

Cabinet

**Agenda
Item 10(a)**

19 June 2019

Report of the Ofsted Working Group

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor T. Wilson – Children's.

Report:

At its meeting on 26 June 2018, the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a working group to investigate recommendations 7 and 9 of the post-Ofsted action plan.

The group completed a final report presenting their findings, which was considered by the scrutiny committee on 25th April 2019. The Committee resolved that the final report of the Ofsted Working Group be sent to Cabinet for consideration of the report recommendations.

Recommendation

That Cabinet consider the working group recommendations as contained within the working group final report.

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Democratic Services Officer

Ofsted Working Group



As presented to the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th April 2019.

Foreword

Every child and young person deserves stability, and working towards permanency from the beginning is important. Permanency can look different to many children; however, it is important that the best option be sought for each child. As corporate parents to the children in Local Authority Care we should all be ensuring that we get the best for each child and as such there are some recommendations in this report that relate to us as Elected Members.

Support for children and families should continue throughout their lives to ensure that placements are a success and that repeat, sequential removals are avoided. Permanency plans should take into account the child's needs, wishes and feelings with them involved in decisions about their lives.

In carrying out its review, the Working Group felt that it was given open and honest access to both staff and information. The engagement from all levels of staff was appreciated and their drive and determination to improve was clear. Despite the challenges being faced in the current climate of austerity, and more families with more complex issues, it was evident that all members of staff were focussed and passionate about improving the current service, however it is important to acknowledge that there is still room for improvement.

This review process has produced recommendations in relation to recommendation seven and nine of the inspection report. It is the hope of the Working Group that its recommendations will be supported by the Cabinet and actioned accordingly.

I would like to thank Nikki Gough (Democratic Services) for her assistance in making the Ofsted Working Group a success.



Councillor A. Nawaz
Chair of the Children's Services Overview and
Scrutiny Committee and Chair of the Working
Group

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Introduction

The Ofsted inspection of the Council's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers was held between 20 June and 13 July 2017. Published on 4 September 2017, the inspection report made twelve recommendations that are addressed by the Council Services post-Ofsted action plan. In 2017/18, municipal year the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee established an Ofsted Working Group to consider recommendations one and two of the inspection report and its findings were presented to the Committee on 27th March 2018. Building on the success of this working group the Children Service's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 June 2018 resolved to establish a working group to investigate recommendations 7 and 9 of the post-Ofsted action plan.

Terms of Reference

Draft terms of reference were discussed and agreed by a meeting of the working group that took place on 29th November 2018. The terms of reference were subsequently agreed at a meeting of the Committee on 28th January 2019.

The full version of the Working Groups terms of reference can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.

The Working Group was supported predominantly by two officers:

Debbie Carter – Assistant Director (Children's Social Care)

Nikki Gough – Democratic Services Officer

Membership

The working group consisted of the following Councillors:

Councillor A. Nawaz

Councillor J. Fitzpatrick

Councillor T. Jukes

Councillor D. Barker

Councillor V. Waters

Methodology

The Working Group has held 6 meetings during its investigations taking into account the views of twenty-three witnesses.

The working group considered progress with the implementation of the following two recommendations from Ofsted:

Recommendation 7: Ensure that managers and social workers have clear guidance and legal advice when placing children in arrangements with friends and family, to ensure that their needs are fully understood and met.

Recommendation 9: Take steps to ensure that care plans for all children who have a plan for permanence progress within the child's timescale to avoid children experiencing delays, including the identification and support of children who could be placed in foster to adopt arrangements.

The Working Group proposed to review the actions, measures and timescales for tackling these recommendations and, in order to achieve this, adopted the following approach:

- Who do you want to see?
- When do you want to see them?
- What will you ask them?
- What other information will you want to see?

The group agreed to hold 2 focus group sessions to question and triangulate the information they have read with information and feedback from the following groups:-

1. Management
2. Practitioners

A list of questions was devised by the Working Group (see appendices 2 and 3) and the other information required in advance of the meetings was specified and supplied to the Working Group by the Children's Services directorate (information pack – background papers). For each meeting frontline staff and managers/oversight staff were identified and invited to attend a meeting to answer questions devised by the Group.

Witnesses

The Working Group met and interviewed the following witnesses:

Job Title
Permanent Social Worker Safeguarding & Family Support
Permanent Assessed Supported Year Employment (ASYE) Safeguarding & Family Support
Agency Senior Practitioner Safeguarding & Family Support
Special Guardian Order Support Lead – Family Placement
Kinship Assessing Social Worker Family Placement
Adoption Social Worker Adoption Team
Adoption Support Social Worker Adoption Team
Team Manager Family Time Service
Legal
Team Manager Corporate Parenting
Permanency Co-ordinator
Independent Reviewing Officer
Team Manager Safeguarding & Family Support
Assistant Director (Children’s Social Care) / Head of Safeguarding
Agency Decision Maker
Group Manager
Permanence Coordinator
Principal Solicitor
Principal IRO and Child Protection
Independent Panel Chair
Group Manager
Team Manager

Findings

The Working Group considered progress made with the implementation of two recommendations made by Ofsted following their inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers. The recommendations the working group considered were:

Recommendation 7: Ensure that managers and social workers have clear guidance and legal advice when placing children in arrangements with friends and family, to ensure that their needs are fully understood and met.

Recommendation 9: Take steps to ensure that care plans for all children who have a plan for permanence progress within the child’s timescale to avoid children experiencing delays, including the identification and support of children who could be placed in foster to adopt arrangements.

The Group considered the information that they would need to consider in order to evaluate the progress made by Children's Services in relation to recommendations 7 and 9. The following documents were identified:

1. Permanence Resource Pack (LGO)
2. Statement of Purpose Permanency Policy and Practice
3. Pre proceedings – Public Law Outline Panel
4. Re-launch Public Law Outline (PLO)
5. Care and Supervision Proceedings and the Public Law Outline
6. Early Permanence
7. Practice Standards
8. Permanence Policy and Procedure
9. Staying Put Procedure
10. Permanence Overarching Strategy
11. Performance Information
12. Adoption Scorecard
13. Looked After Children weekly performance on a page
14. Regional Adoption Agency Family Finding
15. Regional Adoption Agency Adopter Approval Process
16. Regional Adoption Agency Adoption Support for Adoptive Families

These documents provided Members with a broad background to allow them to understand the processes and practices in relation to the two recommendations considered. Once Members processed this information specific questions were devised for frontline staff and Managers in order to make a judgement in relation to the Authorities progress towards recommendations 7 and 9.

Permanence

Permanence is the long-term plan for a child's upbringing to ensure that children have a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood. Permanence arrangements vary for different children, according to what their needs are and what is in their best interests. Permanency options can include:

- Return to /remain with birth parents
- Kinship (friends and family) care
- Adoption
- Special guardianship
- Long-term foster care

Walsall's 'statement of purpose permanency policy and practice', the 'Permanence Policy and Procedure' and the 'Permanence Overarching Strategy' sets out this commitment to children and young people.

Friends and Family placement

The Group heard that viability assessments of connected persons (to a young person) identified were completed to determine the suitability of a friends and family placement. This would also determine their understanding of the child's needs. The Group were assured that the suitability of the placement was considered from the child's point of view. This informed the groups' deliberations when considering if links with extended family, friends and other connected adults was considered to plan for permanency.

The Group found this to be in line with the 'Permanence Policy and Procedure'. There was clear improvement in understanding and the assessment process by practitioners, which had ensured progress, had been made in relation to friends and family placements, and Special Guardianships. There was a positive level of support for staff through supervision and management.

Private fostering

When a parent arranges for their child to live with someone else, such as a distant relative or family friend and they remain there for longer than 28 days, this is called a Private Fostering arrangement. The Group discovered that when notifications of private fostering arrangements are made the carers are made subject of an assessment to ensure the arrangements are safe and suitable. The Working Group learned that although awareness of private fostering was embedded across Children's Services, there was not a good awareness in the community, which may mean that children in private fostering arrangements are not being identified.

The 'Permanence Overarching Strategy' states that 'The Children's Act 1989' requires parents and private foster carers to give the local authority advance notice of private fostering arrangements. It also places specific duties on local authorities with responsibilities for children's services. The Children Act 2004 Section 44 placed a further duty on local authorities to promote public awareness of the notification requirements. Although the Authority had attempted to raise awareness Members concluded that more work needed to be undertaken on this topic. It was felt that further progress was

needed to identify these arrangements. In order to improve this Elected Members needed to be better sighted on this topic, and more work needed doing with schools and school admissions to identify potential cases.

Support to families of children in care and 'Troubled Families programme'

Frontline staff stressed that the primary plan was always to consider whether it is safe for a child to return home to their parents, and significant efforts were put into ensuring that this was as fully explored and social workers use the NSPCC reunification assessment tool. This was a structured 12-week observational / assessment model to identify if parents had made the necessary changes to allow the child to return home. Partner agencies would feed into this report and this evidence was used in court if necessary. The 12-week observational/ assessment model focused on the impact of parenting capacity and what was needed to address root causes this would include identifying any trauma parents may have suffered that could be a barrier to addressing issues of their parenting. The Group questioned timescales involved for this support. Although it was suggested that timescales would depend upon the level of involvement and intensity of support, by working through the therapeutic model, timescales should ideally be completed within 12 weeks.

The introduction of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court was described and the increased level of engagement with intense support for parents to move forward. This approach had achieved positive outcomes.

The 'Troubled Families programme' was developed by government working with local authorities and their partners to help troubled families in England turn their lives around. Troubled families are defined by government as those that have problems and cause problems to the community around them, putting high costs on the public sector.

The Group concluded that without the troubled families programme it would be more likely that more families would require a higher level of social care intervention. The Group were concerned that due to efficiency savings there may be a reduced availability of domestic abuse services and drug and alcohol services which may impact upon the success of children returning home. The Group also concluded that previously not enough was to involve fathers when families were assessed and in the future, more should be done to ensure that fathers were involved in discussions about their children

Special Guardians

A Special Guardianship order is an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's 'special guardian'. A special guardian gains 'parental responsibility' for the child until they turn 18 years of age but links with birth parents continue. Although this restricts birth rights and provides a sense of permanency it does not permanently end the child's relationship with their parents. In order for this arrangement to be formalised a social worker carries out a thorough assessment of potential 'special guardians', this included provision of financial information. The Group heard from frontline staff that Walsall Council was flexible in its support to special guardians in comparison to other local authorities.

Children's views

The Group sought assurance that children's views were captured throughout the care process. Officers described methods to include children, which included the attendance of the child at the Looked After Child (LAC) review, writing a letter to the child rather than formal minutes, the use of storyboard and different methods of engaging children such as text messaging, drawings and notebooks. A range of examples were given to demonstrate that children's views were included in considerations.

Further to this the expectation was that Social Workers were talking to children to gather their views from the first point of contact. Children would also be consulted at certain points to ensure that they understood why decisions were being made. Younger children were observed to identify body language and non-verbal communication and Social Workers continually considered how a child would be feeling about their situation.

The Group were also assured that a Court Guardian was also appointed by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service - CAFCASS. The CAFCASS Guardian represent the child's interests in the Court proceedings. They are independent from the Local Authority and report to directly to the Court on the what is best for the child, this may be in line with what the Local Authority is proposing or may challenge the proposals being put forward by the Local Authority.

Siblings

'Together or apart' assessments provided an awareness/assessment of sibling relationships and assisted social workers in deciding whether the siblings should be placed together or apart in when considering any permanency option. This was very dependent upon the child, the age of the siblings and their individual circumstances. Where siblings with a plan of adoption were not placed together, the group heard that appropriate contact arrangements are agreed based on the needs of the children and can either be face to face or can be through an exchange of cards, photographs and letters.

Drift and delay and 26 Week deadline

'Drift' is when children remain in placements that are not part of their permanency plan for longer than necessary. The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a 26-week time limit for care proceedings (though extensions are available in complex cases). This means that care proceedings should not exceed 26 weeks.

The Group considered why drift might occur in Walsall, and found that there were mechanisms in place to attempt to avoid drift such as supervision, on-track assessments, the permanency tracker and a management oversight of cases. The Group were assured that there had been significant improvement in performance in relation to drift and delay during the previous year. Walsall's performance in relation to the 26-week deadline was good. Current performance for care proceedings is an average of 37 weeks. This is in line with the average for the court (36.7 weeks) and has been increased by a number of complex, high profile cases. Throughout discussions with Officers, it was clear that parallel planning did take place and was embedded throughout the service.

Matching children with suitable adopters

The matching process could begin once a child had gone through care proceedings. Through the matching process, potential adoptive carers' strengths were identified and matched to the child's needs. Child appreciation days were described and the benefit of these were that they helped to speed up the matching process for children with a plan for adoption. There were also chemistry visits to ensure that adopters were fully aware of the child's needs. The Group were satisfied with the evidence they heard.

The Group learnt that children with more complex circumstances might wait longer to be matched with potential adopters through the adoption match database for example international cases. However Walsall's performance is better than national averages. Between 2015 and 2018, Walsall children that were adopted waiting 175 days between the court approving the placement order and being matched with an adoptive family, compared to children nationally who waited an average of 201 days.

In response to challenge about resources and concern that this may impact on the service provided, Members were assured that the children's services transformation programme would reorganise resources to create a more efficient service.

Local Family Justice Board

The Family Justice Board was set up to improve the performance of the family justice system and to ensure the best possible outcomes for children who come into contact with it. Local Family Justice Boards bring together key local agencies, including decisions makers and front-line staff, to improve the performance of the family justice system in their local areas. Local Authority representatives sit on this Board and the Group considered this to be positive because it was a useful forum for the Authority to raise any issues and ensure that all agencies were working well together.

Local Family Court

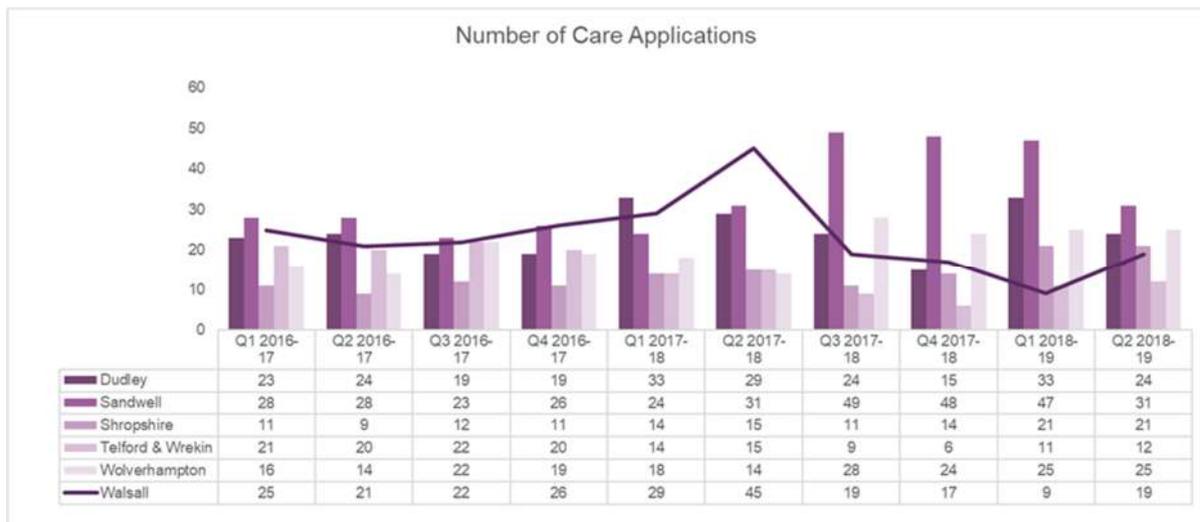
The Group felt that it was important to consider the Council's relationship with the local family court to identify if any changes were needed to improve outcomes for children. The Group were assured that a good relationship existed with the Courts and with the Lead Judge in Black Country (and the designated Judge for the developing Family Drug and Alcohol Court).

The Group were advised that the Black Country Court often requested that children remained on care orders whilst living at home with their parents. This practice is not isolated to Walsall and was the same for other Black Country authorities. This practice needs to change and is being addressed through the Local Family Justice Board. The Group felt that this was an important area of work and further work should be done to explore this further, and heard that there was a Public Law Outline sub group that could consider this.

Effectiveness of pre-proceedings

Pre proceedings are preventative measures that are entered into when a Local Authority has concerns in relation to the care that a child is receiving with the aim of trying to avoid Court Proceedings. The Local Authority works in partnership with parents to assess needs and to identify what support can be offered. Pre proceedings will only be entered into when there are no immediate and pressing concerns about the child's welfare.

The Group were informed that between April 2018 and December 2018 there had been a significant reduction in care applications due to improvements in preventative work made by the Local Authority. CAFCASS Data showed a 56% reduction in care applications on the previous year in Quarter 1,2, and 3. Over the previous 12 months, performance data demonstrated that 50 families had worked through pre-proceedings and children had subsequently remained within the family.



Performance

Information on the adoption scorecard provided an indication of the time it took for a child to be adopted and this was considered regularly by the Adoption Board. When considering the adoption scorecard Members noted that while it demonstrated the percentage of older children that were adopted, it did not differentiate by age when looking at timeliness, which could therefore distort average times where it included older and 'harder to place' children. It was felt that this is something that could be addressed through local performance reporting.

Foster to Adopt

Where the preferred form of permanency for the child is adoption, a young child may also be placed with approved adopters who are also approved foster carers while social workers continue to investigate all options for the child. If the court decides that the child can be placed for adoption, the foster family will then be granted an adoption order, provided social workers and the court are satisfied the child's needs will be met in that placement. This can limit the number of placement moves for a child, and allows them to begin building a relationship with potential adoptive parents from an early stage.

Based on evidence provided to the Group, Members felt that this was not well advanced in Walsall and that priority should be given to improving this in Walsall. The Group considered the Regional Adoption Agency to be key to this improvement.

Repeat sequential removal of children.

The Group considered information on Mothers who had children sequentially taken into care, often at birth and questioned interventions to break this cycle. A multi-agency approach with therapeutic interventions was described to help parents and identify problems within families. Officers described the difficulties that some parents faced often as a result of past trauma. In the future, it was hoped that work would be done with parents post removal of their child to prevent the cycle continuing. Members expressed concern that a lack of resources may exacerbate this problem if families did not have access to services to facilitate behavioural changes. The Group were informed that the introduction of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court would provide more therapeutic input to families to break the cycle of repeat removals.

Conclusions

Recommendation 7: Ensure that managers and social workers have clear guidance and legal advice when placing children in arrangements with friends and family, to ensure that their needs are fully understood and met.

Through discussions with frontline staff and managers of the service, the Group concluded that good progress had been made in relation to 'recommendation 7'. There was clear improvement in understanding and the assessment process, which had ensured progress had been made in relation to friends and family placements, and Special Guardianships. There was a positive level of support for staff through supervision and management.

However, the Working Group was not fully assured that the Local Authority was making sufficient progress in relation to the identification of private fostering arrangements in Walsall. There was concern that Elected Members were not well informed on the issue and the group was concerned that many cases of private fostering were not being reported to Children's Social Care. To be fully compliant with recommendation 7, it is considered important that awareness and identification of private fostering be improved by the Authority.

Recommendation 9: Take steps to ensure that care plans for all children who have a plan for permanence progress within the child's timescale to avoid children experiencing delays, including the identification and support of children who could be placed in foster to adopt arrangements.

The Group concluded that some good progress had been made to address 'recommendation 9' and that this had led to improvements in practice. However, further work should be done in particular the identification and support of children who could be placed in 'foster to adopt' arrangements.

The Group were assured that a range of processes to monitor and unblock drift and delay are being implemented and there are clear processes in place to progress adoption where appropriate. There is management oversight through the permanency tracker, the Independent Reviewing Officer and the escalation process ensures that those cases where drift and delay may be of concern are effectively monitored. The relaunch of Public Law Outline training had assisted Social workers in improving care planning.

Performance data evidenced that levels of permanency via adoption and Special Guardianship are improving, and performance is now closer to the national average for adoption. The Group heard evidence to indicate that parallel planning is effective to prevent drift and delay in line with children's timescales and is becoming better embedded in social worker practice. The Group was also satisfied that practice in relation to pre-proceedings was improving.

The Group considered that the troubled families programme uses resources effectively to provide early intervention and this provides the necessary support to families to prevent children from being placed in care. The Group stressed that this service needs to be sustainable for the future as demand for services increases. In consideration of parents who have had their children repeatedly placed in care, the Family Drug and Alcohol Court was welcomed. In order to ensure its long-term success, it

was suggested that its performance be recorded to ensure that evidence exists to support its impact and protect its sustainability.

It was clear to the Group that the Local Authority has developed a good relationship with the local Court, which assists the smooth transition of proceedings. When considering information on the number of children living at home with parents - whilst subject to a Care Order, the Group acknowledged that, it will be beneficial to avoid this where possible and safe. Although, this has been an appropriate approach historically, assessments have improved and it was hoped that further work could be done to consider this practice through the Public Law Outline sub-group.

When considering the adoption scorecard Members noted that it did not differentiate the age of the children adopted. Although the group was assured that young children were being adopted within their timescales, it felt that data should be provided to evidence this and indicate those cases which may affect the Authorities data. It was recognised that the adoption score card is a nationally agreed data set so any further information would need to be locally provided.

The Group was concerned that 'foster to adopt' was not well developed within the Authority, which meant that opportunities for early permanency for some children are being missed, although the challenges of the route were acknowledged by Members it was also noted that neighbouring authorities have higher rates of - early permanency. It was agreed that this should be monitored by the Authority once the Regional Adoption Agency is implemented.

Recommendations

Recommendation 7

1. More work is done to ensure the effective identification of private fostering arrangements;
 - a) This should include partnership work with schools and the Council's school admissions team.
 - b) Training on private fostering is included in the new Elected Member training schedule
 - c) The Council's annual Local Children's Safeguarding Board report (which contains performance data in relation to private fostering) is considered by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee annually.

Recommendation 9

1. There should be continued partnership work with the local Court through the Public Law Outline sub-group to reduce the number of children subject to care orders, who are living with their parents.
2. More focus be given to prevent repeated, sequential removal of children.
3. Fathers should be included at every stage of involvement with the child.
4. The impact on families of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court should be recorded to evidence its impact and efficiencies.
5. Local adoption performance information should be revised to record the age of the child adopted.
6. Further to the introduction of the Regional Adoption Agency the number of 'Foster to Adopt' cases and the number of children suitable for foster to adopt are monitored by the Local Authority.

Background papers

The Working Group received the following documents as part of an information pack in advance of the meetings and used them both as a reference source and for formulating their questions (see appendices x and x).

1. Permanence Resource Pack (LGO)
2. Statement of Purpose Permanency Policy and Practice
3. Pre proceedings – PLO Panel
4. Re-launch Public Law Outline (PLO)
5. Care and Supervision Proceedings and the Public Law Outline
6. Early Permanence
7. Practice Standards
8. Permanence Policy and Procedure
9. Staying Put Procedure
10. Permanence Overarching Strategy
11. Performance Information
12. Adoption Scorecard
13. LAC weekly performance on a page
14. RAA Family Finding
15. RAA Adopter Approval Process
16. RAA Adoption Support for Adoptive Families

Walsall Council Overview & Scrutiny Working Group Initiation Document

Work Group Name:	Ofsted Working Group
Committee:	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Municipal Year:	2018/19
Lead Member:	
Lead Officer:	Ms Debbie Carter, Assistant Director (Children's Social Care)
Support Officer:	Nikki Gough, Democratic Services Officer
Membership:	Councillor A. Nawaz Councillor T. Jukes Councillor J. Fitzpatrick Councillor D. Barker Councillor V. Waters
Co-opted Members:	N/A

1.	Context
	<p>The Ofsted inspection of the Council's services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers was held between 20 June and 13 July 2017. The inspection report was published on 4 September 2017 and it made twelve recommendations that have been addressed by the Children's Services post-Ofsted action plan dated 1 December 2017.</p> <p>At its meeting on 26th June 2018 the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed that a working group should be established to carry out a more in-depth examination of recommendations 7 and 9, as contained within the inspection report. In due course, the recommendations of the working group will be presented for consideration by the Committee.</p>

2.	Objectives
	<p>The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has identified two of the twelve recommendations from the Ofsted inspection report that they would wish the working group to review:</p> <p>Recommendation 7: Ensure that managers and social workers have clear guidance and legal advice when placing children in arrangements with friends and family, to ensure that their needs are fully understood and met.</p> <p>Recommendation 9: Take steps to ensure that care plans for all children who have a plan for permanence progress within the child's timescale to avoid children experiencing delays, including the identification and support of children who could be placed in foster to adopt arrangements.</p> <p>With reference to the post-Ofsted action plan, the working group propose to review the actions, measures and timescales for tackling the Ofsted recommendations and to submit a report and recommendations to the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 25th April 2019.</p>
3.	Scope
	<p>The working group have adopted the following approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who do you want to see? • When do you want to see them? • What will you ask them? • What other data will you want to see? <p>It is anticipated that the group will consider recommendation 7 alongside recommendation 9.</p>
4.	Equalities Implications
	<p>The working group will ensure that its recommendations will take into account the different strands of equality and ensure that no group is disadvantaged.</p>
5.	Who else will you want to take part?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Management – group manager and team manager 2. Practitioners – friends and family assessors 3. IRO's – fostering panel chair, and panel advisers

6. Timescales & Reporting Schedule		
Date	Action	Who
1 st Meeting	Prepare terms of reference.	Working group
15 th January 2019	Information session	Working group
29 th January 2019	Focus Group	Working group
19 th February 2019	Focus Group	Working group
5 th March 2019	Focus Group	Working group
25 th March 2019	Conclusions and recommendations	Working group
25 th April 2019	Present final report/ recommendations	CS O&S Committee
7. Risk factors		
Risk	Likelihood	Measure to Resolve
Being unable to cover all identified themes within the available time	Low	Organise a schedule of meetings to plan ahead where possible
Officer time available to support the working group may limit its ability to deliver the outcomes desired	Low	Select two of the twelve recommendations, with one meeting of the working group to review each recommendation
Interviewees may feel intimidated by a formal committee-style setting	Medium.	Minimise by: 1. Splitting working group into two sub-groups 2. Interview some participants in groups, rather than individually

Date Agreed:		Date Updated:	
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Recommendation 7 and 9 - Questions

Interviewee	Frontline Staff
1.	How do Social Workers make decisions about placing children with friends and family? How is this assessed and overseen?
2.	What is the approach to placing children with family and friends?
3.	What are the private fostering arrangements in Walsall?
4.	What support is provided to families while children are in care to improve their chances of returning home?
5.	How are special guardians assessed and supported?
6.	How are we giving children the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings? How do we know these are being acted on?
7.	Are sibling groups kept together, how is this included as part of the assessment?
8.	How is drift and delay avoided?
9.	Do we do parallel or twin track to avoid drift, and, do we do it early enough?
10.	How do we match children with potential long-term carers? Are you equipped to deal with different types of placement?
11.	Do we have adoption activity days, to help speed up matching?
12.	How does a child under 5 years old tell a social worker about timescales when we listen to the child and feed it into the plan?

Key Abbreviations

ADM:	Agency Decision Maker
ATM:	Assistant Team Manager
ASYE:	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
BB:	The bigger the number, the better
CAFCASS:	Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CAMHS:	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCG:	Clinical Commissioning Group
CHIS:	Child Health Information System
CMEC:	Children Missing Exploitation Committee
CMOG:	Children at Risk of Exploitation & Missing Operational Group
CPB:	Corporate Parenting Board
CPD:	Continuous Professional Development
CPP:	Child Protection Plans
CQC:	Care Quality Commission
CSE:	Child Sexual Exploitation
DSL:	Designated Safeguarding Lead
DV:	Domestic Violence
EDT:	Emergency Duty Team
EHH:	Early Help Hub
FGC:	Family Group Conferencing
HCPC:	Health and Care Professions Council
HWB:	Health & Wellbeing Board
IAPT:	Improving Access to Psychological Therapies
ICPC:	Initial Child Protection Conference
IRS:	Initial Response Service (team)

Appendix 4

LAC:	Looked After Children
LGA:	Local Government Association
LSCB:	Local Safeguarding Children's Board
MARF:	Multi-Agency Referral Form
MACE/MASE:	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation/Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (meeting)
MASH:	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
MDR:	Management Decision Record
NAG:	NEET Action Group
NEET:	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NFA:	No Further Action
NRM:	National Referral Mechanism
ODP:	Owning and Driving Performance (training programme)
PEP:	Personal Education Plan
PF:	Private Fostering
PIF:	Practice Improvement Forum
PLO:	Public Law Outline
PPP:	Powers of Police Protection
PSW:	Principal Social Worker
RAA:	Regional Adoption Agency
RCPC:	Review Child Protection Conference
RHI:	Return Home Interview
SB:	The smaller the number, the better
SFS:	Safeguarding and Family Support (team)
SGO:	Special Guardianship Order
SUTSW:	Step Up to Social Work (initiative)
TLC:	Transition in Leaving Care (team)

Recommendation 7 and 9 - Questions

Interviewee	Managers and Oversight
	1. How is drift and delay avoided?
	2. How do Social Workers make decisions about placing children with friends and family? How is this assessed and overseen?
	3. What is the approach to placing children with family and friends?
	4. How are special guardians assessed and supported?
	5. How are we giving children the chance to express their views, wishes and feelings? How do we know these are being acted on?
	6. What support is provided to families while children are in care to improve their chances of returning home?
	7. How do we match children with potential long-term carers? Are you equipped to deal with different types of placement?
	8. What are the private fostering arrangements in Walsall?
	9. Are sibling groups kept together, how is this included as part of the assessment?
	10. Do we do parallel or twin track to avoid drift, and, do we do it early enough?
	11. Do we have adoption activity days, to help speed up matching?
	12. How does a child under 5 years old tell a social worker about timescales when we listen to the child and feed it into the plan?
	Management and Oversight specific questions
	13. How many of our cases meet the 26 week deadline, how many missed and why?
	14. Does any child wait longer than 90 days to be referred to Adoption Match database? (I picked this up reading through the notes so I don't even know if we use such a database but it is probably all through the RAA now)
	15. How is our Troubled Families programme working at preventing children coming into care?
	16. Does anyone sit on the Local Family Justice board?
	17. How is the Local Authorities' relationship with the family court, what discussions have been held to ensure proceedings run smoothly to stop delays?
	18. How effective are pre-proceedings at effecting change and preventing children from becoming looked after children?
	19. What more could be done to improve practice at pre-proceedings?
	20. How are special guardians supported?
	21. Does the Authority have a good relationship with the family court?
	22. How has the Authorities performance changed over time, and how does it compare with our statistical neighbours?
	23. Are interventions planned for those families who repeatedly have children taken into care?