0 being that the children and families performance team has just lost its way and the way everyone is working makes you so unhappy.

