

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 6th June 2013, held at 6.00pm in Meeting Room 3, Darby House, Telford.

PRESENT: Councillors M. Ion (Chair), G. Green, J. Greenaway, C. Turley and Co-optees A. Atkinson, R. Aveley, S. Rayner, M. Ward.

Attending: Stephanie Gaskell, Head Teacher St Lawrence CE Primary School; Lisa Howells, Chair of Board of Governors, St Lawrence CE Primary School; Mandie Haywood, Head Teacher Old Park Primary School; Stephanie Jones, Scrutiny Officer.

CYPSC-1 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 18th April 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chair subject to correction of Mr. Rayner's name on page 5.

The Scrutiny Officer informed members that the date of the Annual Foster Care Conference was 8th November.

CYPSC-2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs. J. Loveridge, A. Mackenzie, J. Pinter and Co-optee S. Ali. The Chair informed members that Cllr. Pinter had been appointed to the Committee at Annual Council to replace Cllr. M. Smith.

CYPSC-3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

CYPSC-4 PLANNING PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN TELFORD & WREKIN

The Chair reminded members that the Committee had started to take evidence at the last meeting on the challenge for the borough in planning primary places. There were two ways of increasing capacity – by building new schools or expanding existing schools. The Committee had heard from officers and now wanted to hear from head teachers to get their views.

The Scrutiny Officer had attended a meeting of the Primary Heads Forum Executive Committee to discuss engaging the schools in the scrutiny review and the Executive members had raised a number of issues at the meeting. Workshops had been held at the Primary Heads' Forum (PHF) meeting on 23rd May for Heads in each cluster to identify issues to feed into scrutiny. Stephanie Gaskell, Mandie Haywood and Lisa Howells had been nominated or volunteered to attend the scrutiny meeting to

represent the wider views of head teachers in the borough and to bring their own experience as Heads of a small and large primary school to scrutiny. The Chair welcomed them to the meeting and invited them to introduce themselves and present the key issues.

Mandie Haywood was Head of Old Park Primary School in Malinslee with 500 children on roll. Stephanie Gaskell was head of St. Lawrence CE Primary School in Preston with 80 children on roll. Lisa Howells was Chair of the Board of Governors at St. Lawrence. They presented the issues identified by the PHF as follows:

1. Impact of the “bedroom tax”

This was a challenge across the borough. The movement of families in social housing to smaller properties had caused sudden pupil movement between schools which created issues - one school had had 6 new admissions in a week and another had admitted children of families who had moved into the borough from Staffordshire. Over time, the distribution/location of 2 bed roomed properties across the borough would need to be factored into school place planning.

2. The determination of the Published Admission Number (PAN)

This was a major issue for the PHF. The Heads felt that the PAN should be set in the context of the school and take account of the number of classes and class size limits for year 1 and upward and it was not a consultative process. For example:

- a) The Old Park PAN had been raised from 60 to 80 which was a difficult number to manage when the children moved from reception (three classes) to year one. Years 5 and 6 had the old PAN of 60 and years 4 downwards had 80. There was high mobility in the area and admissions could fluctuate – last year there were 85.
- b) St. Lawrence had a long standing issue with the PAN which was set at 12. This made it hard to accommodate children living just outside the boundary. Children moving into the village had to be admitted, but there were three children just outside on the waiting list who could not be admitted. The Head had consulted with the Heads of neighbouring schools about increasing the PAN to 15 who had said it would not impact on their schools. The Governors had tried to move the PAN but had not been able to. The PAN also constrained the school’s ability to improve the quality of learning. Increasing the PAN to 15 would allow the school to have another class and recruit another teacher, so a small adjustment would have a big impact. The school had started as a Victorian village school and had grown around one hall. PE was still provided in the hall which was not the best option. Years 3, 4 and 5 were all in one room. Children moving into the village and winning appeals had to be admitted which meant one year group had been split and had to use the hall which was not a good learning environment and it had been difficult to bring the groups back together.

3. Drawing boundary lines between catchment areas

There were concerns and a lack of clarity about how and where boundary lines between catchment areas were drawn. People identify with their local community and want their children to attend a school in that community. Boundary lines are moved so families fall into catchment areas of schools that parents don’t want to

send their children to because they don't identify with that community, or the school is too far to walk to or involves crossing busy roads. In Hadley / Leegomery the boundary around HLC had been moved so more people feel into the Teagus Bridge catchment area but parents identified with HLC and other preferences were more likely to be Apley Wood or Millbrook. The Head of Old Park did not feel that Ironstone Primary would alleviate pressure on Old Park because parents want to walk their children to school it was too far.

4. Lack of early involvement of practitioners in the design of buildings and lack of transfer of experience

Heads were not involved in building design at an early enough stage so their expertise as practitioners was not used in terms of what would work well. The plans for Lightmoor had already been drawn up when a head had identified simple problems which meant the building would not work such as the fire escape leading to the boiler room. Overseeing a building project took an enormous amount of time for Heads and this was an issue when they were trying to maintain standards at the same time. The timing of the amalgamation at HLC meant there was some additional capacity, but this was not the norm. It did not always need to be the Head of the school involved – a number of Heads had already been through the BSF process and a lot had been learnt along the way, but no one asked what lessons had been learnt and previous experience had not been drawn on for subsequent projects. Chains of communication could be too long - the head would talk to the architect who would talk to the contractor and so on, and things could get lost along the way. It would be better to have joint project meetings. The overall message was that the local authority must involve practitioners in school building projects and at an earlier stage.

5. Impact of academies and free schools

Academies and free schools were free to set their own admission numbers and could increase without communicating with the other schools or the authority. This had not had a big impact on primary schools yet because there was only one primary academy but would start to impact as new schools were built or others converted.

6. Representation at appeals hearings

There had been a huge debate at the PHF meeting about Appeals Committee meetings and the fact that Heads were not able to attend to represent themselves at appeal hearings. It was not clear whether there were national guidelines in place, but the Heads had heard that Heads in Shropshire had been allowed to attend appeals meetings. The Heads were reliant on Telford & Wrekin admissions staff representing the school but it was not clear to the Heads how they did this and they were not given details about what was said at meetings. There was an issue about the clarity of appeals on the grounds of disability. The Appeals Committee can insist that a school admits a child even if the school is over the PAN. The Heads felt very strongly about this issue and wanted greater transparency.

Members explored some of these issues in more detail and asked a number of other questions:

- Members wanted clarification about how the PAN is decided. The Heads said that it is calculated by the local authority based on the size of the building and that number then goes to the Board of Governors to agree but there can be some pressure. There was a discussion about the role of the Local Admissions Forum (LAF). Mr. Rayner thought the process was that the governors agreed a number to recommend to the LAF to decide, but Ms. Ward who sits on the Forum explained that the constitution had changed and the LAF no longer had any decision making powers. In the past, the LAF had been a forum for lengthy debate and had sometime changed the numbers when the local authority might not. Ms. Ward felt it would still be a useful forum for debate and a conduit between schools and the authority even if it had no powers. Mr. Atkinson agreed the LAF could put issues to the authority on behalf of the schools. Ms. Ward said that secondary schools attended meetings and wanted to know whether the primary Heads heard about meetings which they said they did not, and Ms. Ward suggested the LAF should be reporting back to the Primary Heads Forum. The Chair asked the Heads whether in the light of the discussion it would be fair to say that there was a lack of clarity from schools about how the number is calculated, communicated and influenced and the Heads agreed that the process was opaque. Mr. Rayner also reminded members that there is a difference between the PAN and the net capacity used for planning and they do not need to be the same. Cllr. Greenaway said that there were schools where there were not enough local children to fill the PAN and had spare capacity but the school was not designed to be accessible to children from other communities.
- Members had questions about how projected numbers from housing developments are factored into place planning, including when numbers are built in. Cllr. Green said that developers may not build straight away and numbers factored in too soon would affect the overall projections and planning.
- There was a discussion about traffic problems. Although the majority of parents - about 86% - walk children to school, increasing places could still add to traffic problems and traffic safety issues for those who choose to drive. Issues were also raised about the lack or quality of pavements and poor street lighting on some routes.
- The Chair asked more about the challenges for schools as they expand and whether we should be alarmed if schools grow too big, for example over 500. St. Lawrence had thought about the number at which the school would not be big enough. Technically the school was big enough to manage for the next four years although the numbers were not the same every year. This was not necessarily the case for other schools where development growth – for example in Malinslee – could be a problem if the extra capacity is built in schools that parents don't want their children to go to (for example because they can't walk there). The head at Lightmoor had insisted that expansion should happen gradually and the school had grown into the new building and there had been a gradual increase in improvement but it could not happen overnight. The Heads thought HLC had capacity to increase to 4 classes per year group but they were uncertain as to whether a decision had been made in Telford & Wrekin to limit classes per year

group to three. Class size was important and big classes put immense pressure on teachers – how can they teach 37 or 38 children in one class? There were issues with funding for growing schools - there used to be funding if a school grew above 15% over capacity but this was no longer the case.

- The Chair asked about the link between planning capacity and quality. He painted a scenario of a thriving school with high standards and parents on the doorstep but the PAN could not be increased so children had to go to a less good school that had capacity. He wanted to know if this happened, and if so, how the problem could be solved. The Heads said it was possibly an issue in some areas more than others. Schools work closely with the School Improvement Team and Telford & Wrekin has a good team and a good advisory service and standards were on the rise. There could be historic perceptions about standards which were unfair when a school is improving. Mr. Atkinson commented that “popularity” was not necessarily a good criterion for expanding a school because it could change quite quickly.
- The Chair asked whether converting to academy status would hinder or help solve problems. The Heads insisted they wanted to remain maintained by Telford & Wrekin education authority. St. Lawrence felt converting was not in the best interests of the school and that it was not a viable option with all the bureaucracy that goes with being an academy. Old Park could not see how it would benefit the children and that there would be more work for no more money. The church schools had recently got together to debate the issue and had decided they wanted to work with partners but to retain their current status. Academies could decide to admit more children without consulting or communicating and these decisions would impact on other schools. The primaries had not been greatly affected yet because there was only one primary academy in the borough but this would change over time. Cllr. Turley wanted to know if the government could force schools to become academies and the Chair explained that all new schools must be academies or if a school is eligible for intervention the Secretary of State could enforce academy status. Ms. Haywood said Old Park had a “Good” Ofsted rating and the school had looked at this question now while the school had a choice.
- Members asked more about the impact of the “bedroom tax” - how it manifested itself and the evidence that the sudden admissions were due to the bedroom tax. The Heads said there was anecdotal information from forms that the schools receive and from meetings with the families transferring. It had not affected Old Hall as yet but there were parents who had said they were trying to move. One of the knock-on effects was that many of the children had additional needs which the new school had to meet but the transition was so fast there was not always time to put arrangements in place quickly enough. Sudden moves impact on all children but are especially difficult for children with special needs.

When there were no further questions, the Chair asked the Heads which of all the issues raised were the two priorities they would like scrutiny to make recommendations about and the Heads said priorities would be that the PAN and the appeals processes should be consultative processes - decisions were devolved from

the schools but they should be consulted. Ms. Howells emphasised again that a small increase in the PAN would make a huge difference to St. Lawrence.

The Chair thanked the visitors and they left the meeting.

Members then discussed the Terms of Reference for the scrutiny review in the light of the preceding discussion and it was agreed that they would be revised to take account of:

- The impact of increasing capacity on non-statutory services, such as nurseries, which had come to occupy space during years of under-capacity.
- The impact of expansion on the ethos of the school.
- Point 1 should be changed to take account of the process for planning places including how the PAN is set.
- To include the local admissions policy and the involvement of governing bodies.

The revised Terms of Reference would be circulated to members after the meeting.

Members discussed the next steps and the Chair suggested holding working group meetings between formal Committee meetings to gather evidence as there was a lot of work to do in a short space of time and this was agreed.

The next meeting would include:

- Meeting officers from Planning & Delivery to consider the Children & Families Population Profile 2013, circulated as Appendix C1, to look at how data is gathered, the projections and what it tells us.
- A more detailed meeting with the School Organisation Manager to explore how the population data feeds into place planning, statutory requirements and legislation for authorities in place planning and admissions.
- Members to decide who else to meet or what further information is needed.

CYPSC-5 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair outlined the items for the next Committee meeting as:

1. A report back on the Cabinet response to the Committee's recommendations in the report on the Children in Care Placement Strategy which would be presented to Cabinet on 27th June, and progress on implementing recommendations agreed.
2. An update on the Ofsted action plan, 12 months on.
3. The report of the LGA Peer review of safeguarding.

The meeting ended at 7.25pm.

Chairman:.....

Date:.....

WORKING DOCUMENT: CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Key to RAG rating

	Complete
	In Progress on schedule
	Behind Schedule

PRIORITY 1: ENSURE THERE IS A TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO SOCIAL CARE ENQUIRIES

R1	RECOMMENDATION : Ensure that the outcomes of child protection enquiries are recorded promptly								
	Amend the monitoring of S47 enquiries to focus on accurate recording and evidence that the child has been seen by a qualified social worker and is safe.	Timely identification of those children who are not safe	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Monitoring of S47 enquiries on protocol with notes of audit added to protocol by the Service Delivery Manager (SDM)	Immediate	Maria White Di Partridge RS Angela Yapp Helen Smith	Aug-12	Monitoring system has been established with weekly reporting from protocol of outstanding tasks. Weekly meetings are now held between the Service Delivery Manager (SDM) and individual team managers for Child Protection (CP) team and Assessment and Case Management Team (ACM) teams to audit the completion of current S47 investigations. Weekly meetings are now held between the Service Delivery Manager (SDM) for Children's Specialist Services and the Disabled Children's team and this arrangement is to be extended to the CIC team.	complete
	Include focus on writing up of Child Protection (CP) enquiries in weekly meetings between SDM and CPT managers	Timely identification of those children who are not safe	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Monitoring of CP enquiries on protocol by SDM	Immediate	Maria White Di Partridge RS Angela Yapp	Aug-12	The recording of CP enquiries is now an agenda item on the weekly meeting between SDM and CP team manager.	complete
	Put in place a process to ensure that CP enquiries are being recorded promptly across ACM, DCT and Cohesion Service (CS) teams	Prompt recording of CP enquiries across the appropriate teams in Children and Family Services	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Monitoring of CP enquiries on protocol by SDM	Immediate	Maria White Di Partridge RS Angela Yapp	Apr-13	Process in place for immediate discussions between SDM and team managers within ACM, CIC, CSW and DCT where CP enquiries are not recorded promptly. There has been a reduction of outstanding cases and a plan is in place to clear the backlog of assessment recordings in the Child Protection Team.	complete
R2	RECOMMENDATION : End the unsafe practice of holding cases as contacts and referrals for prolonged periods while information gathering								
R3	RECOMMENDATION: Ensure the prompt identification of referrals at Family Connect and Safeguarding Advisory Team								

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	Review Family Connect Safeguarding Advisory Team (FCSAT) to ensure that risks to children are promptly assessed by a qualified social worker and referrals completed within 24 hours.	Contacts completed and authorised within 24 hours. There are no CP or CIC cases in the CPT or CSW teams for longer than 10 days after Initial Child Protection Call (ICPC)	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Dashboard - Percentage of referrals completed within 24 hours	Immediate	Maria White	Apr-13	FCSAT redesigned to ensure that only qualified social workers process contacts and referrals. This has included increasing SSW capacity to 1Full Time Equivalent (1FTE) to provide more support to the team managers. Second review completed and recommendations agreed by Children & Families Leadership Team to further improve arrangements. Management arrangements for the Safeguarding Advisors Team transferred from SDM Assessment and Case Management to the SDM Family Connect.	complete
	Review cover arrangements between the team managers of the CP team and the FCSAT to spread the load amongst more team managers	Contacts completed and authorised within 24 hours There are no CP or CIC cases in the CPT or CSW teams for longer than 10 days after ICPC	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Dashboard - Percentage of referrals completed within 24 hours	Immediate	Maria White Debbie Lloyd Di Partridge	Apr-13	Arrangements agreed so that all social workers and managers will know at any time what the cover arrangement are for Family Connect Safeguarding Advisor Team and Child Protection Team through a procedure which is being implemented using calendars on Microsoft outlook.	complete
	Put in place a process to monitor contact and referral timescales		Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Milestone	Immediate	Marie White Debbie Lloyd Di Partridge Helen Smith	Aug-12	Monitoring system established with weekly reports from protocol of outstanding tasks and management checks on why tasks are outstanding.	complete
PRIORITY 2: REDESIGN SOCIAL WORK SERVICES TO BETTER SUPPORT THE CHILD'S JOURNEY FROM NEEDING TO RECEIVING HELP									
R4	RECOMMENDATION : Accelerate plans to provide edge of care service out of hours								
	Seek user feedback, agree specification for the edge of care out of hours service, cost and implement.	Improved outcomes and a reduction in costs in relation to out of hours placements	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Number of children who remain at home in a safe environment	3 months	Jas Bedesha Angela Yapp	Apr-13	Family On Call Service (FOCS) fully operational	complete
R6	RECOMMENDATION : Provide partner agencies with a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the community social work team								
	Consult with partner agencies to review and develop pathways to inform the definition of the roles and responsibilities of the community social work team.	Children and young people are referred to appropriate agencies	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Referrals to Safeguarding Advisory Service. Number of children attending residential or independent schools. SEN supported in school through education/ health care plan. Children coming into care	3 months	Diane Partridge Chris Marsh Jas Bedesha Debbie Lloyd Marie White	Mar-13	Recommendations regarding the role and function of Community Social Work Team presented to Senior leadership Team on 05.03.13. Pathways agreed and document produced clarifying role of CSW Team. Awareness raising activities undertaken across localities.	complete
R7	RECOMMENDATION : Facilitate the consistent delivery of planned interventions by minimising changes of social worker								
R20	RECOMMENDATION: Facilitate positive and productive relationships between children and social workers by minimising changes in social worker								
	Monitor the number of changes in social worker and the reasons for these changes.	Minimised changes in social worker	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Changes in social worker per child and evaluation of reasons under defined categories Service user feedback	3 months	Helen Smith Maria White Diane Partridge Angela Yapp	Apr-13	reporting system in place	complete

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Continue recruitment campaign to reduce use of agency workers	Minimised changes in social worker	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Monitoring of vacancy rates against a set target	3 months	Maria White Angela Yapp Diane Partridge	Apr-13	There has been a steady reduction in the SW vacancy rate as well as the number of agency social workers being employed (from a maximum of 14 down to 8.5 at the end of March 2013).	complete
Review pay differentials for social workers in line with neighbouring areas	Minimised changes in social worker	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Monitoring of vacancy rates against a set target	3 months	HR	Nov-12	Pay differentials reviewed with other West Midlands authorities Joining epaycheck – which will allow us access to comparisons regionally and nationally	complete
Carry out review of Social Worker service to better support the child's journey (produce recommendations to be presented to Assistant Directors)	Minimised changes in social worker	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Changes in social worker per child and evaluation of reasons under defined categories Service user feedback	3 months	Karen Perry	Jun-14	Review completed Staff briefings held across Children's Services Reconfiguration plan in progress resources secured to recruit temporary project manager	complete

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PRIORITY 3: ENSURE THAT THE QUALITY OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND EARLY HELP IS CONSISTENTLY GOOD									
R13	RECOMMENDATION: Review the format of review conference minutes so that risk and protective factors are recorded clearly and consistently								
	Introduce the new format of review conference minutes	Risk and protective factors are recorded clearly and consistently	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Quality Sample of minutes related to CP Plans	6 months	Jo Britton	Feb-13	Minutes are now outcome focussed and reflect risk and protective factors Implementation will be monitored via QA framework for safeguarding advisory service	complete
	Implement a Quality Assurance framework for review conference minutes	Risk and protective factors are consistently recorded clearly in minutes	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Quality Sample of minutes related to CP Plans	6 months	Jo Britton Maria White Diane Partridge	Feb-13	Framework agreed issue based learning in place. System of monthly file audit by Managers across Safeguarding and F&C implemented from April. QA framework to be reviewed in February 2014	complete
R16	RECOMMENDATION: Ensure the LSCB's activity links to demonstrable improvements in frontline social work practice								
	Work with frontline managers to identify projects where LSCB can drive improvements to frontline social work practice.	LSCB activity reflects frontline need.	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Monitoring and evaluation of LSCB Business Plan	6 months	Jo Britton	Feb-13	Neglect and domestic abuse highlighted by frontline social workers. Working with other authorities to develop and pilot neglect model - to be piloted by 31/05/13, evaluated by 01/10/13 and then implemented. Domestic abuse to be included in LSCB priorities and action plan for 2013 - 14	complete
R19	Review the capacity and functioning of the IRO team to ensure robust challenge where needed and the prompt circulation of a good quality review records								
	Undertake a review of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) team based on the starting point of what a good IRO team looks like	Review complete with recommendations for improvement	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Final report and recommendations to be presented to CYP&F SLT and the LSCB	3 months	Jo Britton	Mar-13	Review completed and with SLT for consideration Additional temporary post agreed for 12 months and filled	complete
R21	Ensure that all looked after children have a qualified social worker and that minimum statutory visiting requirements are complied with								
	Have clarity and understanding of what the minimum statutory requirements are	Clear starting point for remodel of CIC provision	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Monitoring of statutory visits	3 months	Angela Yapp Maria White Dianne Partridge	Mar-13	Statutory visit template developed and in use across all teams.	complete
	Assess quantity of Statutory work undertaken by SW Assistants and explore which other professionals can enhance this. Propose remodel of CIC provision	All statutory casework activity undertaken by Qualified SW	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Monitoring of statutory visits	3 months	Angela Yapp Maria White Dianne Partridge	Apr-13	Children in Care Team remodel into units implemented. All children in care allocated to qualified social worker	complete

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R22	Facilitate the timely completion of life story work								
	Clarify and agree who is responsible for life story book work.	Responsibility understood and communicated	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Milestone	3 months	Maria White Angela Yapp	Jun-13	Policy drafted and amended following consultation with foster carers and practitioners. Consultation with Children in Care arranged for 01.08.13. To be implemented from 01.09.13	behind schedule
	Develop skills of Social Worker and of other professionals to enhance delivery e.g. Foster Carers	Professionals have skills to deliver life story work	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Evaluation of training	3 months	Maria White Angela Yapp	Oct-13	Workshops to be commissioned between July and October 2013 to roll out training on revised policy and best practice.	In Progress
R23	Ensure that cultural and equality and diversity issues are assessed and recorded during assessments. NHS Telford and Wrekin Council must ensure that this includes health assessments								
	Amend assessment form to include the recording of health needs as a result of cultural equality or diversity issues.	Issues recorded routinely.	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Audit of Health Assessment Forms	3 months	HEALTH /JR	Nov-12	forms amended and in use since Nov 2012 health passports in use since Dec 2012 s/ws are sent copies of health assessments which are uploaded onto protocol	complete
	Incorporate an awareness of cultural, equality and diversity issues within Safeguarding training including CAF, and its impact on the broader lifestyle choices tailored to the local demography.	Those working with the local population are able to respond appropriately to address individuals needs based on cultural, equality and diversity	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Evaluation of impact of training demonstrated through multi-agency case file audit.	3 months	LSCB Training Sub Group	Nov-12	Training reviewed and cultural competence plus 'invisible men' issues woven into all LSCB training. All members of the LSCB training pool have received cultural competence training so they can weave it into delivery. LSCB training subgroup encourages single agencies to include these themes in their own training	complete
R28	NHS Telford and Wrekin and Telford and Wrekin Council must ensure that all initial health assessments are completed within the specified time frame								
	Put process in place to allocate appointments to meet time frame	100% initial assessments within time frame	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Monthly report to monitor performance	3 months	Sara Vale	Nov-12	Process improved and timescales for initial health assessments are improving Review assessments are completed within timescales	complete
	Ensure Social Workers gain consent to medical treatment /intervention from birth parents/local authority and submit referral for Initial Medical Health Assessment (IMHA) to health within 3	100% referrals received within 3 working days of child entering care	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Monthly report to monitor performance	3 months	Karen Perry	Nov-12	Process improved and timescales for initial health assessments are improving Review assessments are completed within timescales	complete
	Ensure social care provide relevant information for the Initial Medical Assessment (IMA) appointment via adoption of British Associate of Adoption and Fostering) and associated	Receipt of forms by health in time for IMHA.	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Monthly report to monitor performance	3 months	Karen Perry Dr Varsha Sadavarte Fern Zihini	Nov-12	BAAF forms in use	complete
R29	Improve the quality and recording of statutory visits								

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	Design and implement new statutory visit information template	Accurate and relevant information from statutory visits	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Audit of revisit notes	6 months	Maria White Angela Yapp	May-13	Template completed and used across all social work teams.	complete
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PRIORITY 4: IMPROVE THE PROVISION TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL BEING									
R10	RECOMMENDATION: NHS Telford and Wrekin must ensure that the transition pathway for those young people with ADHD who require adult services is in place, and that the review of CAMH services ensures that the waiting list for those children and young people with neurological disorders is within agreed targets and there is timely access to treatment and interventions								
	Develop the transition pathway	Young people with ADHD are supported into adulthood	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	To be built in by commissioners	3 months	Michael Bennett	Nov-12	A consultant in adult mental health services has been identified and is taking new referrals from GPs and CAMHS. He provides a session each month to assess, prescribe and review individuals. This has been in place since September. In addition work is in place to have a Transition service in place from July 2013	complete
	Commission CAMHS to provide a stable placement team.	CAMHS stable placement team in place.	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Number of placement moves as a result linked to emotional health of LAC	3 months	Commissioners	Jun-13	CAMHS review completed and reported in december 2012 and new model for delivery agreed. Placement Stability Team being developed. CAMHS identified LAC lead post. Meetings held to develop the service model. Further meetings arranged to develop further. Work now integrated with Recommendation 25 regarding SDQs and spot purchasing of therapeutic interventions (joint care pathway/referral process to be trialled in Sept) Actions from recommendations 10 and 11 to be included in CAMHS Action Plan Development of the Placement Stability team part of the CAMHS Transition Action Plan and progress monitored through the monthly meetings	behind schedule
R11	RECOMMENDATION: NHS Telford and Wrekin must ensure that there are compliant Mental health Act Section 136 arrangements for young people aged 16-18 years of age								
	Put arrangements in place to secure compliancy and look at commissioning local and specialised to improve the arrangements	Compliancy and improved provision	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)		3 months	Director of Integrated Commissioning Care / Camhs Commissioners	Nov-12	December 2012 update - Work is ongoing re use of S136 suite at Redwood this is fraught with complication due to delay re access to Tier 4 beds, availability of 1st level screening out of hours. We comply legally but there is a lot of work to be done by commissioning both local and specialised. Service lead is engaged in ongoing dialogue with FT and Social Care. Commissioners have approached Specialised Commissioning to consider the viability of funding local arrangements that could be initiated without delays. They have indicated that this is not possible. They have also indicated that there are more pressures for Tier 4 beds. Delays are likely to remain. Local Commissioners will continue to raise this as a serious issue and seek assurances about capacity and response times.	behind schedule

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PRIORITY 5: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE INVOLVED SHAPING AND IMPROVING THE SERVICES THEY RECEIVE

R14 RECOMMENDATION: Ensure that assessments and plans accurately reflect children and young people's diversity and include their wishes and feelings									
	Review all assessment and child plan templates to ensure that they have specific section to record the children and young people's diverse needs including their wishes and feelings.	Assessment and child plan templates child centred and accommodate the diverse range of needs	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Audit of assessment and child plan templates	6 months	Maria White Angela Yapp Diane Partridge	Mar-13	Review of templates completed. All current templates (IA, CA, S47 investigation, care plan....etc) all have specific sections to record young people's wishes and feelings. Within CIC Team, Team Manager and Advanced Practitioner have been reviewing assessments and careplan contents ACM Teams have completed analysis of attention to cultural needs for all children from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is to be included as part of the quarterly safeguarding service performance monitoring Monthly monitoring of recording children's ethnicities for all referrals has shown an improvement through 2012 and continuing, currently less than 10 outstanding (< 1%) Within CIC Team Manager and advanced practitioner have been grading care plans and providing feedback to Social Work staff. Advanced Practitioner (CIC) has completed two workshops in how to produce effective careplans, which she will review.	complete
	Explore ways of directly recording children, young people and families views (reportable)	Recommendations made to Safeguarding QA Group	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report	Audit of assessment and child plan templates	6 months	Maria White Angela Yapp Diane Partridge	May-13	Initial scoping of reporting on the child's wishes and feelings has identified that there are fields within the pathway assessments for the child's views to be recorded and whilst these fields are not currently reportable, there is functionality available to develop such reports. This will require input from ICT to establish the reportable queries for the particular fields. In terms of newly developed forms outside the pathway within Protocol, further development will be required to establish whether fields are reportable.	behind schedule
	Develop the template for a single assessment	Planning based on individual child's needs rather than service driven	(Safeguarding)	Audit of assessment and child plan templates	6 months	Maria White , Debbie Lloyd, Diane Partridge	May-13	Draft template developed. To be piloted in CPT during August, amended following learning from the pilot and implemented across all teams from 01/10/13	behind schedule
	Provide evidence based tools to support practice	Professionals have the tools which they can use help them seek and act upon children's views	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Audit of assessment and child plan templates	6 months	Maria White Angela Yapp Diane Partridge	Jun-14	To include in Reconfiguring Social Work project. There has been targeted activity within the CIC Team in respect of Core Assessments to evidence decision making and practice interventions. Advanced Practitioner (CIC) has completed a workshop 'How to develop and implement a good Core Assessment'. Advanced Practitioner (CIC) is involved with a steering group discussing tools for practitioners to use when completing direct work with children & families. There are a number of tools used for risk and parenting assessments eg PAMs, training for which has recently been repeated	in progress

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	Hold Professional Development Workshops to ensure that teams have the skills to use the evidence based tools to seek and act upon children's views	Every children's worker has the skills to seek and act upon children's views	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Evaluation of training	6 months	Maria White Angela Yapp Diane Partridge	Jun-14	To include in Reconfiguring Social Work project. The following workshops have been facilitated and developed by the Advanced Practitioner (CIC): How to create an effective Care Plan, How to develop and implement a good core assessment, How to develop and implement an effective PEP. Children in Care Team have attended a workshop on systemic practice and are beginning to use the tools e.g. genogram Resources identified and work in progress to commission a major programme of systemic practice training across the children's services workshop	in progress
	Quality sample of assessments and plans to ensure the above actions have made a difference	Children's wishes and feelings are consistently seen and acted upon in assessments and plans	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Audit of assessment and child plans	6 months	Maria White Angela Yapp Diane Partridge	Apr-13	To be included in file audit arrangements. The RAG rating of care plans and core assessments, monthly practice meetings which look at difficult cases within the team and what we have learnt from them and how to improve working. Advanced Practitioner (CIC) carries out weekly/Fortnightly/monthly supervisions to increase support, reflective thinking and to create AYSE portfolio.	complete
R17	RECOMMENDATION: NHS Telford and Wrekin must ensure that there are effective service user engagements arrangements within health safeguarding services, to inform both the service design and ongoing quality monitoring								
	Include provider updates on service user engagement arrangements, LSCB Section 11 six monthly reporting, Healthcare Governance Safeguarding Children Committee monitoring Section 11 audits and quarterly template reporting	Service users inform service design and ongoing quality improvement	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Check reports from providers for service user updates and chase up where not included	6 months	Commissioning / Provider Exec Leads	Feb-13	s11 framework updated via LSCB governance groups. Monitoring is undertaken quarterly and reported to LSCB 6 monthly.	complete
R18	RECOMMENDATION: Ensure that all parents receive regular communication and are involved in reviews as appropriate.								
	TMs to check involvement of parents for all reviews up until end Sept is appropriate	Regular appropriate communication and involvement of parents	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Monitoring of attendance	Immediate	Jo Britton Maria White Angela Yapp Diane Partridge	Aug-12	Checks undertaken and communication issues identified. Admin arrangements changed and dip sample will be taken in August 2013 to monitor improvements.	complete
	Develop and implement a Social Work report for child in care reviews	Regular appropriate communication and involvement of parents	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Monitoring of report	Immediate	Jo Britton Maria White Angela Yapp Diane Partridge	Mar-13	Proforma completed and will be uploaded onto protocol in March 13	complete
	Improve recording of parents being invited and parents attendance and agree method of highlighting where this is not happening	Regular appropriate communication and involvement of parents	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Monitoring of attendance	Immediate	Jo Britton Maria White Angela Yapp Diane Partridge	Aug-12	Admin arrangements changed and dip sample will be taken in August 2013 to monitor improvements.	complete

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PRIORITY 6: ENSURE WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER SO THAT WE HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE SKILLS AND CAPACITY TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE (QA)									
R8	RECOMMENDATION : NHS Telford and Wrekin and Local Safeguarding Children Board must ensure that all identified staff are compliant with their safeguarding training especially medical staff and that all staff involved with safeguarding children have supervision								
	Implement robust monitoring of safeguarding training on line modules and Group level 3 training accessed through multi agency training	All Drs completed West Midlands online training before end of December 2012	Ofsted 2012 Unannounced report (Safeguarding)	As per action once in place	3 months	Executive Lead / Medical Director/ Named Nurse / Midwife / Doctor	Nov-11	Trust governance includes agreement that all new and junior doctors on paediatrics and A&E have to complete online training within a month, and that agency locums have to complete online safeguarding training.	complete
	Write / adapt policy for group supervision for staff in A/E and Children's wards as well as Maternity	Effective Group Supervision	Ofsted 2012 Unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Monitoring that group supervision policy is being used	3 months	Named Nurse / Midwife	Mar-13	Decision made that SaTH policy will be adapted and agreed at the Trust Safeguarding Group by 31/03/13	complete
	GMC new Level 3 e learning information to be circulated to all medical staff	Enhanced skills	Ofsted 2012 Unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Not applicable	3 months	Exec Leads for Provider Services/Designated doctor/Named doctors/nurses/midwife	Nov-11	Information circulated to all medical staff within timescale GPs also given the information in safeguarding training	complete
	Increase availability of Safeguarding Training Sessions	Enhanced skills	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Monitored quarterly through the LSCB training sub group	3 months	Exec Leads for Provider Services/Designated doctor/Named doctors/nurses/midwife	Nov-11	Number of safeguarding sessions delivered has increased In addition, training has been made available to a wider group of health staff	complete
R9	RECOMMENDATION : NHS Telford and Wrekin and the Local Safeguarding Children Board must ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the safeguarding children named nurse to comply with requirements, and ensure that children and young people are protected from harm								
	Implement permanent increase in Named Nurse hours	Increased capacity	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Milestone	3 months	Executive Lead for Safeguarding	Nov-12	Current Named Nurse changed hours from part to full time temporarily from 30/11/12 and this will become permanent on 01/04/13 Absent Community Trust nurses have now returned to work so there is now a full complement of staff	Complete
	Advertise vacant named midwife post	Increased capacity	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Milestone	3 months	Deputy Head of Midwifery	Nov-12	Named midwife appointed in October 12 and in post	Complete

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	Look at skill mix for A/E, advertise for children's nurses / Drs.	Royal College Standards for Emergency departments: At least 1 children's nurse per shift. A lead Children's Nurse and a Lead nurse for safeguarding. Lead Consultant for Safeguarding and Named Consultant Paediatrician for Emergency department.	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Vacancies	6 months	Executive lead / Deputy Chief Nurse	Dec-13	A paediatric liaison post has been created and appointed to. The post will be based in A&E and will help ensure information is shared if any safeguarding issues are identified. REDUCTION in numbers of young people coming into A&E with alcohol issues (impact of street pastors) This has been included in reconfiguration plan	complete
	Develop Business continuity plans to address absences within the Named Nurse team and succession planning	Sustained Capacity	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)		3 months	NB (CSM)	Nov-12	Cover arrangements are in place for named nurses in SaTH and Community Trust	complete
	Increase number of staff in A&E who have received multi-agency training	Increased Capacity	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Training Records	3 months	Named Nurse	Nov-12	Numbers have increased	complete
R12	RECOMMENDATION: NHS Telford and Wrekin and the LSCB must ensure that all health staff are aware of the safeguarding referrals escalation policy								
	Raise awareness of safeguarding referrals escalation policy	Appropriate use of escalation policy	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)		3 months	Designated / Deputy Professionals	Nov-12	Completed in both trusts. The policy has been disseminated to all health commissioners and providers via the Health Governance Group	complete
R15	Ensure the development of a workforce strategy in line with the children's services review								
	Agree scope, format and development plan for strategy with senior management team. Plan actions to develop strategy as agreed. Write strategy. Consult on strategy. Revise strategy. Agree strategy.	We have the skills and capacity to deliver improved outcomes	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Safeguarding)	Monitoring of the action plan which supports the workforce strategy	6 months	Emma Wilcock	Mar-13	Strategy and action plan completed and agreed by Senior Leadership Team	complete

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PRIORITY 7: ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE ARE KEPT HEALTHY									
R25	NHS Telford and Wrekin and Telford and Wrekin Council must ensure that the outcomes from the strengths and difficulties questionnaires are used as part of the review health assessments, and that outcomes from mental health assessments, undertaken privately and through spot purchasing are embedded into health assessments and ongoing health care provision								
	Issue Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ) 6 weeks before the Review Health Assessment. (National Screening Tool a requirement of Promoting the Health and Wellbeing of LAC - Doha/DFCS 2009)	All carers receive a SDQ 6 weeks in advance of the next planned review	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Audit of SDQ paperwork received prior to review assessment	3 months	Helen Smith	Nov-12	System is up and running to ensure SDQs are sent out, and the return rate is consistently over 90%	complete
	Redesign the pathway for high SDQ scores	A pathway in place which allows CIC to receive the health services that they need.	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Reduction in SDQ scores for CIC	3 months	Fern Zihini	Nov-12	Pathway reviewed and agreed. To be monitored by Health of LAC steering group.	complete
	Review the commissioning of spot purchasing of therapeutic interventions and mental health assessments	Clear commissioning contracts for the therapeutic interventions and mental health assessments and clear pathways for communication.	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Cost benefit analysis	3 months	CCG Commissioners	Jun-13	Process for accessing therapeutic interventions for children and young people reviewed and pilot of process and pathways will commence in September	complete
R26	NHS Telford and Wrekin and Telford and Wrekin Council must ensure that the outcomes of the IRO reviews are disseminated and as appropriate, form part of the ongoing health care								
	Record that the review assessment has been reviewed by the health lead in the health record.	Assessments reviewed and subsequent action documented	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Improved Health of CIC	3 months	Fern Zihini	Nov-12	It is now standard procedure for school nurses and health visitors who attend reviews to receive copies of the notes and file in health files.	complete
R27	NHS Telford and Wrekin must ensure that there is robust performance monitoring and quality assurance of health assessments including that consent has been obtained and recorded prior to the health assessment taking place and that as appropriate the child agrees to the health action plan.								
	Social worker reviews the health plan upon it's return for basic completeness and legibility and if concerned contact LAC nurse	Robust QA in place	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Audit of Health Plans	3 months	Fern Zihini	Aug-12	Health assessments are never undertaken without consent BAAF forms are now used, which include consent section S/ws for CiC placed out of area do contact Fern Z if they have any concerns about health assessments and plans Health of LAC group is monitoring this	Complete

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	Complete annual audit of health assessments by other health providers for children placed out of area, taking account of the wider picture, e.g. Risk of harm and impact on transition	Robust QA in place	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Audit of Health Assessments	6 months	Fern Zihini	Nov-12	Audit completed and reported to Health of LAC group. To be undertaken again once Designated Paediatrician is in post.	Complete
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PRIORITY 8: PROVIDE EFFECTIVE TRANSITION FROM BEING IN CARE TO INDEPENDENT LIVING

R24	RECOMMENDATION End the reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation to meet the accommodation needs of care leavers								
	Deliver timely information and advice for post 16 options to establish appropriate support to sustain and achieve learning, skills and employment post 16.	reduction in care leavers dropping out of provision post 16	Ofsted 2012 unannounced report (Children in Care)	Monitoring of participation for care leavers	3 months	Sue Marston	Nov-12	<p>There is a lot of provision available for NEET young people Job club set up to support CiC and care leavers, but attendance is low so plans proposals being taken to the Care Council to move from darby House to Madeley Careers Office where there is additional support and which is open for extended hours. Information sharing arrangements in place to identify care leavers etc so direct contact can be made all NEET care leavers have a careers adviser allocated to them Regular contact is maintained with the Care Council to consult and provide information</p>	complete

Briefing for CYP Scrutiny Committee 15.08.13: Update on Service Improvement Plan

1. Background

This is the third progress report regarding the Service Improvement Plan developed following the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services in June and July 2012. Progress reports were previously presented in November 2012 and May 2013.

2. Summary of Progress

It will be seen from the Service Improvement Plan tabled with this report that the majority of actions have now been completed. A summary of those actions which are behind schedule follows:

R22: Clarify and agree who is responsible for life story book work.

This has been delayed, but the refreshed policy has now been drafted and amended following consultation with foster carers and practitioners and a group of children and young people in care. The policy will be implemented from 01.09.13

R10: Commission CAMHS to provide a stable placement team.

R11: Put arrangements in place to secure compliance with Mental Health Act s136 regarding arrangements for 16-18 year olds.

Both these actions are behind schedule. Work is being undertaken at a strategic level by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), CAHMS and the council in resolving the issues. There has been some recent progress with the stable placement team – with a joint referral and care pathway to be trialled in September 2013

R14 Explore ways of directly recording children, young people and families views in a reportable way

Develop the template for a Single Assessment

Work continues on these actions, which are behind schedule. The delay for the Single Assessment from the original Ofsted timescale was due to delays at a national level in publishing the refreshed 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' Guidance, which was finally published in April. A draft template for a single assessment has now been developed, which will be piloted during August and implemented across all social work teams from 1st October. A variety of activity has been undertaken to improve the recording of children and young people's views. Joint working with ICT will enable these improvements to be reportable.

3. Next steps

As stated earlier, most of the actions on the current Service Improvement Plan have been completed. A new service improvement model is being drafted and will be discussed by Children and Family Service Senior Leadership Team in August. Alongside the model will be a refreshed action plan, which will include those actions outstanding from the current Service Improvement Plan as well as actions from the recent Peer Review (please see separate report) and actions identified internally.

Tilly Heigh

Service Delivery Manager for Service Improvement

30th July 2013

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 That the Council carries out a number of activities to improve value for money and the quality of the service provided for Children in care in the following areas:
- a) Members’ responsibilities as Corporate Parents
 - b) Quality Assurance of Systems and Processes
 - c) The Role and Independence of the Independent Reviewing Officers
 - d) West Midlands Framework Contracts for Residential and Agency Foster Care and the Jigsaw contract
 - e) Financial Management and Reporting (the Dashboard)
 - f) Care of children placed in Telford & Wrekin by other authorities

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the recommendations made by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are noted and the response set out in 3.2 of the report and Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Director of Children and Families Services following consultation with Lead Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families, to implement the proposals made as a result of the review of the children in care placement strategy.

SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Objective(s)?	
	Yes	Put our children and young people first Protect and support vulnerable children and adults
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	Children in Care and their families
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	During the course of 2013-14, detail as per appendix 1	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	The total 2013/14 budget for Children in Care including Residential Care, Foster Care and Special Guardianship arrangements is £10m, within a total Safeguarding budget of £18.6m. This budget has been arrived at taking into account the commitments to Children in Care known at the time the budget was constructed as part of the Action Plan. The budget includes the proposed cost reductions expected as a result of the tendering of the Jigsaw Care contract and reducing the number of children in a residential setting. The total budget for Safeguarding for 2013/14 has also been reworked to reflect the expected reductions in the number of agency staff. The Safeguarding budget for 2013/14 has been grown by £600k from 2012/13 as part of the budget strategy. The budget has then been reduced in accordance with the expected results of implementing the action plan with savings of £2.2m being applied as a result of

		<p>reducing the number of children in residential care and reductions in the use of agency staff. A contingency of £950k is in place, intended to cover estimated cost of any turnover in Children in Care placements during 2013/14. Very early forecasts suggest the actions being taken are having the desired impact of reducing costs, but that the contingency will be required in full. The report from IEWM has been considered and recommendations, where they can be usefully adopted to improve financial reporting, are being implemented for inclusion in future "Dashboard" reports.</p>
<p>LEGAL ISSUES</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>In relation to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Recommendations :</p> <p>The statutory duties of Local Authorities in respect of children looked after by them are set out in Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 [CA 1989] ,and further underpinned by Regulations and Statutory Guidance issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970.</p> <p>Section 22C CA 1989 covers the ways in which looked after children are to be accommodated and maintained.</p> <p>Sections 25A to 25C CA 1989 cover the role and functions of the Independent Reviewing Officer [IRO]</p> <p>Section 26 CA 1989 covers the requirement to keep a child's care plan under review.</p> <p>The appointment of an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is a legal requirement. In March 2010 the Government issued new statutory guidance for local authorities and independent reviewing officers on care planning and reviewing arrangements for looked after children, including The IRO Handbook <i>recommendations 2 & 3</i></p> <p>This was part of a suite of statutory guidance which, with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 ('the Regulations') which came into force on 1st April 2011 and set out how local authorities should carry out their responsibilities for care planning, placement and review for looked after children [<i>recommendations 2 ,3 & 4</i>]</p> <p>Regulation 11 of the 2010 Regulations requires a placing authority to notify a local area authority before a child is placed out of area, other than with a connected person or an approved local authority foster parent. [<i>recommendation 6</i>]</p> <p>The Children Act 1989: Care Planning, Placement, Case Review - Volume 2 provides statutory guidance upon the Part 3 CA 1989 functions [<i>recommendation 2</i>]</p> <p>Section 22G C A 1989 requires local authorities to take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area to meet the needs of its looked after children for those children whose needs would be best met by a local placement and there is statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children.[<i>recommendation 4</i>]</p> <p>In relation to Fostering , the Fostering Services</p>

		<p>(England) Regulations 2011 were in force from 1 April 2011 and the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 Fostering Services is the relevant statutory guidance. There are also national minimum standards (NMS) which apply to local authority fostering services, independent fostering agencies and voluntary organisations. The NMS are issued for use by Ofsted and are taken into account in the inspection of fostering services [<i>recommendations 2 & 4</i>]</p> <p>In relation to children's homes ,The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 were amended by the Children's Homes (Amendment) Regulations 2011</p> <p>Revised regulations, statutory guidance and National Minimum Standards (NMS) set out how children's homes are expected to fulfill their statutory responsibilities. Volume 5: Children's Homes is the statutory guidance upon Children's Homes Regulations 2001 (as amended) and came into force in April 2011 [<i>recommendations 2,4 & 6</i>]</p> <p>Revised Statutory Guidance upon the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services for local authorities was published by the Department for Education in March 2013 [<i>recommendation 1</i>]</p> <p>All work undertaken by the Local Authority in relation to procurement and contracting needs to be in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Constitution and in particular Article 14, Section 6 : Financial Regulations and Section 7: Contract Procedure Rules.</p> <p>It is noted that Cabinet received a report , including legal comment , in respect of the Jigsaw contract and re-tender on 31 January 2013 [<i>recommendation 4</i>]</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	Opportunity to improve the quality of care not only for Telford and Wrekin children in care but also for those placed here by other local authorities
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	Children in Care originate from all parts of the borough.

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

3. INFORMATION

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee commenced a review of the Children's Placement Strategy in September 2012. In particular the Committee focused on:

- Whether current policies, procedures and practices keep children and young people in the Council's care safe
- If Council's strategy and processes for care placements offer the best value for money and
- What responsibility, if any, does the Council have for children placed in care in the borough by other local authorities

3.2 Response to recommendations of the scrutiny report about the children in care placement strategy

3.2.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee agreed a number of recommendations under the six themes listed below. The action which has or will be taken in response to the recommendations relating to themes is summarised below and detailed in Table 1. All recommendations were wholly or partly accepted.

Scrutiny Recommendation	Response and summary of action being taken to implement, or reason for rejection
1. Members' responsibility as Corporate Parents	Accepted
<p>2. Quality Assurance of Systems and Processes</p> <p>a) That the system for recording and monitoring visits and outcomes is reviewed, and a new framework developed which is more robust but simpler to use and more effective for monitoring the progress of the children and young people.</p> <p>b) The Council should review its current systems for reporting on the arrangements to complete statutory return interviews for young runaways and bring forward a report to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee within 6 months of the publication of this report.</p> <p><i>There must be simple measures, consistently applied, to monitor how children are progressing.</i></p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted in principle</p>
<p>3. The Role and Independence of the Independent Reviewing Officers</p> <p>a) That the current review of the IRO service should consider the management arrangements and the option of moving the service into the Scrutiny Team, consistent with scrutiny's role in providing objective review and challenge.</p> <p>b) That the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report is presented at a joint meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and the LSCB as a matter of routine, with an interim 6 monthly report provided to the Scrutiny Committee. This should include information about the outcomes of quality assurance audits in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted.</p> <p>Accepted</p>
<p>4. West Midlands Framework Contracts for Residential and Agency Foster Care and the Jigsaw contract</p> <p>a) That the rationale for the number of providers on the framework contracts is reviewed to establish whether more favourable contracts could be negotiated by working with a smaller number of quality providers when the contracts are re-tendered.</p>	Partially Accepted

<p>b) Within 6 months of the Jigsaw contract being awarded and started, officer's report to the CYP Scrutiny Committee on how it is delivering better outcomes for children in care and offering better value for money.</p> <p>c) That there is an officer at the Council responsible for proactively monitoring Ofsted and other agency inspection reports of providers used by the Council to help build intelligence which can inform future placement decisions.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Accepted</p>
<p>5. Financial Management and Reporting (the Dashboard)</p> <p>a) That the cost of internal care reported on the Children in Care Performance Dashboard is a true cost i.e. it includes the cost of the carers' fees and allowances, the Family Placement social worker and other associated costs.</p> <p>b) That each element is shown separately so there is transparency in how the figures are calculated and confidence that they are accurate.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>Partially Accepted</p>
<p>6. Care of children placed by other authorities in Telford and Wrekin</p>	<p>Accepted</p>

4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

None

5 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Report prepared by Karen Perry, Assistant Director: Children's Safeguarding 85652

Table 1 - Cabinet Response to Scrutiny Report

Scrutiny Committee: Children & Young People Report: Children in Care Placement Strategy Lead Scrutiny Member: Cllr. Mike Ion Lead Scrutiny Officer: Stephanie Jones		Cabinet Member: Cllr. Paul Watling Response prepared by (Karen Perry AD Safeguarding Children): Date of Cabinet meeting: 27th June 2013	
Scrutiny Recommendation	Response and summary of action being taken to implement, or reason for rejection	Date by which action will be taken	Person responsible for action (name and title)
1. Members' responsibility as Corporate Parents That the Council holds regular briefings (annual or biannual) for all elected members on their responsibilities as Corporate Parents and that Councillors' attendance or non-attendance at these briefings is published on the Council's website on an annual basis.	Accepted. In March the Cross Party Corporate Parenting Group agreed an approach to corporate parenting training for members which recognises the need for training/briefing according to roles. It is hoped that all members will access the basic awareness training which will, in due course, be delivered via e-learning. The first basic awareness briefing was held on March 25 th 2013.	March 2013 and ongoing	Karen Perry AD Children's Safeguarding
2. Quality Assurance of Systems and Processes a) That the system for recording and monitoring visits and outcomes is reviewed, and a new framework developed which is more robust but simpler to use and more effective for monitoring the progress of the children and young people.	Accepted New template for recording visits is being piloted, and the findings will be used to improve implementation Red Amber Green (RAG) system for rating care plans by Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) to be reviewed.	June 2013 June 2013	Karen Perry AD Children's Safeguarding Jo Britton Service Delivery Manager Safeguarding Advisory Service

<p>b) The Council should review its current systems for reporting on the arrangements to complete statutory return interviews for young runaways and bring forward a report to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee within 6 months of the publication of this report.</p> <p><i>There must be simple measures, consistently applied, to monitor how children are progressing.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Members suggest a category based system (health, PEP, statutory visits, contact, provision, etc.) with a RAG rating and comment for each category, a section for additional information and with automatic prompts to flag up where action is required. There should be a parallel RAG rated self-assessment system for foster carers and children in care which can be cross-referenced with the social worker's assessment to flag up any areas of mismatch. The reporting mechanism must be simple so that reports can easily be pulled off, cross-referenced and tracked. High level data can be shared with partners.</i> • <i>There must be systematic and regular Quality Assurance of care plans. This could be a regular spot-audit of a random sample of plans. Plans should be checked for compliance with statutory visits and to review of social worker</i> 	<p>Accepted</p> <p>A Missing Persons Sub Group working to the West Mercia Protocol for Missing has developed a new pathway for responding to missing person incidents. This was implemented in March 2013. The new pathway uses the responses from an interview with the young person to determine the intervention required. Latest performance information shows improvement against a number of key indicators. We will continue to review progress against key indicators to ensure that we see a continued improvement in outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>Accepted in principle</p> <p>The proposal as described by members is desirable but ambitious. Small working group to be established to consider how to build further on recently developed arrangements in the CIC team to monitor progress of CIC, including consideration of what is effective in other local authorities .</p> <p>Accepted</p> <p>Care Plans are considered as part of the monthly safeguarding audit conducted by managers and as part of the RAG rating by IROs</p>	<p>March 2013</p> <p>June- September 2013</p> <p>April and ongoing</p>	<p>Jas Bedesha Service Delivery Manager Cohesion</p> <p>Service Delivery Manager Children in Care and Family Placement (Angela Yapp)</p> <p>Karen Perry AD Children's Safeguarding</p>
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<p><i>visit records to check that issues raised are being acted on and outcomes are improving. Advanced Practitioners should also observe newer qualified social worker visits.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The systems and processes implemented will continue to be monitored by scrutiny.</i> 	<p>The Advance Social Work Practitioners and managers observe social workers in action and reflect with the workers on their practice.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Childrens Social Care Service Delivery Managers (Angela Yapp, Maria White and Diane Partridge)</p>
<p>3. The Role and Independence of the Independent Reviewing Officers</p> <p>a) That the current review of the IRO service should consider the management arrangements and the option of moving the service into the Scrutiny Team, consistent with scrutiny's role in providing objective review and challenge.</p> <p>b) That the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report is presented at a joint meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and the LSCB as a matter of routine, with an interim 6 monthly report provided to the Scrutiny Committee. This should include information about the outcomes of quality assurance audits in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted. A better option to achieve independence of the IRO service whilst providing support from officers with a focus on children is to move reporting arrangements into Education and Skills.</p> <p>Accepted</p>	<p>Implementation 02.07.13</p> <p>From 2013-14</p>	<p>Assistant Directors Karen Perry and Jim Collins</p> <p>As above</p>
<p>4. West Midlands Framework Contracts for Residential and Agency Foster Care and the Jigsaw contract</p> <p>a) That the rationale for the number of providers on the framework contracts is reviewed to establish whether more favourable contracts could be negotiated by working with a smaller number of quality providers when the contracts are re-tendered.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted Experience prior to the current regional arrangements being put in place (which have saved over £100k p.a.) suggest that prices would be higher if we procured alone. We will review all options for procurement at the end of the current contract period. There is also</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Viv Mckay Service Delivery Manager Commissioning (Children and Families and Transport)</p>

<p>b) Within 6 months of the Jigsaw contract being awarded and started, officer's report to the CYP Scrutiny Committee on how it is delivering better outcomes for children in care and offering better value for money.</p> <p>c) That there is an officer at the Council responsible for proactively monitoring Ofsted and other agency inspection reports of providers used by the Council to help build intelligence which can inform future placement decisions.</p>	<p>a regional commissioning project to commence shortly:</p> <p>Building on learning from existing projects the region seeks to carry out an investigation into the fair pricing of the core components and additional elements that make up children's residential and fostering care placements</p> <p>Accepted We are currently tendering for care provision on the JIGSAW sight. Early indications indicated that a significant ongoing saving will be made without compromising quality of provision.</p> <p>Accepted The Commissioning Team continually monitor quality of residential care provision, including monitoring OFSTED reports. It is our intention to ensure that all residential placements are assessed by OFSTED as good or better</p>	<p>April 13</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>As above</p>
<p>5. Financial Management and Reporting (the Dashboard)</p> <p>a) That the cost of internal care reported on the Children in Care Performance Dashboard is a true cost i.e. it includes the cost of the carers' fees and allowances, the Family Placement social worker and other associated costs.</p> <p>b) That each element is shown separately so there is transparency in how the figures are calculated and confidence that they are accurate.</p>	<p>Accepted The methodology for calculation is being reviewed by IEWM "critical friend" who are reviewing the family placement service.</p> <p>Partially Accepted This level of detail to be provided to Scrutiny once to confirm the methodology and then applied as a single figure</p>	<p>June 2013</p> <p>June 2013</p>	<p>Service Delivery Manager Children in Care and Family Placement (Angela Yapp)</p> <p>As above</p>

<p>6. Care of children placed by other authorities in Telford and Wrekin</p> <p>a) That the Council works with the Police to accurately identify the location of all the external children's homes in Telford & Wrekin.</p> <p>b) The Council organises a provider conference - similar to the one held by Shropshire Council - within the next 12 months. This would encourage co-operation between police and providers, and the Council should give all providers information about support services they could access to help the children in their care.</p>	<p>Accepted Information is being released direct to police from Ofsted and the local authority works closely with the police where any issues are best tackled jointly</p> <p>Accepted</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>September 2013</p>	<p>as appropriate</p> <p>Viv Mckay Service Delivery Manager Commissioning (Children and Families and Transport)</p>
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Update on Action plan- Cabinet Response to Scrutiny Report

Scrutiny Committee: Children & Young People Date of meeting 15/08/13 Report: Children in Care Placement Strategy		Cabinet Member: Cllr. Paul Watling Response prepared by (Karen Perry AD Safeguarding Children):	
Scrutiny Recommendation	Response and summary of action being taken to implement, or reason for rejection	Date by which action will be taken	Person responsible for action (name and title)
1. Members' responsibility as Corporate Parents That the Council holds regular briefings (annual or biannual) for all elected members on their responsibilities as Corporate Parents and that Councillors' attendance or non-attendance at these briefings is published on the Council's website on an annual basis.	Accepted. In March the Cross Party Corporate Parenting Group agreed an approach to corporate parenting training for members which recognises the need for training/briefing according to roles. It is hoped that all members will access the basic awareness training which will, in due course, be delivered via e-learning. The first basic awareness briefing was held on March 25 th 2013.	March 2013 and ongoing	Karen Perry AD Children's Safeguarding
2. Quality Assurance of Systems and Processes a) That the system for recording and monitoring visits and outcomes is reviewed, and a new framework developed which is more robust but simpler to use and more effective for monitoring the progress of the children and young people. b) The Council should review its current systems	Accepted New template for recording visits has been piloted, staff more consistently aware of requirements for recording – improvement will be monitored via case file audits Red Amber Green (RAG) system for rating care plans by Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) has been reviewed.	June 2013 June 2013	Karen Perry AD Children's Safeguarding Jo Britton Service Delivery Manager Safeguarding Advisory Service

<p><i>being acted on and outcomes are improving. Advanced Practitioners should also observe newer qualified social worker visits.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The systems and processes implemented will continue to be monitored by scrutiny.</i> 	<p>The Advanced Social Work Practitioners and managers observe social workers in action and reflect with the workers on their practice.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Childrens Social Care Service Delivery Managers (Angela Yapp, Maria White and Diane Partridge)</p>
<p>3. The Role and Independence of the Independent Reviewing Officers</p> <p>a) That the current review of the IRO service should consider the management arrangements and the option of moving the service into the Scrutiny Team, consistent with scrutiny's role in providing objective review and challenge.</p> <p>b) That the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report is presented at a joint meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and the LSCB as a matter of routine, with an interim 6 monthly report provided to the Scrutiny Committee. This should include information about the outcomes of quality assurance audits in relation to the organisation, conduct and recording of reviews.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted. A better option to achieve independence of the IRO service whilst providing support from officers with a focus on children is by moving reporting arrangements into Education and Skills (Achieved)</p> <p>Accepted</p>	<p>Implementation 02/07/13</p> <p>From 2013-14</p>	<p>Assistant Directors Karen Perry and Jim Collins</p> <p>As above</p>
<p>4. West Midlands Framework Contracts for Residential and Agency Foster Care and the Jigsaw contract</p> <p>a) That the rationale for the number of providers on the framework contracts is reviewed to establish whether more favourable contracts could be negotiated by working with a smaller number of quality providers when the contracts are re-tendered.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted Experience prior to the current regional arrangements being put in place (which have saved over £100k p.a.) suggest that prices would be higher if we procured alone. We will review all options for procurement at the end of the current contract period. There is also a regional commissioning project to commence shortly:</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Viv Mckay Service Delivery Manager Commissioning (Children and Families and Transport)</p>

<p>b) Within 6 months of the Jigsaw contract being awarded and started, officer's report to the CYP Scrutiny Committee on how it is delivering better outcomes for children in care and offering better value for money.</p> <p>c) That there is an officer at the Council responsible for proactively monitoring Ofsted and other agency inspection reports of providers used by the Council to help build intelligence which can inform future placement decisions.</p>	<p>Building on learning from existing projects the region seeks to carry out an investigation into the fair pricing of the core components and additional elements that make up children's residential and fostering care placements</p> <p>Accepted The contract was successfully re-tendered with a more flexible and outcome focussed service specification and the contract awarded to Bettercare Keys. The contractor has accepted our block and spot contract terms within the tendered cost envelope and considerable financial savings will be made as a result. The new contract commences on 1st August 2013</p> <p>Accepted The Commissioning Team continually monitor quality of residential care provision, including monitoring OFSTED reports. It is our intention to ensure that all residential placements are assessed by OFSTED as good or better</p>	<p>April 14</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>As above</p>
<p>5. Financial Management and Reporting (the Dashboard)</p> <p>a) That the cost of internal care reported on the Children in Care Performance Dashboard is a true cost i.e. it includes the cost of the carers' fees and allowances, the Family Placement social worker and other associated costs.</p> <p>b) That each element is shown separately so there</p>	<p>Accepted The methodology for calculation is being reviewed by IEWM "critical friend" who are reviewing the family placement service.</p> <p>Partially Accepted This level of detail to be provided to Scrutiny</p>	<p>June 2013</p> <p>June 2013</p>	<p>Service Delivery Manager Children in Care and Family Placement (Angela Yapp)</p> <p>As above</p>

<p>is transparency in how the figures are calculated and confidence that they are accurate.</p>	<p>once to confirm the methodology and then applied as a single figure</p>		
<p>6. Care of children placed by other authorities in Telford and Wrekin</p> <p>a) That the Council works with the Police to accurately identify the location of all the external children's homes in Telford & Wrekin.</p> <p>b) The Council organises a provider conference - similar to the one held by Shropshire Council - within the next 12 months. This would encourage co-operation between police and providers, and the Council should give all providers information about support services they could access to help the children in their care.</p>	<p>Accepted Information is being released direct to police from Ofsted and the local authority works closely with the police where any issues are best tackled jointly</p> <p>Accepted Planning is underway stages of this and date has been put back from Sept to October to ensure it is achieved in the most effective way</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>October 2013</p>	<p>as appropriate</p> <p>Viv Mckay Service Delivery Manager Commissioning (Children and Families and Transport)</p>

Briefing for CYP Scrutiny Committee 15.08.13: Safeguarding Peer Review

1. Background

Peer Reviews are offered by the Local Government Association (LGA) to local authorities to support them in improving services. On request, Teams of Peer Reviewers, which include Directors, members and specialist practitioners from other local authorities, examine evidence from a wide range of sources in order to challenge the council and help them to recognise their strengths and identify areas for improvement. The key purpose of Peer Reviews is to act as a 'critical friend' and stimulate local discussion about how we and our partners can improve safeguarding outcomes for our children and young people.

A Peer Review was undertaken by request in Children and Family services, culminating in a fieldwork week beginning 3rd June.

2. Review process

The Review Team considered evidence from the following sources:

- Our self-assessment
- Performance data
- Documents
- Online questionnaire of frontline staff in safeguarding services and partner agencies
- A multi-agency case mapping exercise
- Interviews and focus groups held during the fieldwork week, including young people in care, elected members and staff and managers from Telford and Wrekin, partner agencies and commissioned services.
- An audit validation exercise (optional but requested)
- A case records review (again optional but requested)

3. Review findings

The Peer Review Team presented a summary of their findings at a multi-agency feedback event held at the end of the fieldwork week, and the detailed findings were confirmed in a letter which will be tabled separately, following a response from members of the Telford and Wrekin Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The feedback generally reflected our self assessment, and identified the delays regarding improvements in the CAMHS service and the need to increase the pace of change which are discussed in the update report on the Service Improvement Plan.

A summary of strengths and areas for consideration identified by the Peer Review Team follows:

Summary Strengths:

- Very committed and effective social workers and staff across the partnership
- Increasing recognition for need for data analysis to inform practice and maximise positive outcomes for children and young people
- Lots of support, collaboration and commitment across the partnership
- Effective Recruitment strategy achieving reduction in agency staff and stability of workforce
- The Council's Medium Term Plan reflects its commitment and willingness to fund safeguarding
- Aspirational leadership across the partnership
- DCS and Lead Member held in high regard across the Council and the partnership as a whole

Summary Areas for Consideration:

- Commissioning is underdeveloped across the partnership
- Integrated practice is still emerging
- Ensure reflective practice is captured in case recording
- Further develop the effectiveness and awareness of the “early help” offer across the Council, partners, children and families
- Lack of analysis and planning can sometimes mean going directly from information to action
- Ensure that all partners give constructive and effective challenge leading to timely action when necessary
- Greater focus and increased pace of effective change
- More clearly map the relationship between aspiration and frontline practice and help make it come alive for staff

4. Next steps

There is no compulsion to publish Peer Review findings, it is left to the discretion of the Director of Children and Family Services, but in line with our Co-operative values the Peer Review Letter will be published to staff and partners shortly after 8th August, as agreed with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

As discussed in the separately tabled progress report on the Service Improvement Plan, the areas for consideration identified in the Peer Review will be included in the refreshed Service Improvement action plan.

Tilly Heigh

Service Delivery Manager for Service Improvement

30th July 2013

Laura Johnston
Director of Children's Services
Telford and Wrekin Council
Addenbrooke House
Ironmasters Way
Telford
TF3 4NT

25 July 2013

Dear Laura

RE: CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING PEER REVIEW

Thank you for taking part in the Children's Safeguarding Peer Review. The team received a really good welcome and excellent co-operation and support throughout the process. It was evident to us all that all those we met were interested in learning and continued development.

We agreed to send you a letter confirming our findings. As you know the safeguarding review focused on 5 key themes:

- Effective practice, service delivery and the voice of the child
- Outcomes, impact and performance management
- Working together (including Health and Wellbeing Board)
- Capacity and managing resources
- Vision, strategy and leadership

In addition to and within these overall areas, you asked the team to explore the following issues:

- How well are the racial, cultural and linguistic identity and needs of children and young people from minority ethnic communities and their families identified, and how well are they reflected in decision making and care planning?
- How well are early help arrangements improving outcomes for children and young people, diverting them from care while ensuring they are kept safe?
- Can we be confident that the planned reduction in numbers of children on a child protection plan has been achieved while ensuring children are safe?
- How well are early support processes, including Family Connect and the triage system, ensuring children and young people receive the right help at the right time whilst ensuring a timely response regarding those in need of protection?
- How effective are our social work processes around recruitment, induction, supervision and skills development?

- How effective are the new NHS arrangements in terms of safeguarding?

The team's summary findings on these additional areas are provided at Appendix A.

When preparing for the on-site element of the review, the team identified two further areas it wished to explore:

- Improving the quality of provision is essential if Telford and Wrekin Council and its partners are to ensure safeguarding. How secure are the recent improvements?
- Are there effective procedures, systems and behaviours in place to hear the voice of the child and parents, pool information and see the bigger picture in safeguarding issues?

This letter sets out our findings on these areas including the areas of strength identified and the areas which you should consider further.

It is important to stress again that this was not an inspection. A team of peers used its experience to reflect on the evidence you presented on safeguarding vulnerable children and young people. All the documentary evidence provided to us was used in our focus on assisting you in your on-going improvement.

You took up the optional elements of an audit validation exercise and a case records review. The team's reports in respect of these are attached in appendices B and C to this letter. The team's observations about practice concerns and management oversight are set out in the main body of this letter.

Executive Summary

The peer review team were impressed with the strong passionate and clear commitment demonstrated by senior council officers, Members, partners and staff to delivering positive outcomes for children. There is little doubt that the DCS and Lead Member have high aspirations for service delivery but to achieve these it is important to clearly articulate what the vision looks like and that the pace of systematic improvement is maintained and increased where possible. There are opportunities to strengthen the links between plans priorities and performance reports with greater focus on outcomes and deliverables. This would enable you to tell your improvement story with confidence.

Together you are taking action to address areas for improvement identified by Ofsted in your Safeguarding and Looked after Children inspection in 2012. Performance against national indicators is mainly in line or above the England average. CAF remains work in progress and there still is a need for an agreed and widely understood description of early help and how partner agencies should contribute. Further work is needed by partner agencies in understanding their role in providing support and alleviating pressure on social care.

The development of your innovative family connect (a collaborative integrated front door service) has been positively received and is well-regarded but attention needs to be directed toward developing a shared understanding and clarity of the processes for distribution of work following family connect which allows for appropriate and timely access to services.

Staff in the Children & Family Locality Service (0 to 19) have seen an increase in demand for their service since the implementation of redesigned children services in 2012. This has given rise to some capacity issues and training needs for staff in this area

The flow of work, prioritisation and risk throughout the redesigned services should be fully evaluated and assessed to understand capacity, resource issues and to inform your developing commissioning activity. The lack of analysis and planning can sometimes mean going directly from information to action. This can be seen where changes to services are implemented without full consideration of the impact those changes will make. This then requires further remedial actions creating additional work for staff and confusion for others: for example, Telford Leaving Care services. The peer review team identified some evidence that data is beginning to be used to drive better outcomes for children and young people but there is not as yet a systematic approach to analysis to inform practise.

The need to develop a performance culture is an increasing focus at senior level across the partnership and there is a need to develop a multi agency performance framework which will allow challenge and inform the partnership in terms of impact and opportunities for future service design. It is important that all staff understand success factors and that there is clarity about thresholds and continuum of need.

Relationships are strong and collaborative across the partnership at both the strategic and operational levels. These partnerships are capable of delivering effective responses to difficult situations e.g. Operation Chalice, yet there are weaknesses in some aspects of service delivery for children and young people: for example CAMHS, where although there has been consistent challenge at a strategic level this has not resulted in a timely improvement in the service. Despite the many changes within the Health family in Telford and Wrekin there was evidence of clear processes and assurance pathways for safeguarding and an acknowledgment that improvements are needed with adults mental health and G.P.s

There is a need to develop a strong culture of effective challenge for partners to hold each other to account for agreed actions. The changes to the governance arrangements across the partnership provide the opportunity for all partners to give constructive and effective challenge leading to timely action in future. This is particularly so in the proposed redesign of the LSCB governance arrangements under the leadership of the new chair.

There is a strong commitment from the political leadership in keeping children safe in part demonstrated by the financial support given to the service to deal with increased referrals and LAC numbers. Effective formal mechanisms are in place for engaging elected members by the new Cross-Party Corporate Parenting Group, which is led by

the Lead Member for Children and includes representatives of the Scrutiny Committee in the membership.

Commissioning across the council and partnership is in early stages of development and more work is to be completed to bring coherence to this. Public Health's contribution to this agenda has yet to be maximised.

The peer review team found evidence in cases indicating that children are listened to and there are established networks of engagement with children and young people where they are encouraged and supported to contribute their views. The council may wish to consider developing a systematic way of collating and capturing impact; to clearly demonstrate that what is said is heard

Improvements in case file audits developed and piloted this year are still in embryonic stage and will require continued work to embed within and across the service. You are beginning to develop ways of learning from the audits and from serious case reviews so practise is consistently shared across the children's workforce.

As mentioned above, the peer review team raised a further two questions for consideration, although much of our findings address these two questions we would make the following points:

We asked " Improving the quality of provision is essential if Telford and Wrekin Council and partners is to ensure safeguarding .How secure are recent improvements?"

Considerable effort has gone into service redesign since the inspection in 2012, but the changes are only just beginning to demonstrate impact and there is still some bedding down of processes to take place. Overall the picture is mixed. There is a need to tackle unallocated cases at lower levels of need, make best use of early help and reduce LAC numbers. Processes and systems to facilitate consistency of practise within social care are still embryonic and require further testing and application both in audit and reflective practise. The recently appointed improvement officer and the principal social worker are resources which should be maximised to bring pace and application to these areas. Across the partnership there is a lack of rigour in performance monitoring. This is apparent within LSCB although there is a recognition of and intention to deal with the issues.

We also asked "Are there effective systems and behaviours in place to hear the voice of the child and parents, pool information and see the bigger picture in safeguarding issues?"

The peer review team saw some evidence that the procedures, systems and behaviours are in place within Social Care and across the partnership to hear the voice of the child and parents. Again, however, there is a recognition that there remains more to do to ensure a consistency of application. The partners have demonstrated ability to respond to difficult challenges and they should use and apply this learning to help achieve consistency.

The main strengths and areas for further consideration presented to you were as follows:

Summary Strengths

- Very committed and effective social workers and staff across the partnership
- Increasing recognition for need for data analysis to inform practice and maximise positive outcomes for children and young people
- Lots of support, collaboration and commitment across the partnership
- Effective Recruitment strategy achieving reduction in agency staff and stability of workforce
- The Council's Medium Term Plan reflects its commitment and willingness to fund safeguarding
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Summary Areas for Consideration

- Commissioning is underdeveloped across the partnership
- Integrated practice is still emerging
- Ensure reflective practice is captured in case recording
- Further develop the effectiveness and awareness of the “early help” offer across the Council, partners, children and families
- Lack of analysis and planning can sometimes mean going directly from information to action
- Ensure that all partners give constructive and effective challenge leading to timely action when necessary
- Greater focus and increased pace of effective change
- More clearly map the relationship between aspiration and frontline practice and help make it come alive for staff

Detailed Findings

The table below highlights the positive aspects noted by the peer review team and areas for consideration by Telford and Wrekin Council and its partners:

<p>Effective practice, service delivery and the voice of the child</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Connect is an innovative approach and is generally viewed positively across the partnership. • Partners reported good responses including access to the Duty Social Worker. • Parents are reported as not regarding the Family Connect service as being simply social care and this is felt to be strong and helpful message. • There are some very able and committed
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	<p>practitioners who clearly have children's interests at the forefront of their practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recent restructuring of the CiC team into groups and "joint ownership" of cases has been positively received by frontline staff, as has the introduction of weekly group meeting. • Front line staff have access to services such as Family Group conferences which are felt to be effective when working with families, when utilised • Case records evidence some social workers knowing the child as an individual and ensuring their views are represented in plans. • Senior Managers are actively involved in key decision-making points in the child's journey. i.e. the decision to accommodate, to issue proceedings or submitting the final care plan to court. • There is a commitment to reflective practice and continuous professional development. Front line understand the benefits of reflective supervision and seek out opportunities to engage in this • Newly qualified social workers are well supported, particularly in teams where there is an Advanced Practitioner, and have good training opportunities available to them. It would seem that this has contributed towards stability • There is a high level of business support in most social work teams • Emerging understanding of the need to collect data on diversity to inform planning of services. • All referrals to Family Centres are offered an initial interview to ensure any 'quick fix' issues can be addressed to avoid any lengthy wait for their services • Voice of the child heard through the formal processes of LAC reviews and taken to foster Panel. • There is evidence of the virtual elimination of the reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation to meet the accommodation needs of care leavers. • The planned rollout of training in Systemic Practice affords a significant development opportunity to staff, and demonstrates a large
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investment by the council.

- Training for health practitioners on the impact of factors such as alcohol / drugs on parenting has increased knowledge and understanding and confidence in referring to social care.
- Very positive relationships with the police, including community support, who are always available for discussion or joint visits.

Areas for further consideration:

- Practice and procedures need to facilitate social workers' direct work with children. Front line staff wish to increase the time available to work directly with children and some have the skills, resources and support to do so. However, some social workers felt that they were not able to prioritise direct work with children and families and regretted that this was so.
- Social workers felt Family Group Conferences were not routinely considered as part of the range of options available and that a more consistent use of them could be helpful in identifying family support/alternative carers sooner in the child's journey.
- The balance between ensuring that senior managers are aware of, scrutinise and offer challenge at key times and ensuring that the process for doing so does not become too bureaucratic or distracts from case work decisions being made at the appropriate level needs to be assured.
- Build on commitment to reflective practice and ensure it is evidenced in case and supervision records. Social work staff and managers who the peer review team met were clearly very engaged and committed and, in discussion demonstrated that reflective practice was used. However, this was not evidenced in the case records which also did not show how key casework decisions were made and the role of managers in making these decisions.
- Redesigned services will not of themselves

	<p>guarantee improved performance and better outcomes for children. The allocation process with 0-19 Services is unclear between teams creating duplication. There are a number of unallocated cases.. Whilst there is a strategy in place for dealing with unallocated cases, there is not an identified strategy to eliminating these cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation of impact of changes to services may help to get things right first time• The differing professional roles/levels of other agencies' staff within Family Connect could benefit from further consideration• There is not currently an intention to rotate social work staff working on the duty desk in Family Connect - and at least one is newly qualified. This presents a potential of de-skilling workers or of not having staff on duty with current operational experience.• Little evidence in the peer team's discussions with workers and on case records of consideration of cultural, spiritual and religious needs. Staff acknowledged that they were not confident in addressing children and families' racial and cultural needs and felt that this was an area in which they needed support and training.• Further develop the use of Advanced Practitioners to build on the support and supervision they give to newly qualified social workers.• Share good practice and resources for direct work with children between all social work teams and partner agencies.• Improve opportunities for training for experienced social work staff and make training available to all members of social work teams.• Engagement with young people leaving care to be developed to ensure their voice is heard and effective leaving care pathways are agreed. Care leavers expressed a range of concerns about the preparation for independence and the subsequent support they received. Of particular
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	<p>concern was whether the opportunity to “stay put” with foster carers exists. Consideration could be given to measuring the impact of the groups in the CiC team on the young care leavers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination throughout Telford & Wrekin offering clarity about services available to children and young people who are at risk of coming into care would be helpful to staff. • All partners need to focus on the lack of availability of CAMHS services • Ensure there is sufficient capacity in Child and Family Locality Services (CAFLS) so that cases stepping down from Children’s Social Care can be allocated within CAFLS in a more timely way, enabling the case to be closed to Children’s Social Care more quickly
<p>Outcomes, impact and performance management</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing recognition of the need for data analysis to inform practice and maximise positive outcomes for children and young people. The Child Protection Conference Chairs had considered and analysed the reasons for the reduction of numbers of children subject to child protection plans. They felt the main reason was improved practice - both from themselves in ensuring that only children who continued to meet the threshold of significant harm stayed subject to a plan and from social workers who were coming with a better prepared plan to present to conference. • Quality Assurance framework is in development and inclusive of staff in the design and dissemination. Managers and front line staff are engaging with the audit processes and are committed to improving practice. • Evidence of using management information to drive better outcomes: e.g. LAC health and dental assessments. Good work has been undertaken to improve the timeliness of LAC health and dental assessments • Performance in many areas is higher than

national indicators: e.g. stability of placements, percentage of child protection conferences reviewed in timescales, LAC attainment Key Stage 4.

- The appointment of a dedicated Children's Service Improvement Manager demonstrates a commitment to improving outcomes for children.
- Teenage pregnancies of CiC relatively low. Evidence of sourcing suitable placement to meet needs of the young person and child.
- Evidence of Scrutiny Committee impact: for example, LAC placement report, cost improvement plan.

Areas for further consideration:

- The flow of work prioritisation and risk throughout the redesigned services should be fully assessed and managed. There are unintended consequences of the service redesign on allocation across the system, some issues of processes leading prioritisation and evidence of risk avoidance in the management of demand.
- Develop a comprehensive approach to evaluating impact of service developments on outcomes. Consideration should be given to undertaking an exercise tracking cases from decision -making in Family Connect to outcome. This would help to more fully understand the journeys cases are taking and inform decision-making about the re-allocation of resources and the further redesign of services (e.g. the disbanding of the Child Protection Team)
- Accelerate development of multi-agency performance framework. The LSCB has plans to develop a multi-agency outcome-focussed performance framework. This work should be accelerated and embedded as soon as possible.
- Introduce systematic analysis of indicators related to ethnicity and religion, with particular focus on representation in the systems and outcomes. Although management information is available, it is not being made full use of. Information in relation to ethnicity and religion is one example of that. Information was available in

	<p>the data provided to the Review Team regarding the representation of minority ethnic children in the Looked After and child protection systems but it was evidenced in conversation that this was not being actively considered and used to inform actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The QA framework and recently developed case record audit needs time to embed and be evaluated before an accurate assessment of its impact can be made • The offer of 'early help' by the community social work team and Family Centres is being diluted by the emerging complex needs of families referred to them • Health assessments of variable quality for children placed out of Telford & Wrekin, particularly for those with complex health needs. • Consideration to be given to involving local health commissioners earlier in the process. • Recent discussions / agreements across senior partners concerning thresholds needs to be communicated to front line staff. • Family Connect to ensure all referrers receive written information of the outcome of their referral within agreed timescales.
<p>Working Together (including Health and Wellbeing Board)</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HWB and CCG governance have clear assurance pathways following Health Service redesign with Memorandum of Understanding with Shropshire CCG • New Chair of Telford and Wrekin SCB providing fresh perspective with significant opportunity to drive through change. • Partner support and involvement is evident within Telford and Wrekin SCB. There are examples of positive and effective working across partnership

at all levels. The Family Cohesion Service is a practical example of where a service can demonstrate effective partnership working.

- Partners report positive working relationships with police. There are opportunities at a strategic level to demonstrate engagement with the Police service for example through a contribution to the Children's Service Improvement Plan. Partners report very good engagement with the Police at operational level.
- Work in progress in developing multi-agency audits.

Areas for further consideration:

- There needs to be effective challenge to resolve identified key issues (such as CAMHS, equality and diversity). The Council and partners have responded well to difficult and significant issues, but this is not a systematic approach.
- The disconnection between strategic aspirations and front-line delivery should be addressed, making the vision a reality for staff.
- Improvement is needed in data analysis and collection to inform decision-making across the partnership.
- Further development of some adult services engaging with safeguarding – GPs and Adult Mental Health teams
- Further develop the awareness of the “early help” offer across the Council, partners, children and families. There is an ‘early help’ offer that is understood within the Family and Cohesion Service. However, it is not fully understood across the wider children and family services or by some key partners within the Voluntary and Community Sector or schools.
- Take advantage of the opportunity presented by revised governance structures to clarify expectations of individual partners and boards. This will enable difficult and challenging discussions and actions to be taken.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how to improve designated and named professionals' efficient and effective working with two safeguarding boards across the health economy • Work with relevant staff to ensure their work across two LA's is as efficient as possible. • Walk in GP surgeries use different IT systems and do not receive 'alerts' of children subject of CP plans. Use of locums in these surgeries is high. • Some regional commissioning such as Forensic Examination Centre has not fully involved all partners, so ensure designated professionals are involved in the review of the service.
<p>Capacity and managing resources</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council's long term financial strategy recognises need to meet challenge of future funding of children's services. • Safeguarding is a high priority for resources, with extra investment provided where necessary. • Well-managed process of identifying on-going efficiency savings via Cost Improvement Plan. • Ambitious Workforce Development Strategy beginning to show impact e.g. more stable workforce due to overall reduction in agency workers. • Training generally well regarded by partners, including schools, IROs. Partner representatives report favourably on the high standard and value for money of the training available to schools. Provision is described as being of a very high standard and available throughout the year. Timely general training on safeguarding is offered. The Local Authority Designate Officer (LADO) has strong links with schools. <p>Areas for further consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to maintain focus on reducing the number

	<p>of children coming into care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a more coherent approach to commissioning, particularly in early help, across the council and across the partnership to reduce duplication and increase understanding • Accelerate work to develop model of evaluating preventative interventions, based on impact and cost, to inform commissioning • Continued issue of serious under-capacity in CAMHS. The revised governance arrangements described above between the Children Young People and Families Board and its executive members the Local Strategic Partnership, LSCB and the Health and Wellbeing Board, afford an opportunity and a 'litmus test' to demonstrate that partners can resolve complex issues such as the long standing under-capacity relating to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
<p>Vision, Strategy & Leadership</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspirational vision for children in Telford and Wrekin with safeguarding being given high priority by all partners • Committed and visible political and managerial leadership focused on improving outcomes for children. There is a clear accountability framework within the Council – Leader, Lead Member, Managing Director and Director of Children and Family Services. The Scrutiny Committee is providing important challenge. • Collaborative relationships across the partnership with the willingness to do more. This provides a strong foundation for developing the work of the partnership • Strong understanding of corporate parenting and safeguarding is taken seriously across the partnership • Developing culture of positive childcare practice to facilitate consistency

Areas for further consideration:

- The vision for Telford and Wrekin’s children and young people would benefit from wider dissemination and debate. There was some evidence of a disconnection between the front-line staff and the aspirational approach of senior managers. Staff felt some consultation was tokenistic and also that on occasions changes were introduced without sufficient consideration of the impact.
- The new arrangements in the Children in Care service - with the reorganisation of two teams into three “groups” - have been cautiously welcomed by staff with whom the team spoke but it was felt that the changes had been introduced with insufficient preparation.
- Increase the pace and impetus in driving change with focus on key areas: some necessary changes are taking too long to implement.
- Build on the pockets of effective practice where the voice of children, young people and families impacts on priorities
- Bring focus on the “early help” offer, and especially the part to be played by other partners in the delivery of early help and in CAF.
- Add impetus to co-operative commissioning activity across the partnership to deliver “early help”. There are opportunities for further engagement with the Voluntary Sector to help it develop its infrastructure and contribute to co-operative commissioning activity.
- Public Health can assist in maximising outcomes for children and young people. We advise Telford and Wrekin ensures the potential Public Health presents in the Children’s agenda is fully realised.

Following the team's presentation on 7th June 2013 and the answering of immediate questions, you then ran a prioritisation workshop with a variety of stakeholders. You adopted a "light touch" approach on this, recognising that attendees were valuing the opportunity to discuss questions and the team's observations.

The workshop was participative, with four groups each exploring two of the summary areas for consideration. Following an interactive dialogue each group then fed their respective discussions and ideas back to the wider audience. This feedback will be developed and integrated into the action plan stemming from the review: a smaller group commenced work on this after the workshop.

We wish you well with taking these priorities forward. The Local Government Association is offering a follow up visit within the next 12 months after the peer review. This would give us both an opportunity to evaluate the process and assess impact. You and your colleagues will want to consider how you incorporate the team's findings into your improvement plans, including taking the opportunity for sector support through your regional arrangements or the LGA's Principal Adviser, Howard Davis who can be contacted by either email: howard.davis@local.gov.uk or by phone on 07920 061197.

Claire Burgess, Children's Improvement Adviser, has been sent a copy of this letter and will be in touch with you to discuss the options for support and how best to share notable practice identified. Claire can be contacted by either e-mail: Claire.burgess23@gmail.com or by phone on 0785 440 7330.

Once again, thank you for agreeing to receive a review and to everyone involved for their participation. In particular, please pass on our thanks to Tilly Heigh and Julie Gradwell who provided sterling support in both the preparation of the review and during the on-site review week.

Paul Curran

**Children's Improvement Adviser (Peer Review)
Local Government Association**

Appendix A: Key Areas of Focus

- **How well are the racial, cultural and linguistic identity and needs of children and young people from minority ethnic communities and their families identified, and how well are they reflected in decision making and care planning?**

Our view is that this is not sufficiently at the forefront of people's minds. There is a need to increase staff confidence in dealing with these children and their families. There is an absence of evidence that needs are reflected in decision making and care planning

The review team found little evidence of recording within data of information specifically relating to children from an ethnic minority group. Discussions and meetings within groups demonstrated little knowledge of the size or composition or trends of groups and whether they were under or over represented in data. A good example relates to the Looked After Children population.

As recording of racial, cultural and linguistic needs is not yet fully embedded or systematically undertaken, it is not possible for the review team to comment on the degree to which they are identified and reflected in decision making and care planning. However, we note that there has been a significant improvement in recording ethnicity and that the partnership is aware that further improvement is needed

- **How well are early help arrangements improving outcomes for children and young people, diverting them from care while ensuring they are kept safe?**

We suggest that you accelerate work to develop model of evaluating preventative interventions, based on impact and cost, to inform commissioning.

The peer review team heard that there was still "more to do" to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the newly realigned structure which offers early help and support. It was difficult to ascertain what early help offer was available from partner agencies except for their contribution to Family Connect. We suggest that you look at the impact organisational and process changes have had on demand for some services.

- **Can we be confident that the planned reduction in numbers of children on a child protection plan has been achieved while ensuring children are safe?**

From the case mapping, case records review, audit validation and discussions with social workers, there was no evidence to cause for concern regarding the safety of individual children. Our observations of the systems themselves also gave no cause for concern.

The peer review team heard that the reduction in the number of children on a child protection plans has been achieved by the co-ordination of a number of activities including better practice, introduction of reviews prior to the two-year timescale, data cleansing and changes to conferencing.

- **How well are early support processes, including Family Connect and the triage system, ensuring children and young people receive the right help at the right time whilst ensuring a timely response regarding those in need of protection?**

Family Connect as a single point of contact is reported to work well across most of partnership and experience of triage generally positive. The flow of work and management of demand requires further consideration.

Advice from Family Connect service is reported by school staff to be good. Staff based in the Family Connect service well briefed. There is evidence of it being used as first contact point to signpost into early help services with the nature of those services not yet fully understood by partners.

There is an 'early help' offer understood within the Family Cohesion Service. It is not fully understood across the wider children and family services or by some key partners within the within the Voluntary and Community Sector or schools.

Changes to service delivery within Children's Services have sometimes lead to unforeseen outcomes requiring further changes to services:

The flow and allocation of work would benefit from further analysis and evaluation. Staff in the Children & Family Locality Service (0 to 19) have seen an increase in demand for their service since the implementation of redesigned children services in 2012. This has given rise to some capacity issues and training needs for staff in this area

- **How effective are our social work processes around recruitment, induction, supervision and skills development?**

We commend you on your concerted efforts which has reduced reliance on agency staff and which is providing a stable workforce. The Step Up programme and use of SWIF grant has added to the success of this. Social workers speak positively about supervision and the opportunities for skill development should be enhanced across the workforce with the planned introduction of Systemic Practice.

How effective are the new NHS arrangements in terms of safeguarding?

Arrangements are in place for CCG/health governance reporting: however the current interim arrangements within some areas of the Community Trust provider service are impacting on the Community Trust's ability to deliver effective

services such as CAMHS, SARCS and provide appropriate input into Family Connect.

There is appropriate representation at LSCB of Health agencies. The Health system in Telford and Wrekin has experienced difficulty throughout the recent reorganisation leaving some aspects of service delivery vulnerable with reduced staffing and loss of expertise.

The Public Health service has transferred into the council but the opportunities this brings for integration have yet to be maximised.

Appendix B: Audit Validation Report

Introduction

The audit validation exercise is an optional element of the peer review and aims to examine how the council uses case audit to assess and improve the quality of practice.

Three key issues are explored as part of the exercise:

- a) How effective is the local audit process in assessing the quality of practice?
- b) How well are the audit reports used by managers?
- c) What action is taken in response to the audit reports?

The findings in this report are based on gathering evidence through:

- Meeting with the Service Improvement Manager
- Meeting with the Service Delivery Manager Safeguarding Advisory Service
- Review of 5 case files and their audits
- Follow up conversations with a Team Manager.

1. Local Audit

Telford and Wrekin have a history of using audits to monitor and evaluate case work within children's services, however, it was felt that there was no overarching strategy or consistency in the audit processes and in 2012 a Quality Assurance Framework was developed. The framework has been endorsed by the Children and Families Leadership Team and includes a matrix for Service Managers across children and family services to evidence regular quality assurance activity within their service area.

A quality assurance meeting, chaired by the SDM Safeguarding Advisory Service meets on a 6 weekly basis in order to share outcomes of QA activity and consider how this may impact upon learning and service improvement. This is a very recent development for Telford and Wrekin and the SDM SAS and SIM are open to the challenges of embedding a change in culture towards an audit process that is part of an evolving rolling program of activity and continuous learning.

A key element of the quality assurance framework is the Child Care Case Files Audit Tool (Annex A). This was piloted in April 2013. 28 auditors were identified to work in pairs, including Senior Managers, Service Delivery Managers and Team Managers. 14 cases were selected from the short list of cases that had been identified for the case mapping exercise. The feedback from the audit, including feedback on the process, was reported to the Children and Families Leadership Team on the 7th May 2013. Main themes were extracted with a recommendation that the May audits are completed using the same tool but limited to the sections that related to a specific theme (core assessments). The proposed plan is that whole file audits are undertaken every two months and that themed audits are undertaken on alternate months.

A good case audit template should include the essential elements outlined in the table below. The comments next to each element reflect the extent to which the Telford and Wrekin case audit framework examines these aspects of practice, and how accurate the completed template proved to be in the sample of 5 cases reviewed. In the audit sample offered by Telford and Wrekin, all were completed on paper from information recorded on the electronic Protocol case management

system. Auditors commented that some evidence such as, signatures on documents were difficult to ascertain on Protocol, some questions were unclear and that Protocol could be improved in some areas. Auditors also commented that it was useful to have an audit tool, which enabled the auditor to drill down into an activity.

Practice Area	Covered by Case Audit template	Comment
Basic Information	Yes	Audits were completed from the information on the referral form. Completion of this section was variable, as some referrals were taken prior to the audit timeframe (6 months) and were therefore not seen as applicable.
Effectiveness of current and previous interventions	Yes	Re-referral section (2) of audit captures relevant information. 1 auditor identified learning from first referral. The general comments section at the end of the audit provides a good opportunity for the auditor to reflect on effectiveness of interventions, which aren't captured in the tick, boxes in the main audit. The tool would not identify the contribution of the competence of the worker and the actual intervention itself and how it helped.
Assessment of need and analyses – have risk and protective factors been considered?	Yes	The case audit template checks if assessments have been completed. Recording was variable on the electronic case record system which was commented on by auditors. There was evidence of risk and protective factors being considered and auditors noted these appropriately.
Service response	Partial	The question is asked whether there is clear analysis and recommendations however, not asked if the recommendations are acted upon. Question re chronologies being in place is asked but whether response has been efficient and timely is not

		asked although commented upon in general feedback.
Effective planning and review.	Yes	All the sections in the audit relating to planning and review seek evidence around child and family involvement in the process and the impact of the plans. These sections of the audit were completed the most fully by the auditors and provided the most information, both qualitative and quantitative. The voice of the child is audited.
Building a trusted and effective relationship	Yes	There are questions about the child being seen alone and service user involvement throughout the sections on assessments and plans. Extended family members were included in the case recordings and in the cases audited, all but one demonstrated good working relationships with service users and these were correctly commented on by auditors.
A child centred approach including attention to equality and diversity.	Yes	The case audit gives opportunity to state whether the child is seen alone and this is commented upon as well as their views being heard in conferences. Through the audit it was evidenced that a child with a disability may have not had her safeguarding needs fully recognised. This was appropriately followed up. Religion is frequently not completed on the case files and this was commented on by the auditors.
Multi agency involvement	Partial	Questions are asked about who contributes to strategy meetings, case conferences etc. Some clear evidence from audits of multi agency involvement but difficult to find evidence of effectiveness.
Management	Partial	Whilst the question was asked

supervision and oversight of practice		about management 'sign off', it was difficult to find signatures on protocol and thus difficult to verify. Supervision records when found on protocol did not demonstrate reflective practice and were task orientated. Again this was picked up by auditors.
Quality of case recording	Yes	Clarity of information such as up to date entries, relationships, and key documents such as chronologies are in the audit. Carer assessments were requested.
Process monitoring	Partial	There is a section on case file transfers which was completed by one auditor appropriately.

The child care case file audit tool for Telford and Wrekin has been piloted for one month and generated a lot of information. The comments sections encouraged comments on the quality of the service with a movement away for a tick box exercise. The feedback and required actions from the first audit were sent through to relevant social workers and team managers and team managers are required to feedback on action taken within 4 weeks. In May the audit will focus on a specific service area and then the management leadership team intend to consider the way forward, including considering a scoring methodology to measure the impact of the audit process.

2. Reports received by management

Reports to management are clearly factored into the Quality Assurance framework and the team was assured that managers at all levels are engaging with the process. It is too soon to evidence a great deal from the recent audit but it is clear that value is put on the audit process and there is a vision that everyone from Directors through to managers and staff, should regularly review a sufficient number of randomly selected cases to maintain a perspective on how well children and young people are safeguarded.

A matrix of collated findings and main themes extracted from the auditors comments in the April audit about issues and good practice and a cross referenced with the quantitative information was presented to the C & F Leadership Team in May.

3. What action is taken in response to audit reports?

It is too soon to say how the audit reports will be used in the future but from the first audit it was evidenced that a manager was keen to ensure a social worker received positive feedback as well as discussing improvements that could be made in practice. Where the audit highlighted the need for more urgent action, this was actioned in a timely manner. The structure for the regular monitoring of casework audits with follow up checks that actions have been completed is in its infancy but there is certainly an

understanding that this is what will happen and an intention that the learning will reach front line managers and practitioners.

Mechanisms for receiving feedback from service users was evident on Protocol but tended not to be completed by practitioners and it is not known if they are aligned to case file audits.

Main messages

Key messages and themes for follow up:

- The new case file audit tool is of good quality and would enable an auditor to consider both quantitative and qualitative information as well as giving the opportunity to consider emerging themes across teams. It is however, very lengthy; 32 pages which 4 pairs of auditors took 3hrs to complete and 3 pairs took 1 – 1.5hrs to complete. Whilst it is understood the ‘themed’ audit will cover less ground further thought could be given to reducing the size of the document. The more quantitative information could perhaps be audited by business support staff and the qualitative by professional staff.
- It was not clear if all social work teams in both Safeguarding and Family and Cohesion Services were using the same audit tool, to ensure consistency across service delivery this should be developed.
- There has been one report for the leadership team and this also commented on the process of the audit. As a first report with an extremely quick turn around it highlighted the themes from the audits and comments on the process. Recommendations need to be SMART. Comments on the audit process from the auditors were presented to the team and were positive about the tool with minor recommendations for change. Comments made re Protocol’s CP template not allowing for analyses of risk and protective factors for child needs to be actioned as do other comments re Protocol.
- To consider a separate supervision audit to capture challenge, reflection and identify risk

Deborah Toni

Appendix C: CASE RECORDS REVIEW REPORT

Introduction

The purpose of the case record review is to afford a more in-depth look at the effectiveness of social work practice by the exploration of a number of case files, discussion with practitioners and managers and a review of some current referrals and assessments during the review week. This report reflects on the findings of the examination of electronic case records and discussions with some of the allocated social workers and their managers.

Methodology

Eight cases for review were selected by the Review Manager from a long list of thirty cases provided by the council. The Reviewer included a further two who were identified as being from minority ethnic communities, as one of the key lines of enquiry the council had identified was how well the racial, cultural and linguistic identity and needs of children were identified and reflected in decision making and care planning. During the on-site week a further six records of cases which had been referred and had an initial assessment during April were reviewed. These cases were chosen at random from a long list provided by the council and, again, due to the key line of enquiry, included two cases identifying an ethnic origin as other than white British.

The cases reviewed in depth included one child currently on a child protection plan, four children in care – two of whom had previously been on protection plan, and four children to whom services were being delivered under child in need plans. One of these had previously been subject to a protection plan as well as having been looked after for a period. One case had recently stepped down from a child in need plan and was being managed by a key (social) worker and a team around the child.

The teams responsible for the cases included the 16+ Team (Transitions Team), the Looked After Children teams, Child Protection team, Assessment and Care Management Team South, the Community Social Work team and the Disabled Children's team and so the cases examined provided a broad representation of practice across the whole of the children's social work service. During the on-site week the

reviewer met individually with several allocated workers/managers and was also able to meet with the remaining allocated workers as a group.

The six case records reviewed during the onsite week had all been processed through the Family Connect Service where the need for an initial assessment had been identified. One case involved a strategy discussion with the Police and a decision that a joint s47 enquiry was needed.

Key Findings

The initial review of case records evidenced that case recording was generally up to date and it was apparent that children were seen regularly by their social workers, and in some cases the case recording clearly identified that children were seen, if not alone, at least without their carer. From some of the recording it seemed that some workers had developed a strong relationship with, and an understanding of the child and their needs. In all of the cases there was evidence of multi-agency liaison and of work being undertaken in conjunction with other professionals.

There was little evidence of management oversight and involvement - in the main this was only apparent in supervision records. However supervision itself did not appear to be consistent, with the reviewer unable to find any record of supervision on nine (56%) of the cases. Those supervision records which were on file tended to be task orientated with no evidence of any reflective discussion having taken place. There was one exception to this where the (only) supervision record on file reflected the discussion that had taken place and the alternatives considered. However conversation with social workers and managers during the on-site week disputed this evidence, as workers were clear that they did receive regular supervision which included the opportunity to reflect but acknowledged that this was not apparent in the written records. The files also did not evidence how key decisions such as permission to accommodate or decision to issue legal proceedings were made. The Review Team were told about the various decision-making forums to which social workers had to present cases in order to progress actions but there was little evidence on the files of the information presented to these meetings, the deliberations or the rationale for the action agreed. There was also no evidence of any audit activity seen on any of the records.

Discussion with allocated workers and managers confirmed that, on the whole, staff had good knowledge of their cases and that they were able to discuss the children's needs and the plans to achieve meeting them with confidence and insight. The Reviewer was reassured about one case which had caused her some anxiety when she had read the case file as she had had some concern that risk was not being thoroughly identified and understood. The manager in this case was clearly aware that the case was a challenging one for the relatively inexperienced allocated worker and was ensuring that she had appropriate support as well as sufficient management oversight. The Reviewer was also concerned about another case where the children had been on child protection plans since March 2010. There was evidence of "drift" and lack of purposeful work having taken place. The discussion with the team manager and - relatively - newly allocated worker demonstrated that there was awareness that the case had not progressed in a timely way and that they had recognised that more robustness in the interventions with the family was needed.

The review of recent referrals and assessments demonstrated a degree of consistency in the application of thresholds for escalating to initial assessment. The cases reviewed also showed that the decision was made in a timely way although there was subsequent delay in the completion of the assessment in some cases. In general, evidence of multi-agency involvement was apparent via the Family Connect processes but not in the assessments. Of concern was that two of the six cases reviewed had only recently been closed – one less than a month previously - and the other in February, the child having been on a protection plan briefly from June to September 2103.

Management information provided to the Review Team identified that the re-referral rate is comparatively high and further analysis is needed to understand the reasons why and to ensure cases are being properly supported once statutory involvement ceases.

The recent referrals also highlighted some data inconsistencies that the reviewer had not noticed when looking at the cases which had been open longer. These inconsistencies included issues such as the box for "NFA" being checked as well as the statement that the case "meets the threshold for private fostering assessment" (the case had been transferred for the assessment to be done) and another assessment had the outcome ticked that the child "was not a child in need" but the decision was that further assessment was needed. Additionally there was evidence of some (generic)

documents being entered on one child in the family's record but not on their siblings'. The case records where there were child protection or child in care involvement - and therefore the recording of statutory visits - had the box checked whether the child was seen or not, and whether this was alone, the equivalent boxes on the initial assessment record was not checked and it was often not apparent from the narrative content of the assessment.

Telford and Wrekin have made obvious efforts to overcome some of the acknowledged problems inherent in ICS compatible systems. Where a child protection plan was written as a Word document - as well as on the system's form - it was easier to understand and responsibilities for the completion of tasks etc. more apparent. One core assessment seen was a "family" assessment with each child's individual needs separately identified but issues affecting the whole family were also clearly noted. However chronologies were not available on the majority of case (75%) and one that had been done was of questionable value as it was a "cut and paste" job with very little evidence of only including significant incidents. There was little evidence of the use of other tools such as genograms, strengths and difficulties questionnaires etc. Some cases (five) did not have a current plan and the child protection plans were not focused on risk and what needed to change to ensure the children were safe.

Two of the four cases involving children from a minority ethnic heritage demonstrated some superficial consideration of the children's cultural need having been taken in to account in the work with the child/family. However staff spoken to expressed lack of confidence in this area of work and were keen to develop more expertise. In general there was little evidence of account being taken religious or spiritual needs.

Areas for development:

It is recognised that the case record review was only able to sample a small number of cases and only a few social workers and managers were spoken to and so it would be inappropriate to make too many generalisations based on it. Nevertheless the following are issues that Telford and Wrekin may wish to give further consideration to:

- A robust procedure for ensuring that supervision records are placed on case records.

- Working with supervising staff to develop an approach to the recording of reflective conversations
- Developing a system for recording informal case discussions
- Agree a format for chronologies that enables them to be a meaningful tool which informs social work practice and are easy to keep up to date
- Understanding the reasons for the high rate of re-referral and satisfy themselves that cases are only closed once the child's situation is sufficiently changed or is being appropriately supported by another agency
- How notes of decisions are placed on case records including the rationale for the decisions made.
- Social workers' request for learning and development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and confidence in addressing issues of cultural diversity.

Jane Scannell

Operational Peer Reviewer

June 2013