

27 March 2018

Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor A. Nawaz – Education and Children's Services

Executive Summary:

This report gives an update on progress of each of the twelve recommendations of the Ofsted action plan. The progress has been steady with over half the recommendations progressing as expected and on target with measurable outcomes. The remaining recommendations have some actions that have been subject to some delayed and this has been for a variety of reasons; such as the need to take more time to engage with partners, the need to take more time to ensure there is effective engagement with young people, some capacity issues within Legal and Safeguarding Family Support Service management and the need to reschedule of some of the workshops with front line staff so that they are not overwhelmed and are able to engage and take on board the practice expectations.

There are clear plans in place to ensure these delayed actions are progressed by the identified timescale. Positive outcomes are beginning to be evidenced across many recommendations relating to supervision and management oversight, thresholds, Private Fostering CSE and the functioning of Scrutiny and Corporate Parenting Board and it is expected that as work progresses this progress will be more consistently evidenced across all recommendations.

Reason for scrutiny:

To inform the Committee of the progress of the Ofsted Action Plan as Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the quality and performance of the Council's services to children and their families; the outcome of the recent inspection and the planned improvements are integral to this.

Recommendations:

That: The Committee notes the progress to date against the Ofsted Action Plan.

Background papers:

Ofsted Report (<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/walsall>)
Ofsted Action Plan

Resource and legal considerations:

The services and the improvements that the Ofsted report concerns play a key role in the quality of life and outcomes for the children, young people and families of Walsall.

Citizen impact:

The services and the improvements that the Ofsted report concerns play a key role in the quality of life and outcomes for the children, young people and families of Walsall.

Environmental impact:

None.

Equality Implications:

Responding to the recommendations set out in the Ofsted report will secure improvements in the equality of services, which, when achieved will have a positive impact on our most vulnerable children, young people and families.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for specific consultation about this report.

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Walsall Children's Services Post-Ofsted Action Plan – Progress Report

This report provides an update on the action plan which was put in place to address the twelve recommendations made by Ofsted following their Single Inspection Framework (SIF) in June/July 2017. Although work on the recommendations started immediately following inspection, the plan was signed off internally, and accepted by Ofsted in December 2017.

1. Overall Summary

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|--------------|---|
| RED | Process: Tasks have not been completed or timescales have slipped and need attention. Impact: Of outcomes should start to be seen and measured, but are not met. |
| AMBER | Process: Tasks are not fully on track but plans are place to ensure progress by identifiable timescale. Impact: Of outcomes can start to be measured but are yet to be demonstrable. |
| GREEN | Process: Tasks are progressing as expected and are deemed to be on target. Impact: Of outcomes can be demonstrably measured. |
| BLUE | Completed |
| GREY | Process: Not yet started - action is not scheduled to start in this period. Impact: Of outcomes not yet expected to be realised (i.e. actions in progress/not started). |

| | Last Period | | This Period | |
|--|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| | Process RAG | Impact RAG | Process RAG | Impact RAG |
| Recommendation 1: Ensure that thresholds of need are understood and applied at every stage of the child's journey. | | | | |
| Recommendation 2: Ensure that frontline management oversight of practice improves the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children. | | | | |
| Recommendation 3: Improve the response to all children at risk of child sexual exploitation, making sure that all assessments, safety plans and interventions are of a consistently good quality. | | | | |
| Recommendation 4: Increase the number of care leavers who are in education, employment and training. | | | | |
| Recommendation 5: Enable care leavers to have access to good physical and emotional health services and ensure that they are able to understand their health histories. | | | | |
| Recommendation 6: Ensure that pathway plans set realistic targets for care leavers to support their progress into a fulfilling life. | | | | |

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|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Recommendation 7: Ensure that managers and social workers have clear guidance and legal advice when placing children arrangements with friends and family, to ensure that their needs are fully understood and met. | Red | Grey | Green | Grey |
| Recommendation 8: Ensure that managers and social workers correctly apply private fostering regulations so that children who meet the criteria have thorough assessments of their needs and that these include all required safeguarding checks. | Green | Yellow | Green | Yellow |
| 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. | Red | Grey | Yellow | Yellow |
| Recommendation 10: Improve the delivery of life story work for children looked after. | Yellow | Grey | Yellow | Grey |
| Recommendation 11: Improve the functioning of both the Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that their work has a positive impact on improving services for children and the outcomes that they achieve. | Green | Grey | Green | Grey |
| Recommendation 12: Ensure that frontline managers are supported to use performance information so that they can manage and support good frontline practice effectively. | Green | Yellow | Green | Yellow |

2. Summary by Recommendations

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| Recommendation 1: Ensure that thresholds of need are understood and applied at every stage of the child's journey. |
| <p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners' understanding of the thresholds of need is not sufficiently established across all agencies. Although referrals from professionals are timely, a high proportion of contacts either do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention or are insufficiently detailed for managers to make a decision about the next steps. Consequently, the local authority is not yet effective in building an accurate enough picture of children's circumstances, to make sure that they always receive the right support for their needs. Some children experience delays in becoming looked after when the threshold for care has been met. As a result, a small number of children remain living with their birth families when they should be looked after. |

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Partners have a clear understanding of thresholds and multi-agency referral forms are fully completed containing all the relevant information children's services need to assess the threshold of risk to ensure the safety of children.
- Practitioners and managers across the service have a clear understanding of the levels of need. Thresholds are embedded and consistently applied, leading to timely assessments and interventions at the appropriate level leading to improved outcomes for children and their families.
- Consistent and appropriate application of the levels of need creates capacity at the 'front door', leading to more timely assessments and interventions of children in need and children at risk, leading to improved outcomes for children and their families.
- When risks to children escalate and they need to be cared for by the LA, the right actions are taken at the right time to ensure that they are safeguarded.

Current Position:

There has been steady progress in relation to the work on thresholds:

- The Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) was reviewed and re launched in January 2018, and the impact is starting to be felt. There has been targeted work undertaken with schools with a history of inappropriate referrals and this is beginning to have an impact, with a reduction in inappropriate or poor quality referrals. More work is planned with Health.
- The new 'DV light Triage' has been in place from 15 January 2018 and has shown that 52% of DV logs did not meet threshold for social care.
- A briefing has been held between Initial Response Service (IRS) managers and Early Help (EH) managers to reinforce safe step up /down practice. An audit is planned to monitor impact.
- Two multi-agency audits by the Multi Agency Screening Hub (MASH) management group have taken place to examine application of thresholds and the consensus was that the thresholds were being appropriately applied. A further audit of Health referrals is planned for February 2018.
- Two day section 47 training course co-delivered with partners completed for social workers includes focus on application of threshold for section 47 – further training scheduled throughout the year.
- A schedule of workshops with the IRS focussed on assessment practice is underway over January to March 2018. The first workshop was held in January. These will reinforce good assessment practice and there will be a series of audits to monitor for improvement.

Scheduled work

- Thresholds for admission to care to be developed.
- The Local Safeguarding Childrens Board (LSCB) thresholds to be signed off.
- Focus on the Health professional.
- Ongoing audit/dip sample work.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that frontline management oversight of practice improves the quality of decisions and the provision of help to children.

Summary:

- Good quality staff supervision is not yet established across all teams. In many cases, management oversight is too brief and the rationale for decision-making is not always evident on children's files. This means that it is not always possible to track key events and identify evidence for decisions made. As a result, there is drift and delay in taking action when risks increase or progress is limited or not sustained.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Practitioners receive regular, reflective and purposeful supervision that helps them to understand the actions they need to take to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- Case notes, referrals and assessments evidence clear management direction so social workers know what they have to do to progress cases.
- When cases are allocated to social workers, managers clearly identify what actions need to be taken to progress the case and ensure safeguarding of CYP.
- Risks are identified and plans are progressed in a timely manner.

Current Position:

- Better systems are in place to monitor compliance.
- Supervision rates have been increasing across the service and reached 85% completion that is 252 social workers against 301 cohort as of 23 February 2018.
- Practice standards have been reissued by the Assistant Director (AD) with clear direction and message reinforced at Practice Improvement Forum (PIF).
- Use of supervision tools has been reinforced at PIF and audited for compliance.
- First line programme has been agreed and the first cohort is in the process of being recruited to.
- An audit of supervision was undertaken in January.
- Observation of supervision in Safeguarding Family Support (SFS) commenced.

Scheduled work

- Workshops to reinforce supervision and management oversight as part of manager practice up lift in May 2018.
- Further observations of supervision in February / March 2018.
- Peer-to-peer support to share / support development of a coaching approach to supervision.
- Undertake a dip sample for use of analytical tools in March / April 2018.

Area of Concern

- Need to finalise the various workshops to give staff sufficient notice.
- Over load of Team Managers in terms of workshop attendance. Principal Social Worker (PSW) to provide a schedule of all planned workshops and to ensure bite sized learning.

Recommendation 3: Improve the response to all children at risk of child sexual exploitation, making sure that all assessments, safety plans and interventions are of a consistently good quality.

Summary:

- Work to protect children at risk of, or experiencing sexual exploitation (CSE) is not rigorous enough. Risk assessments are evident but vary in quality, and there is limited analysis. As a result, risks of sexual exploitation to some children, including children looked after, are not responded to effectively.
- The partnership and services are not yet delivering an effective enough operational response to child sexual exploitation. Progress has not been sufficient following the July 2016 Local Government Association (LGA) peer review. Multi-agency Children Missing and Exploitation Committee (CMEC) group to accelerate actions from the review to deliver improved response to CSE & Missing.
- There is not yet an effective visible lead ensuring outcomes or good practice regarding child sexual exploitation.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Children and young people who are at risk of CSE, or go missing will be identified more quickly, safeguarded from harm and have their needs addressed promptly.
- Children and young people at risk of CSE and missing receive timely and consistent interventions and risks decrease.
- All assessments, safety plans and interventions regarding children who go missing or who are risk of CSE are of a consistently good quality so that risks to children are minimized.
- Return home interviews are routinely provided by skilled staff and resulting reports help the local authority and partners identify the actions they need to take to minimize risks to children going missing.
- There is tighter coordination, and oversight of practice in regard to all children who go missing and are at risk of CSE, in order to ensure that procedures are consistently applied, responses are timely, information is shared and risks are understood. This enables more effective multi-agency risk management for each individual young person.
- Improved partnership working especially links with police in relation to gathering intelligence to support disruption activity.

Current Position:

- Four training courses have been delivered from July 2017 on CSE and safety planning.
- Good progress has been made with the review of current arrangements for missing and CSE and the proposed revised structure which includes single point of contact. Redesign of the service to provide Return Home interviews has been agreed. Job descriptions and person specifications are with the Job Evaluation Team, to enable the establishment of the team.
- A review of specialist service to provide direct support to medium and high risk children and young people vulnerable to CSE has been completed. The Invitation to tender (ITT) is now with procurement.
- Appointment of the interim operational lead for CSE and Exploitation.
- A routine audit completed in December 2017 focused on CSE and informed areas for improvement in practice uplift.
- Audit of contacts into MASH relating to CSE was completed in December 2017.
- A Survey Monkey has been distributed to identify current level of knowledge across Children's Social Care (CSC) and EH at level of frontline practitioner and Management level (February 2018).
- Current processes and practice have been reviewed and reported back to Directorate Management team (DMT) in February 2018.
- A programme of practice uplift and development of CSE champions is in progress through February and March 2018 and is being positively received.
- A monthly newsletter produced.
- A monthly report to Senior Management Team (SMT) outlining children at risk of CSE and criminal exploitation.
- All children screened at risk of CSE have been reviewed to ensure the assessed risk level is appropriate.
- Revised Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation MASE processes have been launched as part of the practice uplift work.
- Improved awareness in relation to disruption activity is resulting in successful use of civil orders.

- The Education safeguarding co-ordinator routinely receives and shares information from Children at Risk of Exploitation and Missing Operational Group CMOG with Access and Attendance Officers.
- A review of practice to support transition from Children's Services to Adult Social Care commenced with National Working Group (NWG).
- Current discussion at CMOG & Multi-agency Children Missing and Exploitation Committee (CMEC) about splitting CMOG to a Missing Operational Group (MOG) and a Child Sexual Exploitation. Chair CMEC will be presenting to LSCB on this development.
- Trialling a new NWG assessment tool with a cohort of children and young people.

Scheduled work

- Recruit to permanent operation lead – job description & person specification with Job Evaluation Team to enable the permanent establishment of role.
- Review of current process for missing notifications.
- Recommission specific training regarding victim blaming and safety planning.
- Audit of MASE activity planned for spring 2018.
- Developing criminal exploitation procedures.
- Arrangements in hand to ensure delivery of WRAP to School Admissions Team in spring 2018.

Areas of Concern

- Overload of Team Managers in terms of planned workshops. PSW to provide a schedule of all planned workshops and ensure bite sized learning.

Recommendation 4: Increase the number of care leavers who are in education, employment and training.

Summary:

- Too many care leavers are not in education, employment or training.
- More young people need to be encouraged into education, training and employment to prepare them for their futures.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- There is an improvement in numbers of care leavers who are meaningfully engaged in education, employment and training.
- More young people are supported to maintain their post 16 destination.
- Personal Education Plans and Pathway plans are clearly focused on identifying actions that will enable care leavers to access EET.

Current Position:

- A tracking and monitoring spread sheet is in place to identify young people at risk of Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET). There is a monthly update to the NEET Action Group (NAG) meeting.
- Mosaic is now able to accurately record the Education Employment and Training (EET) and NEET status of young people on their birthday and monthly. Accurate monthly figures will be produced at the NAG group and reported to the data team for publication in score cards/performance of a page, etc.
- The Virtual School careers advisor/Impact worker is co-located within the Corporate Parenting Team two days a week to ensure closer working with Social Workers.
- Monthly meetings chaired by the Virtual Head track all children who are NEET and at risk of NEET with Managers and Impact workers identifying clear individual actions to reduce NEET.
- Changes to the Mosaic have been made and these are being tested to enable

reporting on 'as is' data of NEET activity.

- At the end of November, 38.6% (19 to 21 year-olds) were NEET on their birthday, which is a reduction of 4.6% since October 2017 and below the national average. The position at the end of January in respect of the current cohort of 19-21 year olds is that 60.5% are in Education, Employment and Training (39.5% are NEET).
- There is a member of staff from the Virtual School co-located with the Corporate Parenting team 5 days a week. This includes the Virtual School careers advisor.
- There is a member of the Virtual school co-located within the SFS teams two days a week.
- There is a leaving care champion in each of the 4 localities.
- All young People who are NEET have an allocated Impact worker.
- Four care leavers are fully engaged in council apprenticeships.
- Seven care leavers have been identified for a Pre-Apprenticeship scheme.
- Virtual Lead met with HR and mentoring company to discuss scheme. Corporate mentoring scheme now to be presented to Directorate Management Team (DMT).

Scheduled work

- Risk of NEET indicator (RONI) to be incorporated into in the new Electronic Personal Education Plan (EPEP).
- Currently out to tender for the EPEP tool and Transitional Leaving Care (TLC) service have allocated an impact worker.
- Virtual School PEP coordinators to deliver PEP workshops for groups of 4-6 social workers on 'How to write a good PEP'.
- Development of a corporate mentoring scheme agreed in principle.

Areas of Concern

- Delay in EPEP implementation.

Recommendation 5: Enable care leavers to have access to good physical and emotional health services and ensure that they are able to understand their health histories.

Summary:

- Health for care leavers needs to improve. Most care leavers have a doctor, dentist, and optician but not all do.
- There have been significant gaps in the health provision for care leavers. As a result, a high number of young people do not have a clear view of their physical and emotional health needs or their health histories.
- Young people cannot easily access mental health services. Managers recognise a need for a more co-ordinated approach, especially for care leavers who are 17 years old and over and who cannot routinely access emotional health and wellbeing services.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Care leavers have good access to mental health services when they need it.
- Young people report they feel more emotionally resilient.
- When young people leave care they are fully equipped with a good understanding of their health history and they are all registered with a doctor, dentist and optician (if required).

Current Position:

- The new Health lead is undertaking a review of current commissioning arrangements.
- Regular 6 weekly meetings with Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHs)

operational managers have been established to improve key areas of practice which will include transitions. Discussion with CAMH indicates that the directory of services and pathways to services has already been drawn up.

- LAC nurse is notified of all admissions and discharges on a weekly basis.
- LAC Nurse is provided with a list of young people approaching their 18th Birthday.
- LAC Nurse has developed a young people friendly health passport.
- A review of all care leavers is underway to ensure that their GP and dental details are current and up to date.
- From January 2018, the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) performance report is run each week to check the rating and whether a health assessment is on the child's file.

Scheduled work

- CAMHs to share service directory and pathways to care at all Social Care service days in March and April 2018.
- Joint training with CAMHs on mental and emotional wellbeing to be devised and rolled out to all social work staff.
- **Areas of Concern**
- Pace of work with Health.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that pathway plans set realistic targets for care leavers to support their progress into a fulfilling life.

Summary:

- Pathway plans do not support care leavers to develop important skills for their independence.
- Personal advisers, social workers and young people do not use pathway plans effectively to support care leavers to develop important skills for their independence, training or employment. Some personal advisers do not set challenging enough targets for care leavers, and this causes them to make slow progress.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Young people participate and have timely pathway plans with clear actions and timescales that identify how they are going to be supported into transition to adulthood.
- Pathway plans identify how care leavers are going to develop independent living skills and how they are going to be supported to gain employment, education or training. Care leavers report that this preparation has been helpful.
- NEET figures reduce as more care leavers are encouraged to take up apprenticeships and other forms of employment, education and training.

Current Position

- A review of pathway plan formats across a range of local authorities who have judgements of Good or Outstanding Care leaving Services was undertaken in October/November 2017.
- A review of the Entitlement Policy is underway to ensure that this supports care leavers appropriately and is in line with best practice.
- The local authority is a member of the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum and learning from the forum is being implemented.
- Over November and December 2017, consultation events have been undertaken with children looked after and care leavers in Respect, New Belongings Group as well children in Residential Care in Walsall to inform the redesign of the pathway plan.

- Practice workshops commenced in December 2017 and a further two are planned for February and March 2018, with social workers and personal advisors to improve transition planning and the quality of pathway plans.
- A transition and supported accommodation tracking process was established in October 2017 and from January 2018 includes housing colleagues to reduce drift.
- At the end of November 2017, a manual check identified that 79% of young people aged 18 to 21 have an up to date pathway plan. Target dates have been set for those that are outstanding and this is being monitored by managers.
- IROs raise resolutions where pathway plans are not of sufficient quality.
- The final plan is being piloted by 20 young people, with implementation scheduled for May 2018.

Scheduled work

- Safeguarding service to dip sample pathway plans through January and February 2018 to check whether a resolution should have been raised.

Areas of concern

- Adjustment to the performance report has been requested to enable managers to monitor completion of pathway plans and pathway plan reviews and this is not yet in place.

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.

Summary from Ofsted Inspection:

- Some children who should be looked after experience delays when the threshold for care has been met. A small number of children who are already looked after experience delays in permanence planning. Friends and family fostering arrangements are not always sufficiently assessed. This can leave children looked after without the right level of support and protection. The local authority does not yet routinely support children to live with their adopters at the earliest opportunity through foster to adopt arrangements.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Children do not experience drift and delay when plans are made for them to come into care. Actions are taken swiftly to secure their safety.
- There is a robust monthly meeting that oversees all requests for permanence or placements so that children's needs and plans are under continuous scrutiny to avoid drift and delay.
- Robust systems are in place to ensure that all the right checks and assessments are undertaken to assure children's safety before a final decision is made regarding placements with family or friends.
- Foster to adopt is always considered as an early option when permanency for children is being secured.

Current Position:

- Draft guidance has been completed by legal to be shared at Public Law Outline (PLO) workshops.
- Initial viability assessments are jointly completed with the fostering service.
- A LAC tracker is in place.
- Arrangements within the fostering service have been reviewed to improve process and capacity for connected person's assessments.
- A workshop to review Special Guardianship Order (SGO) processes has been completed.

- A Solutions Panel has met weekly since November 2017, reinforcing full engagement with families.

Scheduled work

- Review of Permanency Co-ordinator.
- Workshops to share revised guidance on family and friends.
- Review current arrangements for Family group Conferencing (FGC).
- PLO workshops schedule for April 2018.
- Review of resources and structure within fostering to improved processes and quality of connected person's assessments and support plans.

Areas of Concerns

- Pressures of work for both legal and SFS Manager have slowed down progress.
- Volume of requests for viability assessments and fostering service capacity to respond.
- Overload of staff with workshops. PSW to provide schedule of all planned workshops and ensure bite-sized learning.
- Court Progression Officer impending maternity leave.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that managers and social workers correctly apply private fostering regulations so that children who meet the criteria have thorough assessments of their needs and that these include all required safeguarding checks.

Summary:

- The current arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of privately fostered children are poor; the local authority is not meeting its statutory duties.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of privately fostered children are robust. Good procedures and policies are in place that help professionals identify and assess cases quickly so that safety of placements for children are assured.
- Partners have a clear understanding of what constitutes a private fostering arrangement and they swiftly refer children and families when they believe there is a need for assessment from children's social care.
- Social care practitioners understand the law, their roles and responsibilities with regards to private fostering so they can do their job properly and safeguard children.
- Children are safe in privately fostered arrangements.

Current Position

- Process review completed.
- New process now includes sign off by Head of Service or Assistant Director.
- Safeguarding Family Support (SFS) workshop held on 25 January 2018.
- Team manager in fostering is the practice lead.
- Practice standards completed and shared in workshop.
- Group Manager in reviewing all CiN and CP cases where children not living with parents.
- AD chairing LSCB task and finish group to improve training and awareness raising.
- Private fostering numbers have increased to 6.

Scheduled work

- Train remaining social care & early help staff in awareness-raising.
- Carry out a compliance audit on newly identified private fostering cases.
- Child care manual to be updated.

- Completion of a compliance audit every quarter.
- Awareness raising campaign and training programme to be launched by LSCB in April 2018.

Areas of concern

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.

Summary:

- Some children who should be looked after experience delays when the threshold for care has been met. A small number of children who are already looked after experience delays in permanence planning. Friends and family fostering arrangements are not always sufficiently assessed. This can leave children looked after without the right level of support and protection. Service improvements are clearly evident in adoption, where services are good. However, the local authority does not yet routinely support children to live with their adopters at the earliest opportunity through foster to adopt arrangements.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- The right children, right place, right time for as long as is necessary.

Current Position

- Group Manager SFS identified as the Group Manager lead for PLO.
- PLO proceedings and flowcharts revised and updated.
- An initial review of children subject to pre-proceedings has been undertaken (December 2017) to ensure that all cases are appropriate.
- Approval for admission to care now with Assistant Director to ensure consistency.
- Initial workshop to review approach and management of work associated with Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) has been undertaken with a number of task and finish groups established to feedback in February 2018.
- Tighter operational oversight of children and families subject to pre-proceedings and court proceedings is underway with fortnightly case progression meetings with team managers to ensure any factors that may contribute to delay are kept to a minimum and any barriers are unblocked in a timely way to support the journey of the child.
- Monthly meetings between the legal team, Court Lead and Assistant Director are now in place to support more strategic oversight of court work and to review, track and support improved performance and timeliness in permanency planning.

Scheduled work

- Mandatory workshops to re-launch PLO with social workers from IRS, SFS, CWDT, FPS, IROs and legal services to be delivered in March and April 2018.
- Practice standard to be produced and used as part of the workshop material.
- Audit of new cases for compliance in April & May 2018.
- Review the role of the Permanency Co-ordinator and Case Progression Officer.
- Review the effectiveness of the permanency panel.

Areas of concerns

- Pressures of work for both legal and SFS manager have slowed down progress.
- Workload pressures within Legal.
- Overload of staff with workshops.PSW to provide a schedule of all planned workshops and ensure bite sized learning.

Recommendation 10: Improve the delivery of life story work for children looked after.

Summary:

- Not enough children with a plan other than adoption benefit from life story work, despite training for social workers being completed.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- When plans are agreed for permanency for children, they all have life story work completed so that they understand why they are not returning home and they have a clear understanding of the plans for their future.
- Social workers and team managers have better understand expectations and importance of undertaking life story work.

Current Position:

- A task and finish group has met several times and developed guidance, practice standards and a training workshop. This is in the process of being finalised.
- A review of life story work has identified that children with complex needs have life story work commissioned and there is good evidence of direct work.

Scheduled work

- IRO monthly performance report to be amended to identify children with up to date life story work.
- Training to be scheduled for April 2018 to include social workers, foster carers and residential workers.

Areas of concern

Recommendation 11: Improve the functioning of both the Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that their work has a positive impact on improving services for children and the outcomes that they achieve.

Summary:

- The Scrutiny Committee does not sufficiently understand and effectively challenge the quality of services for children. Scrutiny does not challenge officers effectively about the quality of services and the impact of social work practice. The corporate parenting board is not yet evidencing the impact of its focus and challenge. It cannot demonstrate how its work is influencing service delivery and outcomes for children looked after and care leavers.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Members have a good understanding of the Children's Services agenda and are able to carry out their duties, including challenge, hold to account and support effectively.
- Their work has a positive impact on improving services for children and the outcomes that they achieve.
- The Council's and its partners' duties as a Corporate Parent are undertaken to a good standard.

Current Position:

- Scrutiny development session, facilitated by the LGA, on 16 October 2017.
- Scrutiny working group formed and met in January 2018 to plan the scrutiny review of the Ofsted action plan. This was supported by a peer mentor identified by the LGA.
- The Portfolio Holder and chair of Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) visited Islington to meet with a peer mentor and observe Islington's CPB in January 2018.
- Democratic services support CPB from January 2018.
- CPB steering group reviewed all work stream action plans in January 2018.

Scheduled work

- Scrutiny working group to hold two focus groups to review recommendations 1 & 2 at beginning of March 2018 to report back findings at March Scrutiny Panel.
- Members of CPB to observe Wolverhampton's CPB in March 2018.

Areas of Concern

Recommendation 12: Ensure that frontline managers are supported to use performance information so that they can manage and support good frontline practice effectively.

Summary from Ofsted Inspection:

- Performance information available to frontline managers has yet to become effective. Without this level of assurance at the front line of services, the local authority cannot be certain that it has an accurate overview of every child's circumstances.

Outcomes to be achieved:

- Effective, efficient performance systems are in place to help managers understand and drive outcomes for children.
- Information is produced and used efficiently and effectively to drive service improvement.
- Managers and staff understand their team and the organisation's performance and take responsibility for their actions.

Current Position:

- Three 'managing performance' workshops for managers were completed in November and December 2017 and in January 2018.
- A review of service scorecards with all managers has been completed and improvements made.
- Weekly 'performance on a page' for LAC and CP has been in place since September 2017, MASH from October 2017 and others are in development.
- A 'How to' guide has been circulated to all managers and support is offered by Performance Team.
- A performance portal of information including access to research has been set up and used for scorecards since October 2017. Managers have been shown how to use it on workshops.

Scheduled work

- Implementation of Qlikview is progressing.

Areas of concern

- Ensure that managers are continuing to routinely use the performance reports.

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