

Our journey of continued improvement

# Children and Families Improvement Plan

## **Introduction**

**Our ambition is to support children and families to be together where it is appropriate and safe to do so, by recognising their strengths, utilising community and placed based approaches, with statutory resources only intervening where necessary and appropriate.**

Our aim is to embed a strengths based approach to our practice and work with children and their families and carers and in doing so building on the work that has taken place across teams and services and including the development of Court teams, further developing Family Group conferences and family meetings and a continued cycle of learning and improving alongside the refreshed Quality Assurance framework

### **Our Core Purposes:**

- To work with children and families to remain together where it is safe to do so
- To utilise our resources to achieve sustained improvements to the lives of children, young people and families.
- Work with children, young people and families that are at risk of their needs escalating to a level that requires statutory intervention.
- Involve and engage children, young people and families in aspects of the services that we develop and deliver.
- Share responsibility with partners to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.

### **Inspection outcomes and action planning**

The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) completed by Ofsted in Staffordshire February 2019 graded the quality of our Children's Services as 'Good' overall and recognized quality of services delivered to children and families across the authority. The inspection also identified a number of areas that require further improvement and made recommendations to reflect these findings.

This Improvement Plan addresses the findings and recommendations from the inspection and will form the basis of our business plan for 2019-2020.

### **Governance and accountability**

Families and Communities Senior Leadership Team will take responsibility for the scrutiny, delivery and oversight of the improvement plan.

### **Closing the loop on improving outcomes**

The improvement plan will be continually reviewed and will reflect findings from our quality assurance and feedback processes and including feedback from staff, children, young people and parents and carers and partner agencies. We will build on identified strengths whilst continuing to learn and improve

<b>To improve partner agency participation in strategy meetings on open cases across teams</b>						
<b>Action</b>	<b>Expected Impact/Outcome</b>	<b>Accountable lead</b>	<b>Delivery lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>RAG</b>
1, Relaunch practice guidance on strategy meetings across teams and services	Strategy meetings involve partner agencies so a range of information is shared and considered relating to children and young people to better inform decision making around risks	Vonni Gordon Deborah Ramsdale	Karen Johnson Nic Hull Caroline Moore Claire Owen Sarah Peace Team Managers	June 2019	Karen Johnson is leading on this and a detailed action plan around this area of work is in place and is being progressed	<b>A</b>

<b>To improve our responses and work with young people aged 16-17 year old presenting as homeless</b>						
<b>Action</b>	<b>Expected Impact/Outcome</b>	<b>Accountable lead</b>	<b>Delivery lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>RAG</b>
1, Review of all young people aged 16-17 currently in S.17 housing provision	Review takes place of all 16-17 year olds in S.17 housing provision in line with their needs	Vonni Gordon	Liz Kelay Mandy Thomas Team Mangers SSU James Brookfield	May 2019	Small cohort of young people who are subject to S.17 support around their living arrangements have been identified and a date set for the 5th April 2019 for standalone panel to review all of them	<b>A</b>
2, Update and relaunch homeless protocol in line with changing legislation and guidance	Homeless protocol is reviewed and relaunched taking account of any new legislation and statutory guidance	Vonni Gordon	Mandy Thomas	May 2019	Mandy Thomas is currently leading on this work and homeless policy being updated and a steering group being developed to progress this area of work  Mandy is also attending SSU all managers quarterly meeting April 2019 to update on work taking place including update to policy and steering group  Terms of Reference for Accommodation panel are being updated to reflect updates in legislation	<b>A</b>
3, Further embed the process of senior management	All young people presenting as homeless will be subject to senior management	Vonni Gordon	Team Managers SSU County Mangers SSU Mandy Thomas	April 2019	As of April 2019 all young people aged 16-17 years old will be subject to a critical friend discussion in line with their individual needs	<b>G</b>

oversight of young people aged 16-17 presenting as homeless	oversight via a 'critical friend' discussion and a follow up review process					
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<b>To undertake specific focused work around Care leavers including those who are NEET</b>						
<b>Action</b>	<b>Expected Impact/Outcome</b>	<b>Accountable lead</b>	<b>Delivery lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>RAG</b>
1, Develop a revised pathway plan with a clear focus on outcomes	Pathway plans are user friendly, accessible for care leavers and focus on key actions and outcomes	Deborah Ramsdale	Nic Hull Tony McGregor Through care Team Managers and Team Coordinators	June 2019	Development day with PA s planned early April 2019 We have considered templates and forms from other LAs Pathway plans template to be amended	<b>A</b>
2, Undertake a development session with all PAs across the teams focusing on quality pathway planning that are ambitious	The quality of pathway planning improves with a key focus on outcomes and consistency across teams	Deborah Ramsdale	Nic Hull Tony McGregor	April 2019	Planned April 2019 with a focus on pathway planning	<b>G</b>

3, Set up a working group with key players and partners with a key focus on young people who are NEET and work across agencies to reduce this with clear targets in place	The number of young people in education, employment and training increases across Staffordshire	Deborah Ramsdale	Nic Hull Tony McGregor Sarah Rivers Chris Bamsey Hazel Williamson YOS Education to Employment workers	May 2019	Working group to be developed and to include Talent Match	A
4, Explore digital opportunities to maintain regular contact with care leavers- including the development or purchasing of an app to promote engagement	Increase our methods of communication with Care leavers and reducing the overall number we are not in touch with aged 18-20 years of age	Deborah Ramsdale	Nic Hull Tony McGregor Team Mangers in Through care	June 2019	All PAs now have access to WhatsApp messenger to promote engagement with young people including those who we may not be in touch with	A

To undertake work to improve the engagement of a range of children and young people including those in the Children in Care Council						
Action	Expected Impact/Outcome	Accountable lead	Delivery lead	Timescale	Progress to date	RAG
1, Increase our methods of participation/furt	Increased participation in the Children in	Kate Sharratt	Lindsey Bissel Dave Anslow Comms team	June 2019	Children in care Council in place and other participation forums	A

her promotion and ensure we have a participation framework	Care Council and including children and young people with diverse needs					
2, Social workers and the IRO service promote Children in Care Council	Children in care Council is further promoted and participation increases  Completed consultation forms support wider learning around children's voices	Kate Sharratt	Lindsey Bissel Dave Anslow Comms team IRO Managers	June 2019	Quality Assurance Steering Group being developed to include feedback processes and key messages and learning from young people	A
3, Consider key learning from UASC group and how this can be shared to increase wider participation	Learning from the UASC participation group supports wider participation work and the voice of children and young people	Kate Sharratt	Lindsey Bissel Dave Anslow Lisa Nelson	June 2019	Quality Assurance Steering Group being developed to include feedback processes and key messages and learning from young people and a range of participation forums in place	A
4, Develop a leaflet for children at their	Children and young people are given information	Kate Sharratt	Lindsey Bissel Dave Anslow Comms team	June 2019	Children in care Council leaflet to be developed and shared with children and young people	R

first Looked After Review informing them of the CICC	on the Children in Care Council and how they can contribute and participate to this					
5, Ensure feedback from parents and young people in respect of child protection planning is in place linked to learning and improving	Feedback processes are developed and embedded and link to the cycle of learning and improvement	Kate Sharratt	Lindsey Bissel Dave Anslow IRO Business Managers	June 2019	Feedback processes in place- consider via the Quality Assurance Steering Group what information is captured and how this is being used linked to learning and improving	A



To ensure permanency is achieved for all children and young people at the earliest opportunity						
Action	Expected Impact/Outcome	Accountable lead	Delivery lead	Timescale	Progress to date	RAG
1, Review the children on the permanency tracker who have not been matched and agree actions to progress.	Permanency is achieved for children and young people	Deborah Ramsdale	Sarah Peace	May 2019	Permanency tracker already in place and robust process around following up those who need matching and linked to long term matching	A
2, Case planning for children and young people who become Looked After considers permanency	Case planning within SSU for all LAC includes: 1. Completion of Genograms and Eco- maps 2. Early Family Group conferences and Family meetings take place 3. Placement requests clearly identify immediate and long term needs 4. Timely parenting assessments completed	Vonni Gordon	SSU County Mangers Nominated SSU Team Managers	June 2019	Case planning for children and young people already in place. A number of key pieces of work need to be completed for Looked After children and young people in line with early permanency planning	A

To increase and improve the challenge around and checking of, the vulnerability of children and young people educated at home						
Action	Expected Impact/Outcome	Accountable lead	Delivery lead	Timescale	Progress to date	RAG
1, Consider EHE guidance currently in place and if this is being applied consistently across the County linked to resources and capacity within the service	<p>Increased challenge and checking around the vulnerability of children and young people educated at home</p> <p>The needs of vulnerable children and young people EHE are understood and responded to</p>	Tim Moss	Karl Hobson Clive Cartman- Frost	June 2019	EHE guidance in place needs to be reviewed in line with any recent guidance	<b>R</b>

**To undertake work around return home interviews for children and young people who go missing and ensure key learning is fully considered and shared from these**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Expected Impact/Outcome</b>	<b>Accountable lead</b>	<b>Delivery lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>RAG</b>
1, Ensure that information arising from Catch 22 missing return home interviews informs the assessment process for children and young people and the risks are then considered as part of care planning	Plans and planning for children and young people are informed by information gathered as part of return home interviews completed and risks are understood and responded to in line with the plan	Deborah Ramsdale Vonni Gordon	County Managers Team Managers	June 2019	Roll out of policy around missing across Families First and including a reminder to all staff that return interviews need to inform case planning for children and young people and use of missing intervention meetings	A
2, Ensure information received from Catch 22 on unsuccessful missing return home interviews informs social work assessment and care planning	That all unsuccessful return home interviews attempted by Catch 22 are reported and responded to and take place via the allocated worker	Deborah Ramsdale Vonni Gordon	County Managers Team Managers	June 2019		A

3, Ensure a social work response to completing a RHI should Catch 22 be unsuccessful in attempt.	That all unsuccessful return home interviews attempted by Catch 22 are responded to and take place via the allocated worker	Deborah Ramsdale Vonni Gordon	County Managers Team Managers	June 2019		A

To continue work throughout the County with partner agencies around vulnerable adolescents and contextual safeguarding						
Action	Expected Impact/Outcome	Accountable lead	Delivery lead	Timescale	Progress to date	RAG
1, Roll out of Contextual Safeguarding workshops across the services and teams	Front line practitioners and carers have an increased awareness and understanding of wider exploitation of children and young people	Vonni Gordon Deborah Ramsdale	Hazel Williamson Tony McGregor Hazel Shaw Amy Grice Stacey Black County Managers	December 2019	Around 400 staff trained up until the end of March 2019 and including foster carers and front-line practitioners and managers. Further training dates booked over the next 12 months  Implementation plan around contextual safeguarding devised March 2019	A
2, Roll out wider contextual safeguarding awareness	Develop a training package that can be rolled	Kate Sharratt	Hazel Williamson Tony McGregor Hazel Shaw	June 2019	Staffordshire Police are currently delivering County line training- need to fully consider wider partnerships and link to Safeguarding Board priority area around awareness	A

training across the partnerships	out across partner agencies that increases awareness of vulnerable adolescents in Staffordshire		Amy Grice Stacey Black		raising of vulnerable adolescents  Implementation plan around contextual safeguarding devised March 2019	
3, Review the range of forums and panels where young people are discussed and consider how these can be streamlined and developed around vulnerable adolescents across the County	The number of forums where children and young people are discussed is reduced with a specific focus on vulnerable adolescents and associated practice guidance for front line practitioners is developed and disseminated	Vonni Gordon Deborah Ramsdale	Hazel Williamson Tony McGregor Amy Grice Stacey Black	May 2019	Hazel Williamson is currently leading on this piece of work and action plan in place to progress this  Implementation plan around contextual safeguarding devised March 2019	<b>A</b>
6, Practice guidance developed and rolled out	Practice guidance is developed that supports practitioners and managers across services and teams	Vonni Gordon	Hazel Williamson	May/June 2019	This work is in progress and action plan in place for this specific piece of work  Implementation plan around contextual safeguarding devised March 2019	<b>A</b>

<p>7, Ensure Catch 22 are being tenacious in their attempts to make contact with C&amp;YP and complete RHI's, the intelligence obtained is shared appropriately to benefit care planning and wider strategic priority setting for vulnerable adolescences</p>	<p>Better use of intelligence provided by Catch 22 on children who refuse RHI and those who engage to inform future commissioning intentions</p>	<p>Strategic commissioning Lead</p>	<p>Liz Mellor Stoke City Staffordshire Commissioners office Vonni Gordon</p>	<p>June 2019</p>	<p>Work with the provider to update and improve recording and information sharing pathways into children social care</p> <p>Conduct audits on case files to ensure there is evidence of tenancy and robust attempts to engage young people who go missing</p>	<p><b>A</b></p>

To ensure consistency across teams in the quality of assessments and plans						
Action	Expected Impact/Outcome	Accountable lead	Delivery lead	Timescale	Progress to date	RAG
1, Continue to promote 'what good looks like' workshops to all front line managers across the system	All front line managers access the 'What does good like training' to promote consistency of practice across the County and improve case planning for children and young people	Deborah Ramsdale Vonni Gordon	Alex Cameron Tony McGregor	May 2019	90 front line managers have attend these workshops and further date booked in May 2019  Workshop with Foster Panel members held March 2019	A
2, Share examples of best practice across the system	Continue to deliver the plans and planning training with a key focus on outcomes for children and young people and sight best practice on outcome focus plans completed	Kate Sharratt	Tony McGregor	July 2019	Plans and planning training delivered to over 500 practitioners and managers- further dates booked for 2019	G
3, Undertake a themed audit focus on the quality of plans across teams and services throughout 2019	Audit activity specifically focusses on the quality of plans across services and teams for children and	Kate Sharratt	Alex Cameron County Managers Team Managers LST coordinators	July 2019	Timed audit plan to be put in place	A

and share key learning with front line managers	young people and key learning from the audit findings shared to inform front line practice and outcomes					
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## Embed the new Quality Assurance Framework

Action	Expected Impact/Outcome	Accountable lead	Delivery lead	Timescale	Progress to date	RAG
1, Embed the refreshed QA framework to include group supervision and practice observation	Quality Assurance framework is fully embedded across teams and services and includes practice observations and group supervision in teams and across services	Kate Sharratt	County Managers	May 2019	Quality Assurance Framework now in place and meetings held across teams and services with frontline managers to promote this  Quality Assurance steering group developed and Terms of Reference drafted	A
2, Develop the QA steering group with a key focus on learning and improving with key managers across the system	Quality Assurance Steering Group is developed with clear Terms of Reference and memberships that considers key learning across the system and seeks to inform front line practice	Kate Sharratt	Lynsey Bissell Nominated County Managers and Team Managers Martyn Baggaley Complaints Team IRO service reps	April 2019	Dates in place with key people across services and teams  Meetings will take place bi-monthly	A
3, Promote audit activity by way of these being	Audit activity across teams and services involve	Vonni Gordon Deborah Ramsdale	Lynsey Bissell Alex Cameron Tony	April 2019	The new Quality Assurance process in place includes audits being undertaken directly with front line practitioners	G

undertaken directly with the practitioner-reflecting on practice outcomes	front line practitioners promoting reflection and learning to improve discussions	Kate Sharratt	McGregor			
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**Review of performance data and information that is used across the system**

Action	Expected Impact/Outcome	Accountable lead	Delivery lead	Timescale	Progress to date	RAG
1, Review the range of performance data and how this is shared and when and in what format and how often	A review takes place around all the data being produced and what key data is required and how often that informs us how well the system is working and key areas of concern	Kate Sharratt	Lynsey Bissell BIDTs Team	June 2019	A range of performance data is currently in place and reported on weekly , monthly and quarterly	A
2, Ensure key performance data is reported on explicitly to understand how well the system is working to achieving outcomes and identify early signs of difficulties and challenges	The data explicitly outlines key areas not exhaustive but including: 1) Young people in bed and breakfast 2) Number of 16-17 year olds presenting as homeless 3) 18-20 year old Care leavers in prison 4) Looked After-No permanence	Kate Sharratt	Lynsey Bissell	June 2019	A range of performance data is in place currently and reported on	A

	<p>plan in place</p> <p>5) CP in place plan post 12 months</p> <p>6) Children and young people most vulnerable linked to factors including exploitation and missing and missing education</p>					
3, Engage the IRO service in producing reports either bi-monthly or quarterly that helps to understand how well the system is protecting and promoting outcomes for children and young people in the system	The IRO service produces reports on an agreed basis either bi-monthly or quarterly that allows a deeper and greater understanding around the multi-agency case planning for children and young people including feedback process	Kate Sharratt	IRO Business Managers	June 2019	Development day with the IRO service planned May 2019	R

Ensure Care Leavers have access to their health history						
Action	Expected Impact/Outcome	Accountable lead	Delivery lead	Timescale	Progress to date	RAG
1, Work closely with health colleagues and CCG around the roll out of health histories for Care Leavers before the young person turns 18	Young people who leave care have access to their health history regardless of their placement type or location of placement	Deborah Ramsdale	Nic Hull Tony McGregor Nominated CCG colleagues	June 2019	Template being developed by health colleagues Meeting with Social Care and health planned end of April 2019 to progress roll out and process around roll out	R

Increase the timeliness of Initial Health Assessments for Looked After children and young people						
Action	Expected Impact/Outcome	Accountable lead	Delivery lead	Timescale	Progress to date	RAG
1, Work closely with health colleagues and CCG around the timely completion of Initial Health Assessments for Looked After children and young people	Children and young people have a health assessment in a timely manner in line with national guidelines from the point they become Looked After	Vonni Gordon	Amy Grice	June 2019	Process around health assessments in place and work has taken place around the processes involved to avoid unnecessary delay	A



<b>Embed a practice model across teams and services</b>						
<b>Action</b>	<b>Expected Impact/Outcome</b>	<b>Accountable lead</b>	<b>Delivery lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>RAG</b>
Practice model is fully developed and shared across teams and services throughout the County	Practice model is in place that supports our overarching vision and work with children, young people and their families	Kate Sharratt	Tony McGregor	June 2019	A range of training is available for practitioners and managers across Families First- this needs to link to the proposed new practice model	<b>A</b>
Practice model is embedded across teams and services and staff have a clear understanding of the model and this informs their day to day practice	The practice model is rolled out across teams and services and staff have an increased understanding of the model to inform their day to day practice	Kate Sharratt	Tony McGregor	June 2019	Work is currently taking place around the scoping of the model and how this fits with a range of core training available and currently in place	<b>A</b>
Practice model is developed in line with the workforce strategy and training delivered across services and teams	The practice model is threaded throughout the workforce strategy and training delivered is underpinned by the practice model ethos	Kate Sharratt	Tony McGregor	June 2019	There are a number of core courses in place for social workers and including, Attachment training, child development, toxic trio, resistant families, risk assessments and permanency planning- these need to link with the practice model developed	<b>A</b>

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<b>Increase the number of permanent Team Managers and social works in posts</b>						
<b>Action</b>	<b>Expected Impact/Outcome</b>	<b>Accountable lead</b>	<b>Delivery lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>RAG</b>
Increase the number of permanent social workers and Team Managers in posts reducing reliance on agency workers and spend	Children and young people benefit from relationships with permanent social workers and the number of agency workers reduces over time	Kate Sharratt	Tony McGregor County Managers SSU and Looked After children	September 2019	Recruitment and retention steering group and action plan in place  8 Front line staff qualify August 2019  Adverts for 3 Team Managers live as of end of March 2019  26 applicants being shortlisted April 2019 linked to Compass job fair March 2019	<b>A</b>