



Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan

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Background

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

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

The overall judgement was that Herefordshire Children's Services are 'inadequate'. The judgements contributing to this outcome are as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

Our transformation programme

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

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

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

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

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

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

How we will achieve success

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

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

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

Our workforce

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

Evidencing Impact

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

‘BRAG’ rating guide:

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

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

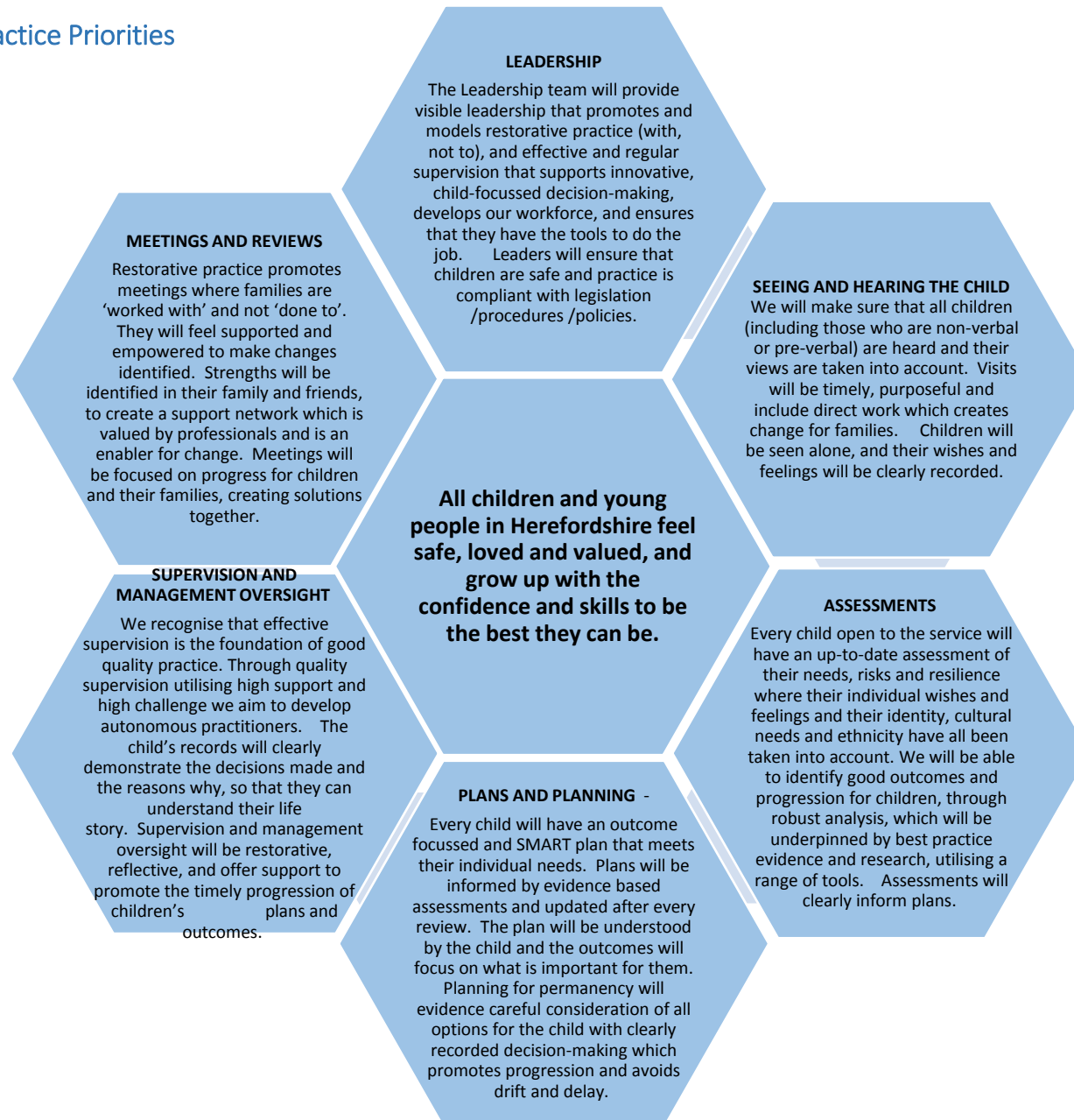
Amber ratings will indicate where activity has started and although some issues have been identified these are being dealt with but are causing some delay

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

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

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



Areas for Improvement

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

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

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

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

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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1.6 Ensure multi-agency governance arrangements provide a clear framework for decision making and accountability, specifically in relation to the Improvement Board and the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP), but also in relation to other key partnerships.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping process with relevant Partnership Chairs underway 	
1.7 Implement a Communication Strategy so 'Messages that Matter' are disseminated clearly and regularly to all key stakeholders.	Service Director (Improvement)	February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping of the strategy completed in accordance with the existing Corporate Communication Strategy 	
1.8 Launch a Leadership Pledge to communicate the purpose, values, strategy and goals for improving outcomes for local children and young people.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft outline for consultation with Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) and CLT for completion December 2022 Launch as part of Communication Strategy (January 2023) 	
1.9 Ensure there are strong and effective arrangements in place to address identified concerns about multi-agency safeguarding practice/arrangements which includes escalation to the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) for swift resolution when required.	Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Independent Scrutineer	January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of arrangements underway 	

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

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

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

Measures that Matter

- Percentage and number of care experienced young people aged 19 – 21 in education, employment and training (higher is good)
- Percentage and number of Early Help assessments completed by services other than the Herefordshire Council Early Help Team

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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2: The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, including sufficient numbers of foster carers, so children receive a timely response to having their needs identified and met across the service.

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One to one consultations with foster carer households underway and on-going Foster Care whole service event scheduled for 21.11.22 	
2.5 Review our Sufficiency Strategy to increase the availability and choice of homes, including foster homes, to meet the needs of children and young people in our care	Service Director (All-Age Commissioning)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim Commissioner appointed to review and refresh the Sufficiency Strategy Appraisal to scope accommodation placement options underway New Fostering Campaign being finalised November 2022 	

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

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

- The proportion of the established workforce that is permanent (increasing and high is good).
- Average social worker caseloads (excluding Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW)) (target range 16-20 children)
- Number of social workers with >24 children allocated (zero or low is good)
- Number of in-house foster care households (and the number of placements offered) (increasing is good)
- Proportion of available in-house fostering capacity utilised. (high is good)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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3: The timely and robust identification and multi-agency response to children and young people who are at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care.

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

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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			to support children as victims of exploitation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to HSCP scheduled for December 2022 	
3.7 Revise and relaunch multi-agency protocols for safeguarding and supporting children and young people who go missing from home and care and improve the quality of return interviews by exploring 'push-pull' factors and using available intelligence to support effective planning.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and refresh of existing protocol to be completed for February 2023 Exploitation Team resources have been reviewed Exploitation access pathway reviewed and to be completed February 2023 	
3.8 Review, relaunch and then evaluate the impact of the multi-agency Neglect Strategy	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-launched by HSCP in October 2022 	

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

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

Measures that Matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of child and family assessments completed within timescales (high is good) • % of strategy meetings initiated at the right time (high is good) • % of Initial Child Protection Conferences convened within 15 days (of the strategy discussion at which the need for child protection enquiries was agreed) (high is good) • % of return interviews which took place within 72 hours of the missing episode ending (high is good)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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4: The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need.

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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4.5 Strengthen quality assurance activity in accordance with the re-launch of the Quality Assurance Framework to provide robust assurance that the quality of practice is improving.	Service Director Improvement	December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised QAF complete November 2022 Re-launch due December 2022 Operational arrangements to be embedded January 2023 	
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Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy promotes and supports continuous learning and development that is evidence based, research informed and makes a demonstrable impact on improving practice. (Performance data, quality assurance activity) Practitioners and managers know what is expected of them, are supported to practice confidently and capably and are increasingly more restorative in their approach which builds trust and strong relationships. (Quality assurance activity and feedback) The needs of children and young people are of paramount importance, their voices are championed and they report feeling safe, well and able to meet their full potential (Quality assurance activity and feedback) Practice is routinely audited against best practice standards and evidences increasingly good and better practice that improves outcomes for children and young people (quality assurance activity)

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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5: Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements to ensure children are protected and enter care when required.

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

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

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

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

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thresholds are well understood and applied consistently across the partnership so children and young people are identified and have their assessed needs, risks and circumstances responded to in a timely manner so they are supported, protected and cared for. (Quality assurance activity, feedback) • Children, young people and families are provided with the right help at the right time. (quality assurance activity, feedback) • Safety planning and risk management arrangements engage all partners to work well together so children and young people are protected from the risk of harm. (quality assurance activity, feedback) |
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Measures that Matter

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Family Group Conferences (FGC) (when established) (increasing and high is good) |
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Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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6: Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the public law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes.

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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understanding of what is a placement unregulated by Ofsted and what is an unregistered placement.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full review of the Home Finding Team underway to strengthen leadership, capacity and capability • End to end review of home finding policies, procedures and processes for December 2022 • Revised guidance to be issued January 2023 	
6.4 Revise the Permanence Policy and Procedures to achieve legal, emotional and placement permanence with children and young people as soon as possible.	Service Director (Improvement)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping of policy and procedure underway with draft due February 2023 	
6.5 Develop and implement a reunification framework to assess and support children and young people who are able to return home to the care of their parents/families when it is safe and in their best interest to do so.	Service Director (Improvement)	March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping of framework underway with draft due February 2023 	

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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Measures that Matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of children for whom PLO pre-proceedings were completed within 16 weeks (Rolling Year) • Number of children in unregistered provision, including where the Corporate Director's oversight and decision is recorded on the child's record • Number of children subject to Deprivation of Liberty (DoL) including the % of these children where DoL has been in place for 6 months or more

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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7: The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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8: Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision.

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

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

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

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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Measures that Matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of allocated children who have an up-to-date (within the past month) supervision completed on their record • Number and % of concerns raised and resolved at stage one of the Dispute Resolution Protocol • The number of unallocated cases in the service (snapshot at month end)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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9: Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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multi-agency data set to safeguard children and young people.	Partnership, Independent Scrutineer			
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Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality assurance and performance frameworks and the system that supports them are robust, reliable and routinely provide evidence and analysis to support and drive continuous improvement and assurance. (Performance data, quality assurance activity) The day to day management of operational practice and performance is supported by quantitative data, information and intelligence that is readily available and easy to access so practitioners and managers have a clear view and appreciation of what this shows and what it means for them and the children, young people and families they are supporting at an individual, team and service level. (quality assurance activity, feedback) The focus, findings and follow up to quality assurance activity provides a shared narrative based on qualitative evidence of what the service has done, how well it has done it and what is required to address recommendations and remedial action to improve outcomes for children and young people (Performance data, quality assurance activity) The partnership achieves and maintains a shared appreciation of quantitative and qualitative data, information and intelligence to fulfil its statutory functions to assess the effectiveness of help being provided to children and families, whether partners are fulfilling their obligations, assure the quality of joint practice and identify lessons, as well as monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training.

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

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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- Number of outstanding priority actions on the audit tracker following an inadequate audit outcome where concerns were escalated about the likelihood of significant harm (zero or low is good)

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

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

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

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

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)

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

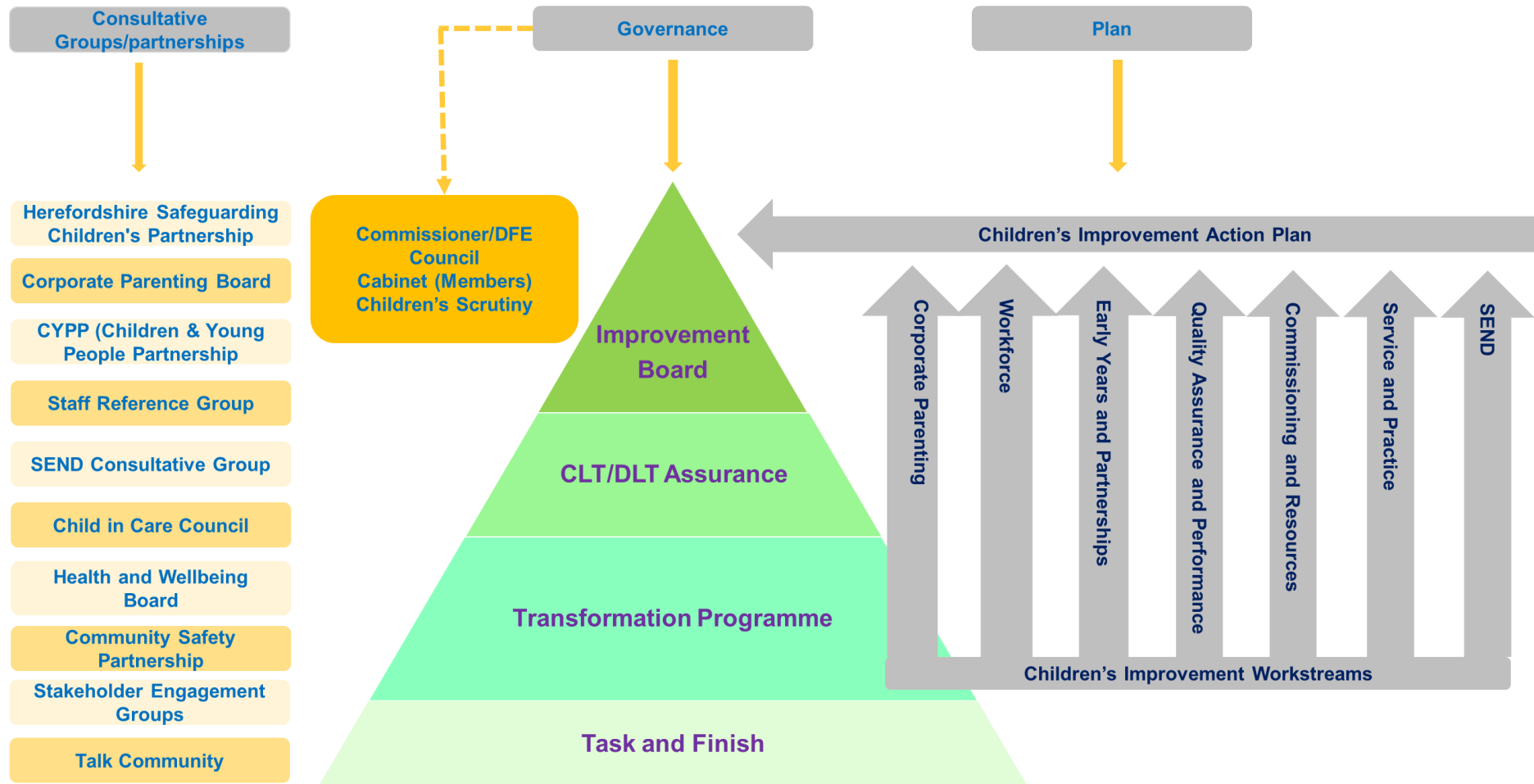
- SEND Strategy is shared publically and with all stakeholders; Strategy widely supported and used to shape/complement other areas of work supporting children and young people. (feedback)
- Data dashboard in place and all partners/service providers provide timely and accurate information; Each sector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

Measures that Matter

- Ratings of EHCPs under Quality Assurance process
- Timeliness of health and social care assessments (completing / updating EHCPs)
- Timeliness of EHC plan issue (90% of plans are issued within statutory timeframes)
- Timeliness of EHC annual review process (90% EHC plan phase transfer annual reviews are completed on time)

Key	Activity Not yet due to start	Activity Started and on track	Activity Started with some issues/delay	Activity Not on track and at risk	Activity completed (impact to be tested)
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Appendix A – Herefordshire Children’s Services Improvement Plan Governance



Appendix B - Glossary of Roles with Names:

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