

Title of report:

Children and Young persons' Improvement Plan – progress update Phase 2

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 26 September 2024

Cabinet member: Cabinet member, Children and Young people

Report by: Corporate Director, Childrens and Young People

Report author: Corporate Director, Childrens and Young People

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present cabinet with the Phase 2 Children's Services Improvement Plan for endorsement on 13th July 24

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **Cabinet endorse the Phase 2 Improvement Plan outlined in Appendix A**
- b) **Cabinet authorise the Corporate Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the council's Corporate Leadership Team to lead this improvement plan on behalf**

of the Council and to send it to Ofsted as part of the ongoing children's services monitoring.

Alternative options

1. To not endorse the plan and to send to Ofsted – this is not an option as it would put the council at significant risk by not having a plan to deliver the necessary improvements following the Ofsted judgement of inadequate in all areas of Children's Services.

Key considerations

Background

2. Children's Services was inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.
3. The inspection report was published on 21 September 2022 and is available [here](#).
4. The Secretary of State issued a [Statutory Direction](#) to Herefordshire Council on 21 September 2022, and appointed a Commissioner for Children's Services.
5. The overall judgement was that Herefordshire Children's Service is '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

6. Three Ofsted monitoring visits have taken place to date. The monitoring visits found insufficient consistency and pace of progress in the areas of focus.
7. The DCS left Herefordshire Council by agreement March 24.
8. An interim DCS was appointed who started post 1.7.24 and is subject to a 9 month fixed term contract to 31.3.25.

Current Situation

Development of the plan

9. This Phase 2 Improvement Plan (Appendix A), hereinafter referred to as the Plan, has been developed to bring focus, pace and measures to the improvement journey.
10. The plan sets out highlights of what has been achieved in the last 2 years and importantly introduces a Quality Assurance framework of measures to enable us to monitor progress. Key Performance Indicators', Service User feedback and Audit, defines measures.

11. The Children's Improvement Board, has reviewed its Terms of Reference and membership (Appendix B) and is independently chaired by the Department of Education Commissioner Eleanor Brazil. Meetings are held on a six weekly basis.
12. Herefordshire Council continues to have a strong commitment to improving performance in Children's Services. Transformation of the service is now in its third year of a three-year programme that commenced in October 2021. This phase 2 covers the period 24/25 and will be refreshed July 25.
13. The aims of the transformation plan remain the same which are:
 - a. Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
 - b. Making working in Herefordshire an attractive and rewarding career choice.
 - c. Embedding systemic partnership approaches and exploring alternative models of delivery.
 - d. Making the service financially viable for the future across a range of services the Council delivers.

All of these are underpinned and driven by improvement across the system of practice, management and leadership.

Community impact

14. The Ofsted inspection judgement of 'Inadequate' has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
15. The County Plan 2023–2025 includes the ambition to '*to do everything we do, well*', the council aims to:
 - a) Ensure all children are healthy, safe, and inspired to achieve;
 - b) Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices;

Environmental Impact

16. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.
17. The transformation activity will be undertaken with consideration to minimise waste and resource in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

18. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

19. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the ‘general duty’ on public authorities is set out as follows:

In particular, the council must have due regard to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

20. Children and young people who are assessed to be ‘in need’ of support, protection and care are additionally vulnerable, often as a result of abuse, neglect, exploitation and a range of personal and family circumstances.

21. As individual improvement projects and service delivery progresses, and changes are designed, equality impact assessments will be undertaken, as necessary and appropriate.

Resource implications

22. There are no resourcing implications to this decision report. Performance against the agreed revenue budget for the Children & Young People Directorate is reported quarterly to Cabinet.

23. The resource implications of the transformation programme have been outlined in separate reports to Cabinet.

Legal implications

24. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Risk management

25. The following risks have been considered

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Partnership buy in to the plan – recognising a joint responsibility to deliver an improved childrens services	Extensive partnership engagement activity and involvement, focus groups with children and young people and key stakeholders. Quartely partnership summits
Plan is not adopted or endorsed	Continuous engagement throughout the development of the plan and the governance process. Engagement with CLT, DLT, Improvement Board, the commissioner and the DFE.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Children’s Services Improvement Phase 2

Appendix 2 – Plan on a Page – Recommendations and Measures

Appendix 3 – Improvement Board Terms of Reference and Membership

Background papers

A -Ofsted’s Publication - [Ofsted Inspection Report July 22](#)

B- [Previous Improvement Plan Nov 22](#)

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	Date
Finance	Date <small>Click or tap to enter a date.</small>
Legal	Date <small>Click or tap to enter a date.</small>
Communications	Date <small>Click or tap to enter a date.</small>
Equality Duty	Date <small>Click or tap to enter a date.</small>
Procurement	Date <small>Click or tap to enter a date.</small>
Risk	Date

Approved by	Tina Russell	Date 18/09/2024
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Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

