

Herefordshire Children's Services

**Director's Update Report
Children's Improvement
Board – 9 August 2021**

**Catherine Knowles Interim
Director of Children and
Families**



Keeping Children at the Heart of all we Do

Feedback and Progress to-date

- Ofsted Focused Visit
- Early Help Diagnostic
- Practice Changes
- Audit update
- Next Steps

Ofsted Focused Visit

Focused visit in July 2021

Ofsted's focus was on Children in need or subject to a Child Protection Plan and looked at:

- thresholds
- step-up/step-down between children in need and child protection
- children on the edge of care

Ofsted Key Findings - Identified Strengths

- We have responded positively to the Covid 19 Pandemic - social workers have ensured home visits to vulnerable children.
- Recognised the new leadership team, in place since March 2021, has worked hard including completing a comprehensive critical evaluation of practice across the service.
- Recognised we have accurately identified the necessary priorities for improvement.
- No child was found to be at risk from harm

Areas of Strength



- A dedicated and committed permanent workforce
- The new senior leadership team were listening to the workforce and are child focussed.
- Progress is made through regular core groups, support from Family Support Workers is good
- There are elements of reflective practice within some supervision records but this is too variable
- Overall staff felt supported through the pandemic and risk assessments were being completed for each case and that families were supported throughout.
- The new Quality Assurance process has recently improved through the introduction of a collaborate approach; social workers are aware of the audits that are being carried out on all open cases
- Step down cases from CP to CIN that were seen were all appropriate

Ofsted - Recognised we have accurately identified our priorities these being:

Strengthen and develop a sustainable workforce (including development of a career pathway, recruitment, retention, learning and development).

Ensuring a consistent and clear management grip to support quality of practice, in particular, robust, individual case work supervision with Social Work staff (including ensuring compliance and returning to basics in terms of understanding and application of social work practice standards. Underpinned by effective training so that staff can do their jobs effectively).

Provide performance management and quality assurance, including strengthening audit activity so that there is a clear line of oversight on the quality of Social Work practice to help understand what actions are needed to take to drive continual social work practice improvement. Whilst repurposing our wealth of performance information moving from data processes to an outcome based evidencing impact of services to children, young people and families.

Improve assessment of children's needs, including direct work with children to understand their experiences

Improve the voice of the child in case recordings and assessments

Diagnostic of Early Help

- **Scope of the review...** to examine the effectiveness of the CSC Early Help (EH) service offer for children, young people (C&YP) and their families.
- Overall, the review evaluated four completed audited cases, tracked one of the audited cases and sampled 10 cases, of these: two are judged good; seven judged requires improvement; and six judged inadequate. This means that 86% of cases seen are either inadequate or require improvement (RI).

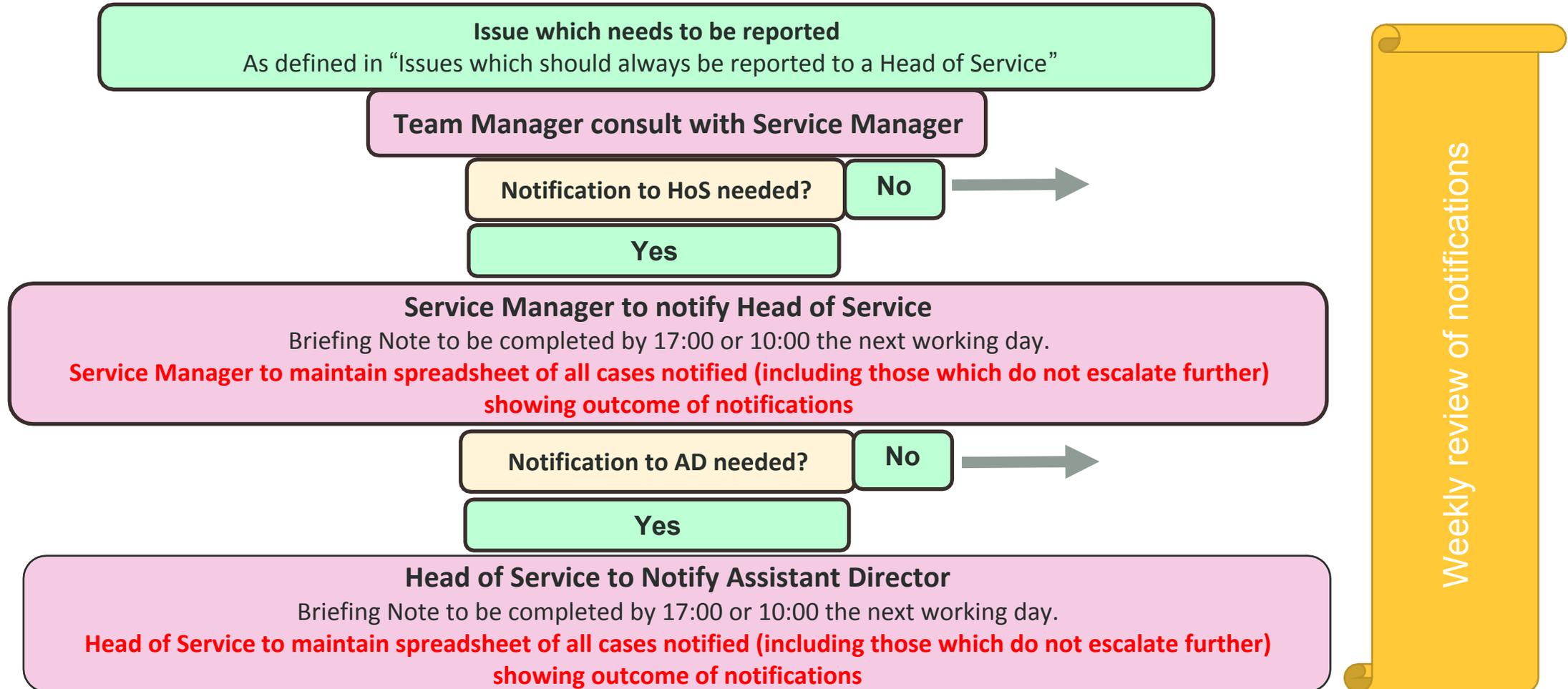
Recommendation:

A full presentation of the Early Review is presented by Marie McGuinness at the next Improvement board in September

Practice Changes Introduced - Case Panels

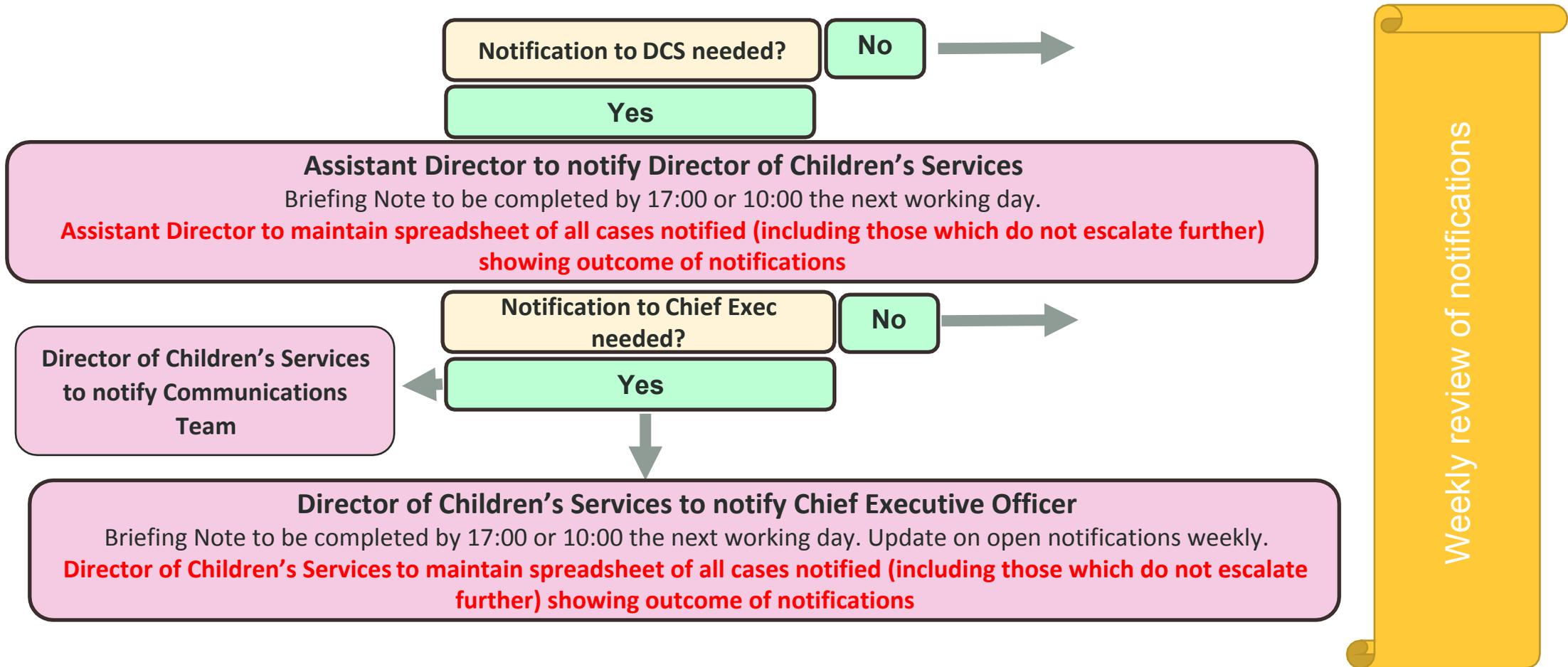
| Name of Panel | Frequency of Panel |
|---|---|
| Access to Resources Panel (AO) | Weekly, Monday 2:00pm – 4:30pm Housing Pathways is incorporated in to the Access to Resources Panel and is heard every 4 th week (Monday 2:00pm – 4:30pm) |
| PLO Panel & Care Proceedings Panel (HOS CP CIN) | Bi Weekly, alternating between PLO & Care Proceedings Panel, Tuesday's 2:00pm – 4:00pm |
| Legal Gateway Panel (SL) | Weekly, Wednesday, 9:30am – 12:00pm |
| Permanency Panel (HOS Children looked After) | Fortnightly, Thursday, 2:30pm – 4:30pm |
| Best Care Best Value Review Panel (CK) | Last Wednesday of Every Month – 2:00pm – 4:00pm |

Practice Changes Introduced - 'Need to know' case notification process



Practice Changes Introduced

'Need to know' case notification process



Audit Update – Week 4 (week ending 23 July 2021)

- The early help audits have now begun.
- To date auditors have undertaken staff surgeries on 146 children's cases and identified 31 (21%) cases for closure and 18 (12%) cases for transfer. There remains a further 227 cases to consider.
- Auditors continue to liaise with workers and managers, where possible, prior to any escalation to clarify information, and they continue to discuss audits with workers prior to confirming actions to ensure that there is full understanding of work undertaken and recognition of activity.

Themes - identified to date

Strengths

- Some work in MASH is good
- There is good management direction seen for MASH workers with specific activity
- Some positive Emergency Duty team (EDT) work identified
- Good work seen by family support workers with children
- CWD cases evidence good child focussed work were support is the focus of interventions

Challenges

- Recording protocols across system are confusing and inconsistently applied
- Inconsistency in approaches leads to lack of clarity of functions and roles
- Risk management and thresholds are not consistently applied e.g. single issue focus
- Signs of safety processes not leading to outcomes or plans e.g. identify risks but then no actions to alleviate them
- Lack of challenge/ professional curiosity
- Lack of consideration of historical information whether internal or OLA e.g. chronologies only focus on current episode
- Systems process issues has identified potentially 4 front doors namely – Calls come in to the Communications Hub who then can send it to either MASH, Domestic Abuse Hub or Early Help Hub – this is being addressed and the system simplified to communications hub straight to Childrens Social Care (MASH) who makes the correct pathway decision

Recent Events and Next Steps

Management Away day (Tuesday 4 August) – Key messages

As a group we have generated a clear understanding of the key actions for our improvement journey, which will enable us to develop quality, child focused practices throughout children services. Whilst valuing our staff and ensuring that we are responsive in relation to professional and personal support.'

We used our priority action plan as a basis for developing service planning approach as follows:

- A template for service planning has been provided to ensure uniformity
- We are confident that most of what is in the plan and relevant to operational services will be captured
- Service plans are being developed by Head of Service' to be submitted to Assistant Director's for quality assurance by end of August
 - Service Manager's will develop their service plan together with their respective Team Managers
 - Each Service Manager will then produce a service plan for their area and each Team Manager will develop a Team Plan
- In early September Assistant Director's will arrange away days with there SMs TMs to do further work on their plans

Performance Data

- Performance data that team and service managers want to see on a weekly basis is being reviewed and will be developed to meet their requirements and more importantly demonstrate qualitative and quality of data against the improvement plan.

Team Building

- Feedback from the day was positive; it was a fantastic opportunity to meet together and develop as a team

Next Steps – Staff Development Programme

Core Skills for Practitioners

A five day course that progresses through the child's journey from early identification of need through to statutory intervention – from Early Help to Permanence

It is suitable for Support workers, Social workers, ASYEs and Senior Practitioners from Children's Services including Early Help.

This ensures that all staff are au fait with the relevant processes and required standards for intervention

- **Day 1:** Relationship based, empathic practice, effective communication skills, working effectively with resistance, critical thinking skills, planning home visits, ethical dilemmas and ethical decision making.
- **Day 2:** The application of social work theory and intervention when undertaking assessments including assessing and managing change. Formulating a hypothesis, undertaking an analysis and developing an outcome focused /measurable support plan using SMART principle; evidencing and capturing the Voice of the child.
- **Day 3:** Child Protection, signs and symptoms of abuse, neglect and brain development, Section 47 enquiries/investigation; undertaking risk assessments and attending the initial Child Protection conference.
- **Day 4:** Children Act 1989, legal threshold and internal legal planning processes, Public Law Outline; placement choices and parental responsibility, permanency planning and Care Planning, Placement and Review regulations.
- **Day 5:** Course Skills session including, court reports, processes, protocols and personnel, rights of audience; various courts and jurisdiction.

Next Steps – Management Development Programme

Core skills for managers

The course is very practical and provides delegates with strategies and tools which they can immediately implement to support them in becoming more effective in their managerial role.

It takes delegates through their managerial journey: from managing the transition from Practitioner to Manager, managing themselves, their teams and individuals within the teams and effectively managing a change process.

Module 1: Managing the Transition from Practitioner to Manager including managerial analysis; impact of style and identification of core activities

Module 2: Managing Self including time management strategies – including time management strategies, effective delegation and prioritization; assessing managerial risks including managing high caseloads and evidencing clear managerial decision making processes

Module 3: Managing in Groups and Teams – including management styles and when to use them, team dynamics; role of the leader and use of different leadership styles

Module 4: Managing Individuals including developing coaching programmes – including developing coaching programme; motivation of staff; recording and use of reflective supervision techniques

Module 5: Managing Change/Service Development – Implementation of change; devise and monitor implementation plans and review of milestones

Next Steps – Learning Workshops

As well as scoping the training above we are developing the following bite size workshops for TM's and practitioners to be delivered August – September. These include:

- ✓ Quality and content of court evidence and planning and organisation to meet timescales
- ✓ Contact referral assessment planning and review

Next steps - Performance reporting development

- Review of data information and development of Key Performance Indicators and Local Performance Indicators with front line managers has been completed
- Analytical development of data informing heat maps/hotspots being undertaken
- Creation of a high level dashboard, evidencing accumulative and quality data to support scrutiny and challenge for example the summary chat tool.