

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S IMPROVEMENT BOARD 7 JUNE

IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE COVER REPORT

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This cover report addresses the progress updates that have been added to the Improvement Plan for consideration at the June 2023 Improvement Board. These updates are based on information outlined in the Transformation Programme Delivery Dash Boards, feedback from Project Managers, Senior Responsible Officers and Service Leads as well as quality assurance and performance reporting. The Improvement Plan reflects the most up to date data and information for the month of May 2023.

2.0 BRAG Breakdown

2.1 Overall, the general direction of travel continues to be positive in respect of progressing agreed improvement priority actions as the majority of these continue to remain on track. Of the 64 priority improvement actions, 32 (50%) are now BRAG rated Blue which reflects a positive shift towards 'business as usual'. When adding the Green BRAG rated priority improvement actions, this figure increases to 43 (67%).

2.2 The overall improvement activity and impact summarised below:

	Previous Improvement Activity	Previous Improvement Impact	Current Improvement Activity	Current Improvement Impact
Grey	1 (1.53%)	33 (49.23%)	0	29 (45.31%)
Blue	28 (46.66%)	0	32 (50%)	0
Red	8 (13.33%)	1 (1.53%)	2 (3.13%)	2 (3.13)
Amber	4 (6.15%)	20 (30.76%)	18 (28.13%)	22 (34.37%)
Green	24 (36.92%)	11 (16.92%)	12 (18.75%)	11 (17.19%)
Total	65	65	64	64

2.3 Whilst improvement actions remain broadly on track the impact of these is not yet being reported on a consistent basis. Overall, the impact of improvement activity is broadly the same as previously reported to the Improvement Board in April 2023. A key reason for this is that impact measures have not been agreed for all priority improvement actions yet. Whilst most activity has been progressed or completed it is not always clear what difference this has made and whether children, young people and families are better off as a result. This highlights the need to ensure that impact measures are agreed as a matter of priority and routinely reported to future Improvement Boards, starting at the July 2023 Board. It is anticipated that the review proposals outlined below in section 4 will assist.

2.4 Another issue concerning the BRAG ratings relates to a number of priority improvement deadlines which, upon reflection, may have been overly optimistic when they were first set, particularly given the low base for many of these. Having said this, all priority improvement actions have now started and an increasing proportion are now progressing well or have already become business as usual, as indicated by the Green and Blue BRAG ratings. The pace of improvement will however remain a key concern and it is important that the service, council and wider partnership continue to build and maintain focus and momentum moving forward.

2.5 Overall, the number of Red BRAG rated priority improvement actions has decreased from 8 to 2 and in terms of impact this has increased from 1 to 2. The details of the Red BRAG rated improvement activity and impact are outlined below:

#	Improvement Activity	Commentary	Deadline
2.1	Impact of workforce strategy to recruit social work practitioners and managers	Despite the improvement activity undertaken to date, the impact of this has not had desired effect. The recruitment of new permanent social work practitioners and team managers remains very low. Reporting for the past period indicates 0 appointments and 2 conversions from agency to permanent contracts. The DCS has escalated this with the Corporate Leadership Team.	March 2023
2.4	Foster carer recruitment campaign	Improvement activity and impact of this are both RAG Rated Red. Improvements in the Fostering Service have been focused on rebuilding the trust and confidence of current foster carers. Following the recent appointment of the new Marketing Officer the launch of the Foster Carer Recruitment Campaign can now begin. This will be further strengthened and supported by the recent developments in respect of the Communications Strategy which will address priority improvement campaigns, including the Foster Carer Recruitment Campaign.	March 2023
7.5	Care experienced young people's health histories	To date, there is no evidence that this priority improvement action has been progressed. Some health related priority actions (7.1 and 7.2) have however been scoped. More focused work is underway but not reported yet. Following consultation with the Improvement Board Chair, it is proposed that Health partners are asked to present a report to the next Improvement Board in July 2023 to outline the improvement activity that has been progressed and the impact this is having, including 7.1, 7.2 and 7.5 regarding health histories.	March 2023

3.0 Top 5 Improvements

3.1 The top 5 improvements was introduced for the first time in the previous Improvement Board. This development has not yet been fully embraced by the delivery boards, which have been slow at identifying areas of improvement to highlight and celebrate. This will hopefully become more of a focus as more impact measures are developed and as a result of the proposed changes that are set out in section 4 below.

3.2 The top 5 improvements for this Improvement Board are SEND related and are set out below:

#	Improvement activity	Improvement Impact
1	SEND Strategy (10.1)	Setting priorities - Children and families report being clearer about Herefordshire's priorities and how these respond to what they have said about what needs to change and improve.
2	SEND strategic oversight and direction for improvement (10.2)	Performance - The Strategic Board report confidence in the SEND Action Plan which is gaining traction. For example, EHC plans issued within 20 weeks = 100% in April 2023. Plus the LGA (April 2023) follow up to review focusing on the quality of completed EHC plans reported positive findings: <i>'We were impressed with the professional and dedicated team of case workers who were appreciative of the demands placed on other agencies but determined to complete the ECHPs. The common theme was the safety of children, their well-being and the opportunity to develop to their full potential.'</i>
3	SEND partnership (10.3)	Co-production with children and young people - Work to develop engagement and participation is a particular priority with children and young people's views informing and shaping the focus of the SEND Strategy
4	SEND offer (10.4)	Parent Carer feedback – parents and carers report that the offer adaptations are easier to navigate and improves access to information.
5	SEND sufficiency (10.7)	Sufficiency – sufficiency planning for September 2023 is on track to open: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 4 new mainstream Autism bases (2 x Primary & 2 x Secondary) offering 24 additional places ➤ New Satellite Hub for SEMH

		<p>➤ School's Re-Building Programme - Westfield Special School will be prioritised for re-building</p> <p>Pupils with SEND will now be able to access suitable local education provision to meet their assessed needs and be supported to reach their potential.</p>
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4.0 Improvement Board Infrastructure Review and Rationalisation

4.1 Since the last Improvement Board in April 2023, there has been a review to rationalise the improvement infrastructure. The review was undertaken by Gladys Rhodes White, Gail Hancock and Joni Hughes and proposes a number of recommendations to streamline and coordinate improvement activity in order to improve accountability and pace.

4.2 The proposals have been shared and agreed with all Senior Responsible Officers and, subject to feedback from Improvement Board members, the proposed way forward will hopefully mark a step change in current arrangements.

4.3 A summary of the review proposals is as follows:

- a) The seven transformation programme delivery boards will be reduced to three and will include: Practice and Service Delivery; Workforce; and, Commissioning and Resources.
- b) Each delivery board will have nominated senior responsible officers as Chair and Vice Chair. They will possess the relevant technical knowledge, skills and experience and have the necessary leadership to drive improvements forward.
- c) The four key partnership boards will become directly responsible for progressing relevant priority improvement actions and will be asked to report directly to the Improvement Board.
- d) The four partnership boards will include; the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership; the Children and Young People's Partnership; the Corporate Parenting Board; and, the SEND Strategic Board.
- e) The Project Management resources will be reconfigured to continue supporting the three delivery boards and also provide additional support to the four partnership boards
- f) All existing priority improvement actions contained in the Children's Improvement Plan will be assigned to the appropriate delivery or partnership board

4.4 The senior responsible officers, who will be the chairs and vice chairs for the delivery boards are as follows:

- Practice and Service Delivery (SROs: Rachel Gillott / Gail Hancock)
- Workforce (SROs: Tracey Sampson / Darryl Freeman)
- Commissioning and Resources (SROs: Hayley Doyle / Victoria Gibb)

4.5 The senior responsible officers, chairs and service lead for the four partnership boards are as follows:

- Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP) (SRO: Kevin Crompton)
- Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) (Chair: Councillor Ivan Howell, SRO: Victoria Gibb and Service Lead: Julie Mepham)
- Children and Young People Partnership (CYPP) (SRO: Matt Pearce), and the;

- SEND Strategy Board (SRO: Liz Farr).

4.6 There will be an expectation that Quality Assurance and Performance reporting will be core for all partnership boards, although the Children’s Services SRO, Victoria Gibb, who is the new incoming permanent Service Director starting on 4 June 2023, will continue to oversee the reporting of the established monthly auditing and performance reports for Children’s Services.

4.7 A standard agenda and reporting template have been developed to ensure a comprehensive and consistent approach. The Improvement Board will receive delivery board reports at every board meeting. The Improvement Board will receive Partnership reports every other board meeting and will adopt the following pairing and reporting pattern set out below:

- HSCP and CPB – starting with reports to the 19 July and then 11 October Improvement Boards
- CYPP and SEND Board – starting with reports to the 30 August and then 22 November 2023 Improvement Boards

5.0 Summary of Board Requests:

- a) To endorse the review proposals, as outline in section 4
- b) To endorse the proposal to seek a Health report at the next Board, as outlined in section 2.5

6.0 Arrangements for presenting this report

5.1 Due to annual leave, this cover report will be presented by Bart Popelier, Improvement Lead. Gladys Rhodes White, DfE Independent Improvement Board Chair, will address section 4 which relates to the review of the Improvement Board infrastructure and related proposals.

Gail Hancock

Interim Service Director (Improvement)

1 June 2023