

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 28 September 2020

Report Title: Progress update following the November 2019 Cheshire East Ofsted Standard Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe, Executive Director of People

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report updates the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress following the Ofsted Standard Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) undertaken in November 2019, with the report being published by Ofsted on the 9 January 2020.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
 - Scrutinise progress on the development plan, and the impact for children, against the Ofsted recommendations within the Ofsted published report.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The Council, working with partner organisations and agencies, has specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Cheshire East. It is important that Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is appraised of the strengths and challenges of the quality of practice in Children's Services and is assured that arrangements are in place to deliver the plan to ensure children are safe and have improved outcomes.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not applicable

5. Background

- 5.1. All Children's Services are subject to regular inspection by Ofsted. Cheshire East were inspected under the "new" ILACS framework in November 2019, this framework, once again "raised the bar" of what Ofsted expects to see as consistently good practice across all services. Cheshire East Children's Services were judged as "Requires Improvement to be Good" although it was recognised that significant progress had been made in a number of areas since the last inspection in 2015.
- 5.2. Following on from the Ofsted inspection, a development plan was implemented. A phased approach has been used with the plan being updated quarterly. This ensures that progress can be closely monitored and there is a clear focus on areas of improvement for each three-month period.
- 5.3. Covid-19 has had some impact on progress due to the urgent response required for emergency planning and completion of risk assessments for individual children, particularly during March and April 2020. However, this was also an opportunity for reflection and to reshape some of our initial development work, and to strengthen progress following the initial response to Covid-19. During phase two of the plan we have been able to access external support from the Local Government Agency (LGA) children's lead.

What has worked well?

- 5.4. There has been whole Council support to prioritise the required developments in Children's Social Care. Corporate Parenting Committee and Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee have held Children's Social Care to account. This will ensure that social work practice is consistently good and there is a positive impact on children's outcomes. The recommendations from the Ofsted ILACS report now form key priorities within our development plan. There has been an additional investment of £2.3 million to ensure Children's Social Care has the required resources to improve.
- 5.5. There has been strong leadership to drive developments in a timely way, this means that children and families will experience improvements in the consistency of social work practice more quickly.

- 5.6. A series of communication events, following publication of the report, meant that children, young people, foster carers, practitioners, managers and the wider partnership understood the strengths and areas of development for Children's Social Care following the inspection.
- 5.7. The Ofsted development plan was co-produced with children and young people, front line practitioners and managers. Engagement with members, Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Local Family Justice Board also informed the plan.
- 5.8. We have developed our vision "Together for Children and Young People" and will be formally launching this within the service, wider Council and with partners during Autumn 2020.
- 5.9. There has been increased management oversight and individual review of the following vulnerable cohorts of children: children suffering from chronic neglect, 16/17 year olds who are homeless, and children living in private fostering arrangements, to ensure that timely and robust planning is in place.
- 5.10. We are in the process of re-commissioning our 16+ supported accommodation offer for cared for children and care leavers. We have worked in partnership with a small number of care leavers to ensure that we will have a robust offer that meets their needs.
- 5.11. The governance structure within Children's Social Care has been reviewed and new arrangements established. This will mean that there are stronger measures in place to support and challenge practice and improvements in outcomes for children.
- 5.12. The independent fostering review has been completed and there are early signs that our communication and engagement with foster carers has led to an improvement in our relationships. This means that carers are starting to feel more valued and better supported to care for our children. We have made good progress in our work with foster carers and are implementing all of the recommendations from the independent fostering review. Foster carers are involved in the development work and there has been positive feedback regarding the actions we have taken. Recruitment has increased significantly with 7 carers approved since April 20 and 12 currently being assessed.
- 5.13. The Public Law Outline (PLO) process has been refreshed in partnership with legal services. An audit provided an early indication that this has led to a reduction in the risk of drift for children at risk of chronic neglect. Ensuring that basic social work practice is consistently good is a priority within the

plan. Significant work has taken place with team managers and front line practitioners so there is a common understanding of what a good assessment looks like across the service.

- 5.14. Following feedback from our frontline practitioners and managers, our Principal Social Worker has developed a comprehensive training package, initially focusing on assessments, this includes a training video and examples of good practice. We will use feedback from these sessions inform our development work around plans for children and young people, but are confident that this is the right approach for our teams.
- 5.15. We have launched our leadership program for team managers; this has a clear focus on ensuring all frontline managers understand what good practice looks like and are supported to be leaders in practice.
- 5.16. The service has responded with creativity and flexibility to ensure that vulnerable children have remained as safe as possible during the Covid-19 lockdown. There have been rapid advancements in the use of virtual visits and review meetings. This has led to every effort being made to minimise drift and delay for vulnerable children and their families in this unprecedented situation.

What do we need to improve?

- 5.17. Covid-19 and the required emergency planning response has provided some challenges to progressing as planned. Every effort is being made to minimise delay to the actions required to improve practice. We are experiencing increasing concerns regarding capacity and are planning for the increase in referrals that is likely to occur as children return to school in September 2020.
- 5.18. We have benefited from external support provided by our LGA advisor and an external quality assurance consultant. This has helped us to focus on improving the quality of our social work practice. We have clear priorities in place, with a focus on “doing the basics well” to support our ambition of excellence in social work practice. Our frontline practice continues to be variable and we expect to see evidence of improvements over the next three months.
- 5.19. The focus of the next three months will continue with “doing the basics well”. This includes development and delivery of training to all frontline practitioners on completing good quality assessments, plans and chronologies. Improving the quality of our PLO work will continue to be an area of significant attention. Early improvements in pre-proceedings have

been hindered by the impact of Covid-19, and feedback from the court has challenged us to increase the pace of our improvement work in this area.

What we will do?

- 5.20. In the next phase of the Ofsted development plan we will refine our “one plan” for the development of the service. This will ensure that there is a focused approach to our development work that is clearly linked to our priorities and we can measure impact of our work to drive improved outcomes for children and their families.
- 5.21. We will ensure that the improvements required continue to be a priority for the service, Council, and Safeguarding Partnership as we move to the recovery phase of the Covid-19 emergency planning, ensuring that they understand the impact of the Covid-19 situation on vulnerable children and their families, with clear plans to minimise risk, strengthen safety and reduce the impact of drift and delay.
- 5.22. We will continue to focus on doing the basics well, through a comprehensive training program for frontline practitioners and managers to ensure we are delivering consistently good social work practice. We are investing in three lead practitioners who will be supervised by the Principal Social Worker and will not casehold. Their role will be to strengthen social work practice and support practitioners to deliver good quality assessments and planning for children to improve their outcomes.
- 5.23. Progress against the plan will be evaluated in a number of ways and will ultimately be judged against the difference in outcomes and experiences for children, young people and families, as shown through our performance information, audits and service reports, feedback from families, and feedback from professionals. Activity against the action plan will be driven and tracked by the relevant sub groups, reporting to a central Board for scrutiny. The Corporate Parenting Committee will hold senior leaders responsible for the swift progression of the plan. There will be quarterly check and challenge sessions held with young people through “My Voice” Children in Care Council. Frontline practitioners and managers will also be involved in the evaluation of progress throughout the delivery of the plan.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to keep children within its area safe. Equally, there is a duty to promote a child being raised within the family where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

6.2. Finance Implications

- 6.2.1. The ambition to ensure that children's services deliver services which are good and outstanding requires an ongoing financial commitment from the Council. Nationally there are budget pressures around cared for children's placements, this has been worsened as a direct impact of Covid-19. This is due to the rising costs of children's homes and insufficient foster placements to meet the rising numbers of children in care.
- 6.2.2. In Cheshire East we are facing similar challenges, however some of the rising costs will be mitigated through the work planned to increase the number of Cheshire East foster carers, driving individual permanency plans for children, and mobilisation of our commissioned children's homes.

6.3. Policy Implications

- 6.3.1. Cheshire East is ambitious and committed to ensuring it is a great place to be young and every child has the best start in life. This is demonstrated through the Council's core priorities that people live well and for longer and have the life skills and education they need to thrive. These priorities are supported and driven through the Children and Young People's Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan.

6.4. Equality Implications

- 6.4.1. The proposals within this report are intended to improve equality for children and families.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

- 6.5.1. Ensuring the ongoing recruitment and retention of social workers and managers will continue to be a priority for the local authority and will require the support from HR colleagues to deliver the strategy in relation to this. The support package for our newly qualified social workers has been reviewed to ensure we are strongly placed to attract the very best student social workers.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. There are reputational and financial risks of not providing good children's services. These risks are also included as risks for the Safeguarding Children's Partnership. The Council, as the lead agency, must continue to ensure that these risks are minimised by ensuring effective plans are in place to improve where areas for development are identified.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. Our plans intend to improve the experiences and outcomes for children and young people across the borough, in particular those who are most vulnerable.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1 There is a commitment to ensure that Cheshire East cared for children live as close to their home community as possible, wherever this is safe to do so. This will ensure that children can continue to feel connected to their families and local community. It also reduces the geographical footprint of children, families and staff as travel is reduced.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. The recommendations will affect children and young people across all areas of Cheshire East, mostly our most vulnerable.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. We will continue to consult and engage with all our key stakeholders as we develop and implement our plans for improvement.

9. Access to Information

9.1. The published Ofsted inspection report can be found on the following Ofsted page:

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80447>

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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Children's Social Care Development Plan

Phase 2: 18th May - 7th August 2020



What are we here to do?

We believe that children are best supported to live in their families and communities. We will work in partnership with children, families and the wider network, using our strength based, Signs of Safety practice model, to help us build safety and stability for children.

We will be the best corporate parents for our cared for children and care leavers. This means that achieving permanency at the earliest opportunity is our priority. Our Cared for Children and Care Leavers will be living in their local communities in Cheshire East so that we can ensure the very best support.

We will deliver excellent social work practice, through doing the basics well! On every child's file there will be a good quality assessment, plan, review, chronology and effective management oversight that drives improvements in the lives of our children.

What has worked well?

There has been whole Council support to prioritise the required developments in Children's Social Care. Corporate Parenting Committee and Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee have held Children's Social Care to account. This will ensure that social work practice is consistently good and there is a positive impact on children's outcomes. The recommendations from the Ofsted ILACS report now form key priorities within the development plan. There has been an additional investment of £2.3 million to ensure Children's Social Care has the required resources to improve.

There has been strong leadership to drive developments in a timely way, this means that children and families will experience improvements in the consistency of social work practice more quickly.

A series of communication events mean that children, young people, foster carers, practitioners, managers and the wider partnership understand the strengths and areas of development for Children's Social Care following the inspection.

The Ofsted development plan was co-produced with children and young people, front line practitioners and managers. Engagement with members, Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Local Family Justice Board informed the development plan.

There has been increased management oversight and individual review of the following vulnerable cohorts of children; children suffering from chronic neglect, 16/17 year olds who are homeless and children living in private fostering arrangements to ensure that timely and robust planning is in place. In phase 2 of the Ofsted Development Plan there will be an audit to scrutinise progress for this small but very vulnerable group of children.

The governance structure within Children's Social Care has been reviewed and new arrangements established. This will mean that there are stronger arrangements in place to support and challenge practice and improvements in outcomes for children.

The independent fostering review is completed and there are early signs that our communication and engagement with foster carers has led to an improvement in our relationships. This means that carers are starting to feel more valued and better supported to care for our children.

The PLO process has been refreshed in partnership with legal services and an audit has provided an early indication that this has led to a reduction in the risk of drift for children at risk of chronic neglect.

Ensuring that basic social work practice is consistently good is a priority within the plan. Significant work has taken place with team managers and frontline practitioners so there is a common understanding of what a good assessment looks like across the service.

The service has responded with creativity and flexibility to ensure that vulnerable children have remained as safe as possible during the COVID-19 lockdown. There have been rapid advancements in the use of virtual visits and review meetings. This has led to every effort being made to minimise drift and delay for vulnerable children and their families in this unprecedented situation.

What do we need to improve?

COVID-19 and the required emergency planning response has provided some challenges to progressing phase 1 as planned. Phase 2 of the plan will take place alongside our recovery planning. Every effort is being made to minimise delay to actions

required to improve practice.

The focus of the next three months will be 'getting back to basics', with the development and delivery of training to all frontline practitioners on completing good quality assessments, plans and chronologies. A recent external audit indicates that social work practice continues to be variable. This focus will ensure that all practitioners and managers throughout the service have a clear understanding of **how to do the basics well**.

Management oversight and supervision continues to be an area of attention in the next phase of the development plan. The leadership role of frontline managers will be strengthened to ensure they are supporting and challenging front line practitioners to deliver consistently good social work practice.

The planned improvements to our quality assurance and auditing arrangements have experienced some delay as a direct result of the COVID-19 emergency planning response. This included the postponement of Practice Week due to lockdown, and a temporary pause in auditing allowing managers to prioritise our emergency response. The next phase of the development plan will have quality assurance as a central pillar. This includes improvement in the reliability of auditing judgments and the use of audits to provide assurance regarding the impact of the first phase of the development plan.

We will build on the achievements of the work completed in phase 1 with foster carers to ensure they feel valued, supported and engaged.

What we will do?

In the second phase of the Ofsted development plan we will move to having one plan for the development of the service. This will ensure that there is a focused approach to our development work that is clearly linked to our priorities and we can measure impact of our work to drive improved outcomes for children and their families.

We will ensure that the improvements required continue to be a priority for the service, Council and Safeguarding Partnership as we move to the recovery phase of the COVID-19 emergency planning, ensuring that they understand the impact of COVID-19 situation on vulnerable children and their families, with clear plans to minimise risk, strengthen safety and reduce the impact of drift and delay.

We will focus on doing the basics well, through a comprehensive training program for frontline practitioners and managers to ensure we are delivering consistently good social work practice.

Progress against the plan will be evaluated in a number of ways and will ultimately be judged against the difference in outcomes and experiences for children, young people and families, as shown through our performance information, audits and service reports, feedback from families, and feedback from professionals. Activity against the action plan will be driven and tracked by the relevant sub groups, reporting to a central Board for scrutiny. The Corporate Parenting Committee will hold senior leaders responsible for the swift progression of the plan. There will be

quarterly check and challenge sessions held with young people through "My Voice" Children in Care Council. Frontline practitioners and managers will also be involved in the evaluation of progress throughout the delivery of the plan.

Our priorities

- **Do the basics well.** We will develop and deliver a training programme for all frontline practitioners. This will ensure that all social workers have the knowledge and skills they need to deliver consistently good social work practice. There will be a good one of each: assessment, plan, review and management oversight on every child's case file
- **Be leaders in practice** We will develop and deliver a Team Manager development program that ensures the role of the Team Manager is strengthened.
- **Strengthen our Quality Assurance and Auditing arrangements** The focus of our quality assurance (QA) will be on the experiences, progress and outcomes of children on their journey through our social work and safeguarding systems. QA will be characterised by high support and high challenge. Findings will be designed to promote reflective practice and shared learning.
- **Ensure children experiencing from chronic neglect have the right support and decisions to safeguard them.** We will work in partnership with children, their family and wider network to build safety and stability in child-friendly timescales. We will use

our strength-based Signs of Safety practice model as a foundation for creative and imaginative practice.

- **Support our children to achieve permanency at the earliest opportunity.** We are reviewing how we deliver our permanency forum so we are effectively tracking children who may not be achieving permanency in a child-friendly timescale. We will have a spotlight on children subject to the PLO process and children on a Care Order at home.
- **Create stability for our cared for children.** We will launch Bespoke to ensure cared for children and their carers have the right level of support needed to create stability for children and young people. We will open our final two commissioned children's homes so our children with the most complex needs are living and supported in Cheshire East. We will plan for more children to step out of residential care to live with family or be supported into independence.
- **Recruit, retain and support our foster carers.** We will develop a strengthened offer of recruitment, development, engagement and support. We will ensure that there is a whole Council awareness and commitment to this.
- **Establish check and challenge sessions.** We will establish quarterly check and challenge session to understand how well we are doing in improving our practice and achieving better outcomes for children. These will involve children, front line practitioners and team managers.

Development Plan: Phase 2

18th May -7th August 2020

Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
Effective Leadership, Structure and Support to Drive Improved Outcomes for Children						
1A	Develop and launch an identity for Children's Services, including a set of beliefs and outcomes to be achieved, that is recognised and understood across the service, wider partnership and by children and families.	There will be a coherent narrative regarding the values and beliefs of Children's Services, supporting a joined up approach to helping and protecting children and families.	Children and Families will have an improved understanding of the role of Children's Services and how we intend to support them to thrive.	Director of Children's Services	Action will carry over into phase 3 of the Plan	<p>The vision has now been created, informed by participation work with children and families. Consultation and engagement session took place with Heads of Service on the 6th July.</p> <p>Engagement is currently underway with key stakeholders – children and young people, practitioners and partnerships. The vision will be formally launched in October following the development of branding materials, however is currently being communicated widely within the service.</p>
1B	Develop a cared for children strategy that supports the safe reduction of children in our care through effective interventions that align with our belief that children are best supported to live in their families and communities.	<p>There will be a clear belief across the service that children are best supported within their children and families.</p> <p>Interventions will be realigned to enable this approach through investment in edge of care support.</p>	Fewer children will need to become cared for as they can be effectively safeguarded within their family and community.	Director of Children's Social Care	Action will carry over into phase 3 of the Plan	Work is underway on this. A number of sessions have been held with a Consultant from the LGA to develop our thinking in this area and establish the groundwork for this strategy.

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1C	Develop and plan delivery of a team manager development program that provides them with the knowledge and skills to be leaders in practice.	The leadership role of Team Managers will be strengthened and managers will understand what excellence in social work practice looks like.	Children's needs are identified in a timely way and they benefit from child focussed plans that lead to improved outcomes.	Head of Service Cared for Children Principal Social Worker	23 rd July 2020	<p>The external audits completed in May 2020 identified variability in social work practice. The development program will focus on a combination of back to basics for social work practice so all team managers have the knowledge and skills to understand what good practice looks like as well as strengthening of their leadership skills. This will ensure that they are identifying best practice and challenging poor practice consistently to enable and support consistently good social work practice.</p> <p>The launch of the leadership program took place in July 2020, starting with assessments, and a full program of training is planned over the next six months.</p>

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1D	Review the role of the Principal Social Worker (PSW).	The Principal Social Worker role will lead the development of consistently good practice across the service and will be closely linked to quality assurance work within the service and workforce development to ensure there is a learning loop. This role will ensure our areas for development identified through quality assurance inform our workforce development, and the impact of workforce development is then evaluated through QA.	Children and families will experience strength based, good quality social work practice that supports and challenges them to improve safety and stability for children.	Director of Children's Social Care	7 th August 2020	<p>The role has been reviewed and it has been agreed that this role will now work more closely with the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit to support the important independent support and challenge function of the PSW.</p> <p>The PSW is involved in all development work regarding the quality of social work practice.</p>
Evaluating Outcomes for Children						
2A	Develop monthly performance information that provides data relating to individual teams. This should include performance data relating to business and people.	Emerging concerns regarding social work practice are identified quickly and the required support and challenge is mobilised effectively to address potential areas of weakness.	Children and young people will be effectively supported and any emerging needs are quickly identified.	Director of Children's Social Care	<p>3rd August 2020</p> <p>Further work will be completed in the next phase – action to be carried over</p>	<p>A review of performance information has taken place. A number of workshops have taken place with team managers and service managers to establish what performance information they need to understand the quality of practice and impact for children within their teams and service areas.</p> <p>A new reporting system, Power BI, is being developed to ensure the</p>

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						reporting provides clarity regarding areas of strength and emerging areas of concern. A quarterly report is being developed for the Director of Children's Social Care and the Director of Children's Service to provide assurance and support effective oversight and challenge. This will be aligned with the children's vision and our priorities.
2B	External review of quality assurance and auditing arrangements within Children's Social Care.	Strengthened quality assurance and auditing arrangements are in place so there is an accurate understanding of the quality of social work practice.	Children and young people will be effectively supported.	Head of Service Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	6 th July 2020	An external auditor has carried out a case file audit. The report of the findings has been fed back to all levels of management and have informed the priorities for business for the next year including the team managers development programme. Future whole case file audits will be carried out by the independent auditor for the next 3 quarters to evidence any changes. The audit programme has been altered during COVID-19 and a different model employed with Team Managers to support learning against judgements.
2C	Complete 25 external audits of children's cases, looking at	To ensure there is an accurate understanding of social work	Children and families will be effectively supported.	Head of Service Safeguarding	4 th June 2020	An external auditor has carried out a case file audit. The summary report

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	the last 6 months of practice.	practice and the impact this has on outcomes for children.		and Quality Assurance		<p>identified that there continued to be variability in social work practice across the service and some children were at risk of drift and delay. There continued to be examples of good social work practice, including strong assessments, partnership working and care planning. However, this was not consistent across the service. The findings of the audit were shared and discussed with Service Managers and Team Managers.</p> <p>A training plan of getting "back to basics" for all frontline practitioners was planned in response to these findings. The initial training planned was not delivered due to COVID-19 and the emergency planning response, however further training was subsequently planned and delivered to establish good social work practice so we can build from strong foundations.</p>
2D	Undertake auditing with front line managers to understand progress in improving the quality of assessments and to inform next steps.	Children and Families assessments are of a consistently good quality.	Children have good quality assessments that ensure we understand their lived experience, needs and risks.	Head of Service for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	13 th July 2020	<p>The programme of auditing assessments alongside team managers has been completed and involved all operational managers.</p> <p>The final report was received by the Social Care Leadership Team (SCLT) with the learning. It was agreed that a further</p>

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						round of auditing focussed on assessments would take place to ensure the understanding and recognition of good quality assessments is understood and embedded. Following this the auditing sessions will move onto children's plans.
2E	Implement regular themed audits focusing on vulnerable cohorts, mirroring the approach inspectors used during the inspection to identify any areas for development	Regular audits of vulnerable cohorts are undertaken which identify any areas where further development is needed and drive improved outcomes for children.	Children in need of care and support will be safeguarded in a timescale that meets their needs and helps them achieve improved outcomes.	Head of Service for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	3 rd August 2020	<p>The programme of audits resumed during May and June and an audit timetable was agreed at SCLT. The audit leads will be responsible for reporting the findings into SCLT to inform learning and next steps.</p> <p>Joint performance meetings with the CiN/CP team continue to use data to identify areas of practice for further in depth evaluation through audit. The audit timetable is reviewed at each monthly meeting and the next priority agreed. This follows the 'last 10 that...' Approach used during the inspection. For example, a focus of one of the audits was the last 10 children who came into care.</p>

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2F	Develop a process to support managers to complete supervision audits and effectively report the findings to senior leaders.	Supervision audits demonstrate that all supervisions within Children's Social Care include discussion and reflection on the quality of social work practice, which is driving improvements to the quality of work within teams and services.	Children in need of care and support will be safeguarded in a timescale that meets their needs and achieve improved outcomes.	Audit and Quality Assurance Officer	3 rd August 2020	The supervision audit process has been agreed in SCLT and the supervision audits have now commenced.
2G	Establish check and challenge sessions to take place quarterly with frontline practitioners and team managers to test progress of the development plan.	Impact of improvements in social work practice driven through the development plan will be reviewed, and challenge will be provided by frontline practitioners and managers to ensure that actions are resulting in a real difference to practice.	Children will receive the help and protection they require to achieve good outcomes.	Director of Children's Social Care	3 rd August 2020 Establishing team manager sessions to be included in the next phase of the plan	Regular meetings are now established with frontline practitioners. Arrangements will be put in place for a similar approach with frontline managers. Frontline practitioners have provided valuable input into the plan. They agree with the priorities and have been clear that further support is required to ensure everyone understands what a good assessment and plan looks like. They welcomed the training blog we have introduced as part of this work and the anonymised examples of good assessments. The group are also keen for audits to be part of a learning approach to practice and for managers to consistently

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						feedback findings in audits.
2H	Establish quarterly challenge sessions with 'My Voice' Cared for Children Council to test and evaluate the progress of the development plan.	Impact of improvements in social work practice driven through the development plan will be reviewed and challenge provided members of My Voice Cared for Children Council to ensure that actions are resulting in a real difference to children and young people.	Children will receive the help and protection they require to achieve good outcomes.	Head of Service, Cared for Children and Care Leavers	3 rd August 2020 To be included within the next phase of the plan	Due to COVID-19, establishment of the check and challenge sessions, which were due to commence in March, was delayed. The Cheshire East Cared for Survey will be launched to gain young people's views, and there is an 'Animoto' video to accompany this. My Voice is now meeting virtually on a weekly basis and their feedback supported the discussion at Corporate Parenting Committee on the 14 th July. A participation worker will be located with the Cared for Children's team 2 days per week and recruitment activity for this position is currently underway.
Excellence in Social Work Practice						
3A	Develop and deliver a back to basics training programme for all frontline practitioners. This will be underpinned by the SOS practice model. Practice should be strength-based with a focus on	All frontline social workers will have the knowledge and skills they require to undertake good quality assessment and planning.	Children's needs are identified in a timely way and they benefit from child focussed plans that lead to improved outcomes.	Director of Children's Social Care	3 rd August 2020	A package of resources for assessments has now been compiled and launched, this includes a training video based on a conversation between a frontline practitioner and manager in the service. A feedback survey accompanies this, so we can monitor the impact of the

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	working in partnership with children and families.					training blog. A suite of anonymised good assessments has also been compiled. The next focus of this training will be children's plans in phase 3 of the development plan.
3B	Develop and launch the refreshed supervision policy.	Good quality supervision which includes reflective, supportive and challenging conversations regarding social work practice, driving improvements to the quality of work within teams and services.	Children in need of care and support will be safeguarded in a timescale that meets their needs and achieve improved outcomes.	Head of Service Child in Need / Child Protection Principal Social Worker	15 th July 2020	The supervision policy has been agreed and launched to all staff. Training for managers will be delivered as part of the leadership programme.
3C	Refresh the management oversight guidance for key points in the child's journey.	Management oversight will clearly evidence the reason for decisions at key points in the child's journey.	Children will be effectively helped and protected through evidence-based decisions. They will also clearly understand the reasons that key decisions were made in their lives as these will be clearly recorded in their case file.	Head of Service Child in Need / Child Protection	15 th July 2020	This has been completed and shared with Team Managers, management oversight and supervision training is included within the leadership programme.
3D	The use of chronologies for children and young people to be embedded across the	All frontline workers will be clear in the expectation that an up to date chronology is	Children will understand the important events in their lives and the	Head of Service Child in Need / Child	1 st Sept 2020	Guidance and anonymised examples have been prepared and there is a plan in place to deliver training. Following

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Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
	service.	required for all children and have the skills and knowledge to ensure this is completed to a consistently food standard.	significance of these.	Protection		<p>the initial external audits, alongside the work around strengthening our quality assurance, it was agreed that this action should be moved to phase three. It was agreed that our initial focus needed to remain on establishing consistently good assessments and plans, ensuring that the history of the family and child is understood to inform risks and needs.</p> <p>Once this is established we will then agree a launch date for chronologies with training sitting alongside this and a clear expectation that every child should have an updated chronology on their case record.</p>
3E	<p>Recruit a permanent Signs of Safety Practice Lead to embed the practice model with a specific focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength-based practice • Working in partnership with children, families and their network • Doing the basics well. 	The Signs of safety practice model will be fully embedded.	Children and families will experience social work practice that is strength based. Children and families will be fully involved in the development of assessments and plans leading to strong outcomes for children and young people.	Head of Service Cared for Children/ Care Leavers	25 th May 2020	<p>There has been further investment in frontline practice through the decision to recruit three lead practitioners. They will sit under the PSW and their role will be to support practitioners to ensure their practice is strength based, focuses on relationships and is consistently good. This will be a wider and more inclusive focus than originally envisaged.</p> <p>Recruitment is currently underway and the first practitioner will be in role from</p>

Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
						September 2020.
Caring for Children in their Families and Communities						
4A	Recruit a permanent family network lead.	Frontline practitioners will ensure that the wider network is used effectively.	Children will be effectively supported within their own families and communities.	Head of Service Child in Need/ Child Protection	3 rd August 2020	<p>We want to strengthen the role of the extended family in supporting children in need of help and protection, particularly children on the edge of care. If a child does become cared for the aim is to increase the number of children placed with family members. This will allow children and young people to be placed with people who already have a connection to them and care about them, and will reduce the need for high cost placements.</p> <p>Two Practice Lead Practitioners will be recruited to join the one already appointed as a small team, to promote the highest standard of social work practice by supporting and developing frontline practitioners to achieve the very best outcomes for children and their families by working in a strengths based framework. These new roles are focused on supporting a culture and environment where excellent social work practice can truly flourish.</p> <p>The role will coordinate and contribute</p>

Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
						<p>to workforce planning and delivery of learning and development that will support positive outcomes for children. The role will provide a blended approach to learning and development through role modelling excellent practice.</p> <p>This small team will take messages from frontline practitioners into strategic planning meetings as well and collating messages from internal and external audit to support as targeted approach to achieving excellence in Social Work practice. This will include seeing Family Networking embedded in every day Social Work practice.</p>
4B	Develop a trajectory plan for the implementation of Bespoke	There will be effective plans in place to support placement stability and timely transitions from residential care for children.	Cared for children will experience improved stability in their families and homes.	Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers	25 th May 2020	<p>A trajectory plan has been developed and was reviewed at the SCLT Caring for Children in Communities meeting on the 10th June.</p> <p>All four homes have now been registered and are caring for six children currently.</p> <p>Trajectory planning for the right support at the right time for each child and developing exit strategies will be</p>

Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
						developed in the next phase of the plan.
4C	Mobilise the final two commissioned children's homes	There will be high quality residential provision in Cheshire East for cared for children	Cared for children with the most complex level of need will be supported in their communities in Cheshire East	Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers	4 th July 2020	The final two children's homes have now been mobilised.
4D	Review of permanence forum and performance challenge meetings	Effective management oversight drives good quality permanency planning for all children subject to the Private Law Outline (PLO) process and cared for.	Children will be living permanent care arrangements as early as possible.	Head of Service Child in Need/ Child Protection Head of Service Cared for Children	23 rd September 2020 To be carried forward to the next plan	Both Heads of Service for CIN/CP and Care Planning have met to discuss Permanence Forums, their current function and effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes for children. As we have also developed our thinking in SCLT on the demand management strategy, this has also added to how we seek to shape our senior management oversight of permanence planning and how this can also be linked to the current RAP Panel and allocation of resource. We plan to bring proposals to SCLT in September 2020
4E	Review and revise the Private Fostering Policy.	All professionals understand how to effectively support children and young people in private fostering arrangements.	Children and young people in private fostering arrangements get the support they need to achieve good outcomes.	Head of Service Child in Need and Child Protection	23 rd September 2020 To be carried forward to	There has been an audit completed of all children who are currently in a privately fostered arrangement. This audit found that all children were correctly identified as being Privately Fostered and that they are safe within this arrangement. Legal advice had been

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Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
					the next plan	correctly sought to support and confirm decision making. The Private Fostering Policy is currently being updated to support practice with this group of young people. The audit findings will also support the development of Practice Guidance. The Private Fostering Policy will be completed for September 2020.
4F	Share the findings of the fostering review with all key stakeholders and develop a detailed development plan.	There will be an increase in the number of cared for children living with foster carers in Cheshire East. Foster carers feel listened to and supported and better relationships between professionals and foster carers will lead to better outcomes for children.	Better outcomes for children in foster care, and more options for children and young people to be cared for within their communities.	Head of Service, Fostering and Children with Disabilities	22 nd June 2020 Completed on 5 th August 2020	The Review outcomes have been shared with Foster Carers and the Service. A response report has been completed relating to each of the findings and recommendations have been made in relation to each recommendation. This has been approved at SCLT and DMT. An update report was presented to Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 th August 2020.
4G	Improve communication and engagement with foster carers and develop a communication and engagement strategy.	Foster carers state that they feel valued and part of the team around the child. There will be an improvement in foster carers satisfaction rates evidenced through the	Better outcomes for children in foster care, and more options for children and young people to be cared for within their communities	Head of Service Fostering and Children with Disabilities	3 rd August 2020 To be carried over to the next plan	We have had to suspend our diary of Fostering Forums due to the COVID-19 safety measures. We have however increased our communication with Foster Carers through a weekly updating email.

Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
		completion of an annual foster carer survey. Foster carers feel listened to and supported and better relationships between professionals and foster carers will lead to better outcomes for children.				<p>As a result of COVID-19 we have increased financial and direct support to Foster carers which has been received positively.</p> <p>Virtual options for delivering a fostering forum are now being explored with plan to pilot with a small group of foster carers in August 2020.</p>
4H	Update fostering policies and procedures.	Policies and procedures are up to date and easily accessible by carers.	Cared for children receive high quality and consistent care that ensures they are safe and have the opportunity to thrive.	Fostering Service Manager	Action to carry over into next phase of the plan	<p>The Policy Development Group has met on two occasions and has co-produced two specific policies (Medication and Delegated Authority) with foster carers.</p> <p>A SharePoint site for foster carers has also been developed so all foster carers can easily access our policies and procedures.</p>

Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
4I	<p>Improve recruitment and retention of foster carers through launch of a Cheshire East recruitment service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review fostering allowances - Develop a recruitment strategy - Ensure regular performance monitoring and scrutiny is in place 	<p>There will be an increase in the number of cared for children living with foster carers in Cheshire East.</p> <p>Foster carers feel listened to and supported and better relationships between professionals and foster carers will lead to better outcomes for children.</p>	<p>Better outcomes for children in foster care, and more options for children and young people to be cared for within their communities.</p>	<p>Head of Service, Fostering and Children with Disabilities</p>	<p>Action to carry over into next phase of plan</p>	<p>We have provided additional financial support to all mainstream and family and friends carers in reflection of the additional costs attached to children and young people not being in school during lockdown.</p> <p>We have completed a consultation on the fee uplift.</p> <p>The latest data set provided as part of Foster 4 and the data that we collect ourselves has shown an improvement in recruitment over the past quarter. It is still too early to determine whether this improvement is an indication of an improving picture.</p> <p>We will continue to support the marketing strategy within Foster 4 until the point that we leave the collaboration in September 2020.</p>
4J	<p>All children at risk of not achieving a timely permanence plan will be closely tracked to ensure a permanence plan is achieved within timescales.</p>	<p>There will be an increase in the percentage of children with a plan of permanence at the second review.</p> <p>There will be a reduction in the average length of care</p>	<p>Permanence plans are achieved for children within their timescales.</p>	<p>Head of Service for Child in Need and Child Protection</p>	<p>15th July 2020</p>	<p>We are closely tracking children, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic we are concerned about the progress of permanency planning for children and young people. This is being closely monitored and reviews are taking place every three weeks in</p>

Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
		proceedings cases.				<p>respect of children with a plan of adoption.</p> <p>Four weekly strategic tracking meetings take place where all children who either have a potential plan or confirmed plan of adoption are discussed individually and actions are taken out to move these forward. Risk assessments of those at high risk of not achieving permanence are undertaken and any transitions to adoption are authorised by the agency decision maker.</p> <p>Regular meetings also arranged with Cheshire and Merseyside Court to ensure minimal drift and delay for children during this period.</p> <p>The Permanence Forum continues to focus on children who are subject to PLO and Court Proceedings and individual cases are being escalated to the Court where Social Care believe we are able to progress finalising permanence planning fairly despite the current COVID-19 restrictions.</p>
4K	Ensure timely discharge of Children living on a Care Order at home	Children on a Care Order at home will have their permanence plan closely	Children and families will not be subject to intrusive Court Orders for longer	Head of Service for cared for children and	29 th June 2020	A trajectory has now been completed for all children on a Care Order at home. Progress will be scrutinised in the Caring

Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
		tracked to ensure timely discharge of Care Orders at home.	than necessary.	care leavers		for Children in Communities SCLT meeting.
Actions currently on hold due to impact of Covid 19 Emergency Planning Response						
5A	Hold a (COVID secure) Practice Week to celebrate good social work practice. This will include training and development opportunities, and showcasing good practice, to continue to develop the quality of practice across the service. Senior managers, including the DCS, will also complete audits and observations of practice during the week.	Practitioners and managers at all levels understand the quality of practice and what makes good quality practice. Practitioners and managers are inspired to deliver good quality practice and feel valued and recognised by the organisation.	Children in need of care and support will be safeguarded in a timescale that meets their needs and achieve improved outcomes.	Principal Social Worker	Action to be carried forward to next plan	Practice Week will be rearranged for Autumn 2020
5B	Recommission the accommodation offer for care leavers, in partnership with our cared for children and care leavers.	All care leavers are provided with appropriate accommodation where they feel safe and secure.	All care leavers are provided with appropriate accommodation where they feel safe and secure.	Head of Service Children's Commissioning	Action to be carried forward to next plan	There have been regular virtual meetings with Mark Riddell, Care Leavers Ambassador, and other LAs to share best practice and identify challenges for care leavers during the current pandemic. The local offer has been adjusted to ensure it is meeting the needs of our care leavers during this

Ref	Action	Anticipated impact on the quality of practice	Outcome for Children and Families	Accountable Person	Complete by	Update on Progress to Date
						<p>time.</p> <p>The recommission of supported accommodation has been delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; it will now take place December 2020.</p> <p>The recommission of the 16+ supported accommodation offer is on hold pending the government exit strategy around COVID-19.</p>
5C	Review of the Local Offer for Care Leavers	All practitioners will be ambitious for our care leavers and there will be a strong offer in place to support this.	Care Leavers have a strong local offer that supports them to achieve good outcomes and reduce the level of disadvantage that they experience	Head of Service Cared for Children	Action to be carried forward to next plan	The care leavers local offer is a continual and evolving process that requires engagement with internal services, commissioned services and the broader community. To do this engagement virtually would dilute the opportunities to build new relationships and get the very best offer for care leavers. It is therefore more appropriate to delay the review until January 2021 when the position regarding Covid-19 will be a improved picture.

Appendix 1

Progress against the Ofsted Areas for Improvement

Planned Response	Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7 th August 2020)
The quality, consistency and analysis of assessments and the child focus of plans	
<p>Over the last 18 months, Cheshire East has been introducing a new evidence based social work model, 'Signs of Safety'. In the short term this has led to some inconsistency in the quality of assessments and plans as early help workers, social workers and managers begin to use the new approach. Significant progress has been made in embedding the model, particularly in building trusting relationships and the quality of direct work with children and families. Implementing Signs of Safety is a journey of 4-5 years to fully embed the approach, however this will provide the foundations of a good social work service for vulnerable children.</p> <p>Further work is required to improve the consistency and quality of social work assessments and plans, which will take place across Children's Social Care and Early Help Services. We aim to improve consistency across the whole service. Over the last six months there has been a focus on improving practice. We have invested in training additional practice leads to support individual teams. We have also delivered additional training and support to frontline practitioners.</p>	<p>Progress at the end of Phase 1</p> <p>Over the last 12 weeks there has been a focus on ensuring frontline practitioners and managers understand what a good quality assessment and plan look like. A series of team manager development events were facilitated, including individual coaching sessions delivered by senior leaders. Signs of Safety practice lead sessions have also taken place to drive improvements. This ensures a strong foundation for developing consistently good social work practice.</p> <p>Frontline managers have a clear understanding and expectation that only assessments and plans of the required quality will be authorised.</p> <p>Due to the unexpected impact of the COVID-19 emergency planning, the anticipated auditing to track progress did not take place as planned. Phase 2 of the development plan will ensure that there is a clear auditing plan in place.</p> <p>Progress at the end of Phase 2</p> <p>The external audit of children's case records took place as planned. This indicated that there continued to be inconsistency in the quality of</p>

Planned Response	Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7th August 2020)
<p>In 2019, we launched our quality assurance framework, but this was not yet fully embedded at the time of the inspection, and our audits were overly optimistic. We have refreshed our audit process, redesigning the audit tool and strengthening moderation. We plan to increase the frequency of reporting to the Senior Leadership team to ensure that audits are completed and the moderation process leading to increasing accuracy in audit judgements. To support this process, we have provided additional training to our frontline team managers around completing audits. We will also be providing individual coaching sessions with each team manager on ensuring consistent and high quality practice in their teams during February and March 2020.</p> <p>Over the next 6 months we expect to see improvements in the consistency and quality of our assessments and plans for children, driven by a strengthened quality assurance process.</p>	<p>assessments and plans. External LGA support has been provided and we have also worked closely with the external auditor to ensure we have a focus on improving the quality of practice. One of our priorities is “doing the basics well” with a good assessment and plan on every child’s record. Frontline practitioners and managers fed back that they wanted additional training and examples of good practice. We have now launched specific resources around assessments, taking their views into account. We will be developing training materials for plans in the next phase of this plan. The Principal Social Worker is leading the development of these materials.</p> <p>Team Managers have been auditing assessments and completing a plenary session with the QA and auditing officer. This is giving us increasing confidence that Team Managers are clear about what a good quality assessment looks like.</p> <p>We are investing in 3 lead practitioners who will be supervised by the Principal Social Worker and will not case hold. Their role will be to strengthen social work practice and support practitioners to deliver good quality assessments and planning for children to improve their outcomes.</p> <p>During phase 3 we expect to see a gradual improvement in the quality of assessments, followed by improvements to plans, once the additional training and support has been delivered.</p>

Planned Response

Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7th August 2020)

Management oversight of cases in pre-proceedings to avoid drift and delay for children

A small number of children suffering chronic neglect experienced delay in ensuring they were protected from the cumulative impact of neglect. During the inspection a review of each child took place and senior managers agreed actions to ensure timely progress was achieved. Tracking for the individual children identified as being at risk of not achieving a timely permanency plan that ensures they are safeguarded from neglect will be led by Head of Service for Child in Need and Child Protection. A joint evaluation with legal services will take place by February 2020 to determine what further work is required. This evaluation will include understanding good practice in other Local Authority areas and seeking feedback from the Courts, Family Justice Board and Cafcass to inform our plans.

Progress at the end of Phase 1

The PLO process has been refreshed in partnership with legal services. Management oversight by frontline managers is visible and an audit in May 2020 has provided an early indication that this has led to a reduction in the risk of drift for children at risk of chronic neglect.

Progress at the end of Phase 2

COVID-19 continues to have a significant impact on our ability to achieve plans of permanence for our children within their timescales. Some Care Proceedings are delayed due to remote hearings not always being appropriate and the availability of the Court being a challenge. In these cases, we are pushing and prioritising where possible, in order to achieve permanency where there would be the highest level of impact for children and young people, such as a child who has a plan for Adoption, where delay of a significant nature could lead to us needing to change the preferred plan longer term to one of fostering. There are children placed with family members on an interim Order who we will begin to prioritise as the Court hearings become more fluid as Court availability improves.

Some children have been in Pre-Proceedings for longer than we would have usually anticipated. Applications to the Court will still be required

Planned Response	Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7th August 2020)
	<p>for these children in order to achieve permanence however there is consent and engagement in Pre-Proceedings from those with parental responsibility to allow the current situation to temporarily remain. Although not ideal as we would want to secure permanency for these children, they are already living with the identified family member with whom we are seeking a permanence order so the impact on them is not as great.</p> <p>During COVID-19, we have continued to issue Care Proceedings where necessary and appropriate to secure the immediate safety of our children following an emergency situation such as the use of police protection powers or significant non-accidental injury. For these children, they are now in a place of safety and the majority are placed with extended family and friends. There is a risk of early drift for some of these children due to the Courts and external experts not operating as 'business as usual' however their immediate safety demanded the need to seek such urgent intervention.</p> <p>Some children with a plan of Adoption could not commence introductions to their adoptive family during lockdown. Following risk assessment, introductions have commenced and all children matched with their adoptive family pre and during the COVID lockdown have now moved.</p> <p>Adoption Order applications which are awaiting Court hearing dates are impacting on legal permanence being achieved for the children concerned. These children are already placed with their adoptive</p>

Planned Response	Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7 th August 2020)
	<p>families but there will be a delay of approximately six months in achieving their legal permanency through the making of an Adoption Order.</p> <p>We are starting to have an increased number of hearings provided for the planned application to the Court to discharge Care Orders for children who live at home with their parents. This is positive for those children as they no longer require such intervention to keep them safe.</p>
<p>The response to children in private fostering arrangements, children who are homeless aged 16 and 17 years old and care leavers who need emergency accommodation</p>	
<p>All children and young people within this small but significant cohort have been reviewed by senior managers and we are confident that appropriate plans are in place. The quality assurance process for 16/17 year olds presenting as homeless will be strengthened through revision of the audit tool by February 2020. The accommodation offer for care leavers will be recommissioned, with the new services in place from July 2020. The specification has been amended to reflect the findings from the recent inspection.</p>	<p>Progress at the end of Phase 1</p> <p>There has been increased management oversight and individual review of the following vulnerable cohorts of children; children suffering from chronic neglect, 16/17 year olds who are homeless and children living in private fostering arrangements to ensure that timely and robust planning is in place. In the next phase of the Ofsted Development Plan there will be an audit to scrutinise progress for this small but very vulnerable group of children.</p> <p>Progress at the end of Phase 2</p> <p>There has been an audit completed of all children currently in a privately fostered arrangement. This audit found that all children were correctly identified as being Privately Fostered and that they are safe</p>

Planned Response	Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7 th August 2020)
	<p>within this arrangement. Legal advice has been correctly sought to support and confirm decision making. The Private Fostering Policy is currently being updated to support the excellent practice being achieved with this group of young people. The audit findings will also support the development of Practice Guidance. The Private Fostering Policy will be completed for September 2020.</p> <p>There has been an audit completed of 16/17 year olds who have presented as homeless. The audit reassured us that children who present as homeless are appropriately referred to Children's Services in all cases and that management oversight is evident on all children's records. There is an identified need to revisit the guidance with frontline practitioners to ensure they fully understand what a 'homeless' interview consists of, inclusive of seeing the child alone and providing information about becoming a cared for child and then evidencing this clearly on the child's record. This will be delivered to frontline practitioners throughout September in master classes.</p>

The quality and consistency of support and engagement with foster carers

<p>An independent review regarding the recruitment, retention, development and support of foster carers will be completed by the end of January 2020. The recommendations from this review will then be overseen and progressed by the recently established Fostering Review Board. The review and development work will be co-produced with foster carers and progress reported to the</p>	<p>Progress at the end of Phase 1</p> <p>The independent fostering review has been completed and there are early signs that our communication and engagement with foster carers has led to an improvement in our relationships. This means that carers are starting to feel more valued and better supported to care for our</p>
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Planned Response	Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7th August 2020)
<p>Corporate Parenting Committee. Work has already commenced to improve our engagement and communications with our current foster carers. This includes the first newsletter being sent in December 2019 and a Foster Carers' Forum, attended by senior managers on the 13th January 2020, where views were sought from carers to inform the review.</p>	<p>children.</p> <p>Progress at the end of Phase 2</p> <p>We have established a series of working groups that include representation for across our group of foster carers. This includes the Communication and Engagement Workstream, Mockingbird Implementation Working Group and Policies and the Procedures Workstream. We are also developing a foster carers' charter.</p> <p>We have co-produced a SharePoint site with a group of foster carers to share information, including policies and procedures, which has now gone live.</p> <p>We have completed a consultation exercise with all foster carers concerning increases in our current foster carer fee structure and implemented an increase in the skills fee for all carers.</p> <p>We have continued to publish regular newsletters, which have been positively received and are currently working on developing an online Foster Carers Forum due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>We have also undertaken a review into our Local Authority Designated Officer process, this is used when an allegation is made against a foster carer. This followed concerns raised by foster carers regarding the time taken to complete the investigation and subsequent reviews. The report identified that delays were linked to the timeliness of the subsequent foster carer review and panel. A series of recommendations</p>

Planned Response	Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7 th August 2020)
	<p>have been made and the findings will also be shared with foster carers.</p> <p>During phase 2 of the development plan we have seen an increase in foster carer households approved at panel (7) and foster carers in assessment (11), this has included foster carers who have transferred from an IFA as they had received positive feedback about fostering for Cheshire East.</p>

Consistent management oversight and supervision in the organisation to ensure that consistent good-quality social work practice is in place

<p>A review of how performance management information is scrutinised and understood has taken place. An evaluation of supervision arrangements, following the introduction of Signs of Safety has also been completed. A revised supervision policy has been developed together with practitioners and managers, which ensure what good reflective supervision looks like, and the expectations on delivery and quality of supervision are clear. The new policy includes audits of supervision to support improved quality of supervision, and therefore an improved impact on practice. This will be launched through the management forum to ensure managers are clear on the expectations for practice.</p> <p>There is a plan in place to fully embed our revised quality assurance framework. This includes additional training and support for managers at all levels. The review of pre-proceedings will also</p>	<p>Progress at the end of Phase 1</p> <p>The governance structure within Children’s Social Care has been reviewed and new arrangements established. This will mean that there are stronger provisions in place to support and challenge practice and improvements in outcomes for children.</p> <p>The new supervision policy was reviewed and it was agreed it needed further work to ensure it would drive effective supervision across the organisation. This work is now underway.</p> <p>Senior leaders are developing a clear vision for Children’s Services so there is a clear identity and coherent narrative for the outcomes we believe children and families should achieve. The next phase of the development plan will focus on this and getting the basics of social work practice right.</p>
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Planned Response	Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7th August 2020)
<p>include a specific focus on the role of team managers and service managers in timely progress for children, whilst ensuring all help and support has been offered to families to care safely for their children.</p>	<p>The leadership role of frontline managers has begun to strengthen and the next phase of the plan will focus on this further, ensuring there is a management development plan in place to deliver support required to facilitate change.</p> <p>Progress at the end of Phase 2</p> <p>The Supervision Policy has been fully updated and launched. Practitioners across all services have been consulted and contributed toward a much clearer policy and separate practice guidance. The workforce are positive about the changes and adaptations made and feel confident this will support improved quality of supervision provided to frontline staff. There has also been a 'One Minute Guide' produced in consultation with Service Managers, to support consistency in the recording of a 'Managers Decision' on a child's record. This recording should demonstrate rationale for decisions made and assist the child in understanding why and when decisions were made about their life.</p> <p>Both the Supervision Policy and the One Minute Guide on Managers Decisions have been ratified through SCLT and the Policies and Procedures Group.</p> <p>The Team Manager development programme has been designed with an emphasis on leadership and supporting excellence in social work practice. This will ensure that as leaders in practice, our Team Managers</p>

Planned Response	Progress at the end of the 12 week period (7th August 2020)
	<p>are driving improved outcomes for children. This has been launched with all Team Managers and was well received.</p> <p>The Development Programme continues to provide facilitated audit sessions for Team Managers in the drive to achieving consistently good quality practice across all services within Children's Social Care. These sessions are in their second phase, compliance is excellent and the messages from this will support team managers to support and challenge social work practice and establish a strong foundation of doing the basics well.</p>