

26 June 2018

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

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor T Wilson Children's Services

Executive Summary:

This report provides a progress update against the Ofsted Improvement Plan and the associated 12 recommendations and shows that steady progress continues to be made in respect of all actions.

Positive outcomes are beginning to be evidenced across many recommendations relating to supervision and management oversight, understanding and application of thresholds, Private Fostering, CSE and the functioning of Scrutiny and Corporate Parenting Board. There is good cross service collaboration and ownership across each of the recommendation areas.

The impact is yet to be demonstrated for a number of recommendations as the change in practice takes time to embed and the focus now needs to be on demonstrating the improved outcomes and impacts across all activity.

It is acknowledged that partnerships and collaboration are critical to our improvement trajectory and the pursuit of full partner engagement remains high on the agenda

In addition, a 'deep dive' review was undertaken by the Scrutiny Working Group in March and focused on the first two recommendations which was positive. A full report has been completed and shared with both Scrutiny and Cabinet and the recommendations are being implemented.

Reason for scrutiny:

To inform the committee of the progress of the Ofsted Action Plan as Children's Services 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: Scrutiny notes the progress to date against the Ofsted Action Plan

Background papers:

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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Progress Update on Ofsted Action Plan Post Ofsted Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers

Period Covered	Up to Quarter 1 2018-19
Report Provided By:	Debbie Carter, Assistant Director – Social Care

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

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).

Action Plan Recommendations	Last Review As at 31 March 2018		This Review As at 18 May 2018	
	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.				
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.				
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.				
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.				
Recommendation 10: Improve the delivery of life story work for children looked after.				
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.				
Recommendation 12: Ensure that frontline managers are supported to use performance information so that they can manage and support good frontline practice effectively.				

2. Summary by Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Ensure that thresholds of need are understood and applied at every stage of the child's journey.
Summary:
<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:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 together with 5 top tips in completing a quality MARF 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 48% of DV logs did not meet threshold for social care.
- A briefing took place on the 6th March 2018 between Initial Response Service (IRS) managers and Early Help (EH) managers to reinforce safe step up /down practice. An audit is planned during May 2018 to monitor impact.
- The MASH Management Group undertook an audit of cases that were referred into MASH during February, which were initially RAG rated as green, as this indicates that the threshold of referral to MASH was not correct this will be fed back to individuals to progress. Learning from this will be fed into the safeguarding Board Threshold training
- Two day section 47 training course co-delivered with partners completed for social workers includes focus on application of threshold for section 47 – Two courses have been delivered with further training scheduled for the autumn. In addition a bespoke course for managers is being designed.
- The Local Safeguarding board is launching the revised threshold document and neglect strategy on the 25th June.
- During January a service day took place, to reinforce the principles of assessment practice, with further workshops to follow.

Scheduled work

- Thresholds for admission to care to be developed
- Focus on the Health professional
- Ongoing audit/dip sample work
- A series of workshops on assessment practice is scheduled over the summer, to continue with the theme of reinforcing good assessment practice. This will be followed by a series of audits to monitor improvement.

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:

- Supervision compliance system has been established. This database provides a robust mechanism for identifying the level of supervision sessions taking place across the service, as a whole, but also breaks the data down to service and team level to enable clear identification of patterns of good compliance and areas where compliance is problematic.
- 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.
- Four Safeguarding Family Support (SFS) Team Managers are participating in First Line Programme
- An audit of supervision was undertaken in January. This demonstrated areas of good practice with evidence of robust analysis and others where significant improvement is required. An action plan has been developed.
- The annual social work health check is demonstrating very positive feedback about both frequency and quality of supervision including reflective supervision.

Scheduled work

- Observation of supervision in SFS is currently in progress and being undertaken by the SFS GM.
- The supervision templates are being developed that build upon the good practice identified within the supervision audit and incorporate Restorative Practice language and tools.
- Workshops to reinforce supervision and management oversight as part of manager practice up lift on 9 & 10 July 2018.
- Peer to peer support to share / support development of a coaching approach to supervision.

Area of Concern

- A dip sample for use of analytical tools in March 2018 via supervisions audit, identified limited consistent evidence of the use of tools.
- 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 & 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.
- On March 12th 2018, we held our first exploitation conference in Walsall to coincide with national CSE awareness week. Attended by over 100 professionals from across the partnership we heard from a survivor of child sexual exploitation, had input from the West Midlands Police force lead on exploitation and County Lines and heard from Street Teams 'Children's Champions' who gave a presentation to delegates on grooming and the use of victim blaming language.

Current Position:

- A Principle exploitation officer has been appointed to provide operational oversight / lead
- 4 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 & 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 & high risk children & young people vulnerable to CSE has been completed. The Invitation to tender (ITT) is now with procurement.
- 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). The survey was designed to capture current practitioner awareness and the outcomes, which range from 57% awareness of grooming to 16% awareness of County Lines, provide useful benchmark regarding practitioner understanding. The survey will be repeated in 6 months, once the current practice uplift work has been completed, to provide assurance of improved awareness.
- 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 & Missing Operational Group CMOG with Access & 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 & young people.

Scheduled work

- Review of current process for missing notifications to be completed by 30 June 2018
- Practise uplift sessions to continue
- Specific training regarding victim blaming and safety planning commissioned and scheduled.
- Audit of MASE activity planned for summer 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. There is an improving picture of young people in education with the AS IS position being that 76% of 18-21 year old known to the service.
- Mosaic is configured to 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.
- Post 16 Partnership agreement developed by the Virtual school, Social Care are post 16 education and training providers
- 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 Mosaic have been made and these are being tested to enable reporting on “as is” data of NEET activity.
- At the end of March 2018 39.7 % of 19 to 21 year-olds were NEET on their birthdays which is a reduction of nearly 13% since March 2017. The “as is” position at the end of February in respect of the current cohort of 19-21 year olds is that 71% are in Education, Employment and Training (29% 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.
- Care leavers are fully engaged in council apprenticeships.
- 7 care leavers have been identified for a Pre-Apprenticeship scheme.
- 14 young people are at university.
- Virtual Lead met with HR and mentoring company to discuss scheme. Corporate mentoring scheme now to be presented to Directorate Management Team (DMT).
- Procurement of in EPEP underway with implementation in September
- Corporate mentoring scheme to be rolled out

Scheduled work

- Risk of NEET indicator (RONI) to be incorporated into in the new Electronic Personal Education Plan (EPEP) which is subject to procurement process it is anticipated that upon conclusion of the procurement process the EPEP will be implemented in Autumn 2018.
- Virtual School PEP coordinators to deliver PEP workshops for groups of 4-6

social workers on 'How to write a good PEP this has been done with most of the LAC, SFS and CWDT Social Workers

- Half termly post 16 partnership meetings taking place between training providers, colleges and the virtual school.

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 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 and the more health passports are being provided.
- A review of all care leavers is completed in January and February 2018 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.
- In March 2018 there has been a further meeting the CCG and the LAC Nurse to further strengthen the interface and ensuring there is better understanding and support for care leavers in respect of their health and wellbeing.
- Health work stream for CPB has been refocused and aligned with the CQC and Ofsted Action Plan

Scheduled work

- Joint training with CAMHs on mental and emotional wellbeing to be devised and rolled out to all social work staff. CAMHs to undertaking workshops with SFS and CPS over summer to support staff in identifying child and young

people with poor mental health/emotional wellbeing and to identify the appropriate pathway to access appropriate levels of support

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 identifies 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 LA's who have judgements of Good or Outstanding Care leaving Services was undertaken in October/November 2017. This has informed the format of the revised pathway plan, which was piloted during March.
- A dip sample of pathway plans during January and February demonstrated a variable quality resulting in the following actions: session with PA's on outcome focused person centred planning; in consultation with young people redesigned the pathway plan into be more interactive; triple planning for former unaccompanied asylum seekers, developing financial capability included and pathway planning included in the CYP training plan.
- 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 to inform the redesign of the pathway plan.
- Practice workshops commenced in December 2017 and completed across the CP teams and TLC 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 and this has resulted in better information sharing and identification of accommodation needs for care leavers.
- At the end of February a manual check identified that 95% 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 on a

monthly basis.

- The final plan is being piloted by 20 young people, with implementation scheduled for June 2018.
- Safeguarding service dip sampled pathway plans through January and February 2018 to check whether a resolution should have been raised.
- Housing protocol reviewed by Children and Housing Services managers.
- Draft housing protocol between Children's Services and Housing Services – approval has been sought
- IROs now raise dispute resolution alerts where pathway plans are not of sufficient quality

Scheduled work

- Pathway Plan workshops in the training plan have been scheduled for 2018/19
- Adjustment to the performance report has been requested to enable managers to monitor completion of pathway plans and pathway plan reviews. Draft has been developed and this is now being tested.

Areas of Concern

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:

- Initial viability assessments are jointly completed with the fostering service, where appropriate.
- Arrangements within the fostering service have been reviewed to improve process and capacity for connected person's assessments.
- A tracker is in place to oversee progress of permanency plans for children who are looked after.
- 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.
- A series of mandatory workshops are being delivered from May to August to

reinforce guidance in relation to the Public Law Outline (PLO).

- Permanency working group is reviewing all processes
- **Scheduled work**
- Review of effectiveness of permanency co-ordinator role and case progression role.
- Further review Case progression tool and process.
- Review current arrangements for Family group Conferencing (FGC).
- Review of resources and structure within fostering to improved processes and quality of connected person's assessments and support plans.

Areas of Concerns

- Volume of requests for viability assessments and fostering service capacity to respond.
- Effectiveness of current tracking process
- Overload of staff with workshops. PSW to provide schedule of all planned workshops and ensure bite sized learning.
- Case progression officer now on 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 helps 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.
- Workshops across children social care and locality teams have been delivered to reinforce criteria, practice standards and procedural guidance
- Team manager in fostering is the practice lead.
- Practice standards completed and shared in workshop.
- SCB task and finish group revised awareness raising material and relaunched awareness raising campaign and associated training material.
- Case records of current children in private fostering arrangements regularly audited by Head of Safeguarding to ensure compliance.

Scheduled work

- Monitor impact of new campaign

Areas of concern

- Lack of appropriate referrals

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.
- Permanency working group established to review all aspects of permanence planning.
- Tighter operational oversight of children and families subject to pre – proceedings and court proceedings is underway by permanency coordinator under the supervision of court lead. 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 permanence planning.
- Mandatory workshops to re-launch PLO with social workers from IRS, SFS, CWDT, FPS, IROs and legal services to be delivered in May, June, July & August 2018.
- Practice standards produced and used as part of the workshop material.
- IROs commencing midway reviews to ensure care plans are being actively progressed

Scheduled work

- Audit of new cases for compliance in August and September 2018.
- Review the role of the permanency coordinator and case progression officer.
- Care Planning Training is being commissioned for all Social Work staff, frontline and provider services, IROs and legal department, to be delivered in Autumn 2018

Areas of concerns

- Pressures of work for both legal and SFS manager have slowed down progress.
- 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 dates for training workshop have now been scheduled.

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.

- IRO monthly performance report identifies children with up to date life story work.
- Policy and practice guidance has been finalised to be presented at PIF in April 2018
- Training is taking place June and July following PIF presentation during April. This is being positively received.

Scheduled work Training dates have been agreed for 2018/19 to include social workers, foster carers and residential workers.

Areas of concern.

- Evidence of effective life story work is not yet consistently demonstrated

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 has undertaken a deep dive of recommendations 1 & 2 from Ofsted action plan, with focus groups. A report of which was shared with Scrutiny on 27 March 2018. This work was supported by a peer mentor identified by the LGA.
- There are now two scrutiny committees which focuses on education and the other which focuses on Social Care and Early Help.
- 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.
- Wolverhampton's CPB observed by AD – Social Care and Democratic Services Senior Officer and review of functioning was completed resulting in CPB being constituted as council committee supported by Democratic services
- Multi-agency CPB steering group now drives the work stream action plans
- Participation officer now in post

Scheduled work

- Improve formal engagement with C4Kids once Participation officer is in post.

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 & December 2017 and 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.
- 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, which is accessible to managers.

Scheduled work

- The first pilot dashboard demonstration across Child Protection was undertaken, this is now being published in order to go live.
- A schedule and time line for the development of service based dashboard is being developed

- Iterative development of a Directorate wide Performance and Improvement forum, which aligns to the transformation agenda
- A system based supervision tool is being finalised for go live
- A system based audit tool has been built in system and is being finalised for training and go live
- Making performance personal is being progressed via performance slots within operational team meetings.

Areas of concern

- Pace of dashboard development is slow as a tool to enable managers to proactive manage
- Pace of Performance Team remodel means supporting the improvement journey is not as proactive as it needs to be

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