

DRAFT Cheshire East
Children and Young People's
Improvement Plan
to meet the Ofsted Recommendations
November 2015-2016



Creating a
great place to
be young



Cheshire East
Children & Young
People's Trust



Cheshire East Local
Safeguarding Children Board



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Foreword

Foreword from Kath



Executive Summary

We want to make Cheshire East a great place to be young, where children and young people are happy, healthy, safe, and have lots of opportunities to enjoy life, learn and develop. As a partnership, achieving this is our focus, and this is the basis of everything we do.

In order to achieve this, we need to continue finding ways to put children and young people at the heart of all our activity, which is why a large element of our plan will focus on listening to children and young people.

This plan sets out how children's services in Cheshire East, as a partnership, will continue to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The plan has four priorities:

- 1. Embedding listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people throughout services**
- 2. Ensuring frontline practice is consistently good, effective and outcome focused**
- 3. Improving senior management oversight of the impact of services on children and young people**
- 4. Ensuring the partnership effectively protects and ensures good outcomes for all children and young people in Cheshire East**

The plan details what actions we will take to continue to improve the quality of services and embed a culture of continual learning, support and challenge, where everyone supports each other to get the best outcomes for children and young people. Our staff are passionate and committed, and they are the key to making the changes a success. We will continue to invest in supporting our staff, recruiting the right people, and empowering staff to shape and make changes, as well as celebrating and sharing good practice.

The plan also shows how we will drive, monitor, and continually assess our progress to ensure that we deliver the best service we can. Listening to children, young people, parents and staff will be a key component of evaluating how well we are doing.

The plan addresses our areas for improvement, and the recommendations from the Ofsted inspection in July 2015. The wider plans for Children's Services are contained within the Children and Young People's Plan 2015-18, the LSCB Business Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Cheshire East has been on a continuous upward journey of improvement since April 2013. Understanding where we have come from, what we have achieved, and our strengths, is important to give context on what we know works and how we will continue to operate going forward, so this is also included in our plan.

This plan is focused on activity to improve services over the next year as part of a larger improvement programme over three years. We recognise that our plan will evolve over that time in response to feedback from young people and staff, and audit findings and external review. Our progress and the plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure that we are achieving the impact we need for children and young people, and will be revised to include any new activity as needed.

Children and Young People in Cheshire East

Cheshire East is a generally affluent area, and for the vast majority of children and young people it is a good place to grow up; Cheshire East has recently been announced as the 'best place to live in the North West' in the annual Halifax Quality of Life Survey. However, there are pockets of deprivation in Cheshire East where we know that children and young people do not enjoy the same outcomes, and the gap in attainment between more vulnerable groups and their peers, although reducing, remains too large.

There are approximately 74,930 children and young people under the age of 18 in Cheshire East, which is approximately 20% of the total population. Only 5% of children and young people are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 22% in the country as a whole.



A significantly lower proportion of children and young people are eligible for free school meals in Cheshire East, 10% in primary schools compared to 17% nationally, and 7% in secondary compared to 15%. But there is deprivation in Cheshire East, approximately 12% of children and young people live in poverty, specifically in Crewe, which has 40% of all children and young people in poverty in Cheshire East.

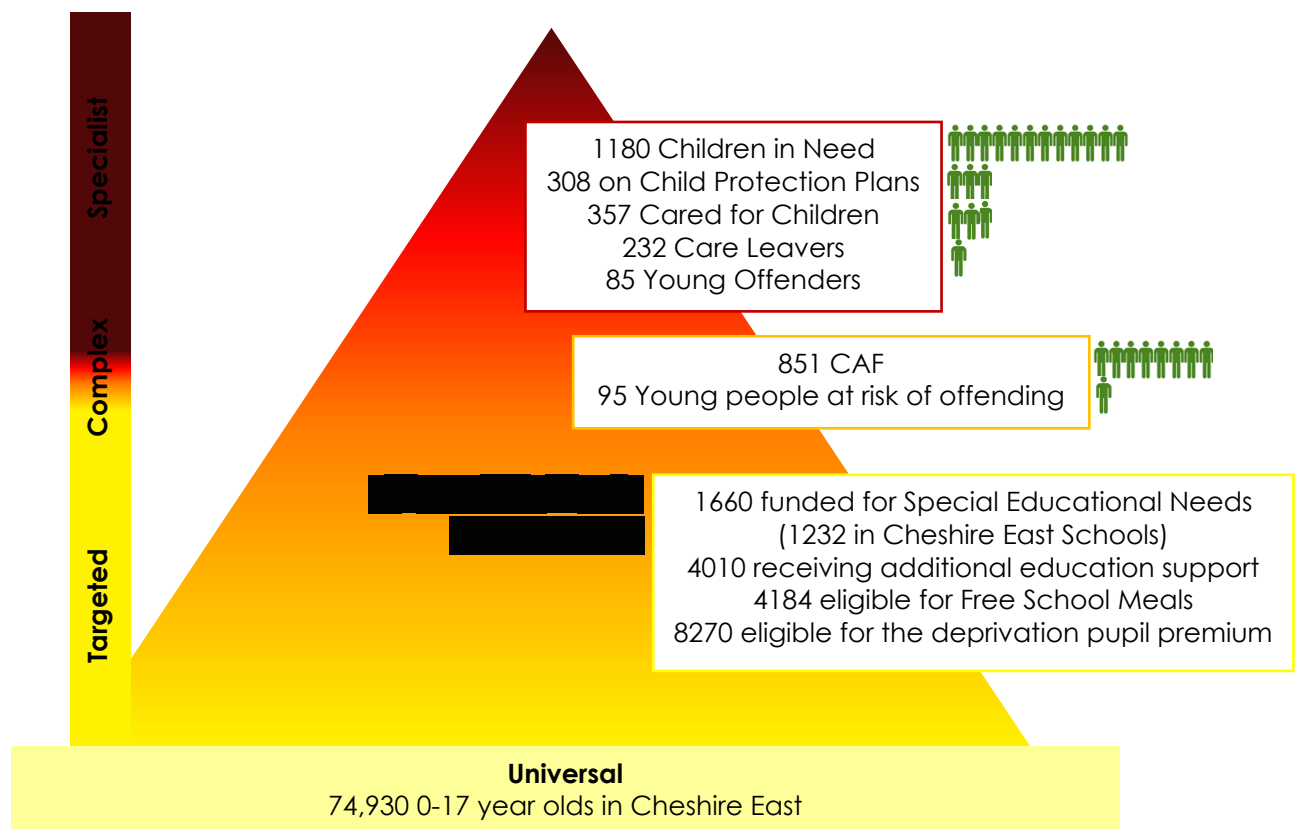
Demand for children's services continues to rise nationally, and this is also true within Cheshire East. At the end of March 2015, 2,217 children and young people in Cheshire East were identified as in need of a specialist children's service, which is an increase from the previous year of 2,116, a 5% increase overall. However, the number of children and young people subject to a Child Protection Plan has increased dramatically since the end of March 2014, from 203 to 308 in 2015, a 52% increase. This is due to better identification of and response to risk, and a greater focus on children and

young people who are at risk of being sexually exploited, reflected in the increase in children and young people subject to a child protection plan under the category of sexual abuse.

357 children and young people were cared for by Cheshire East Council at the end of March 2015. 38% of these live outside Cheshire East. The majority of cared for children and young people, 266 (75%), live with foster families, 29 live in residential children's homes, and 26 live with their parents. 21 children and young people were adopted in 2014-15.

The vulnerability profile below demonstrates the current level of need in Cheshire East from targeted to specialist services as at March 2015.

Cheshire East Vulnerability Profile



The Ofsted Inspection

In July 2015, Ofsted inspected Cheshire East Council's services for children in need of help and protection, cared for children and care leavers. This month long, unannounced inspection was carried out by a team of 10 inspectors and covered the range of local authority services for vulnerable children, young people and families, to understand the impact these are having on outcomes for children and young people, and particularly how professional practice impacts on the journey of the child. The inspection also evaluated the effectiveness of Cheshire East's Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), which is a partnership of key people within services across Cheshire East that work closely with children, young people and their families, working together to effectively safeguard children and young people.

This was the first inspection that Cheshire East Council has undergone that reviewed all the elements of the safeguarding system at the same time.

The inspection focused on the experiences of the child or young person and the effectiveness of the help and protection that they are offered. Inspectors scrutinised case files, observed practice and discussed the help and protection given to these children and young people with social workers, managers and other professionals. Where possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. This was a robust, in-depth and thorough inspection that left no stone unturned.

Ofsted published its Inspection Report¹ on 15 September 2015. The report recognises the significant improvements we have made as a partnership; however, we still have more work to do to make Cheshire East a great place to be young.



¹ Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children, Cheshire East – available at www.Ofsted.gov.uk

The judgements for the following areas of children's services received in the inspection are given below. Services were judged to be requiring improvement to be good overall.

Ofsted's definition of 'requires improvement' is that "there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm" and "the welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted." However, it also means that the local authority is not yet delivering 'good' services to protect, help and care for children, young people and their families.

1. Children who need Help and Protection		Requires improvement to be good
2. Cared for children and achieving permanence		Requires improvement to be good
2.1	Adoption Performance	Good
2.2	Experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires improvement to be good
3. Leadership, management and governance		Requires improvement to be good
4. Review of the LSCB		Requires improvement to be good

Ofsted made 17 recommendations for improvement to Cheshire East Council, and 8 for the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The full list of these is given in the supporting documents, along with an action plan to address each of these recommendations.



Our Improvement Journey

Background

Cheshire East has been on a continuous upward journey of improvement since April 2013.

In March 2013, Ofsted inspected Cheshire East's services for children and young people in need of help and protection and found the effectiveness of these to be inadequate overall. Ofsted made 16 recommendations for improvement, and Cheshire East was issued with a statutory Notice to Improve from the Minister on behalf of the Department for Education.

The key areas identified for improvement were:

- Timeliness of planning and assessment
- The rigour of the front door to Children's Social Care
- Management oversight
- Capturing the voice of children and young people
- Engagement with partners
- Quality and consistency of Social Work Practice

Cheshire East established an independently chaired Improvement Board in June 2013 to monitor and challenge progress against our improvement plan and to ensure the plan and quality assurance measures were robust and were effectively driving improvement to services. Our progress was also monitored by Ofsted during this period; Cheshire East took part in a pilot of Ofsted's Improvement Support programme which included 7 monitoring visits and culminated in a Progress Inspection in November 2014, which found Cheshire East to be making satisfactory progress with our improvements.

Since March 2013, extensive activity has taken place to drive improvement across Children's Services. Cheshire East has made significant progress in improving services for children, young people and families. The Ofsted Inspection Report published in July 2015 states that:

"Since the last Ofsted inspection of 2013, senior and political leaders have worked closely and effectively with the Cheshire East Improvement Board (CEIB) to improve the quality and effectiveness of services for children and their families."

"Senior and political leaders understand their strengths and weaknesses well. They have taken decisive steps to identify, tackle and systematically address the barriers to providing good services."

Improvements we've achieved so far

Considerable improvement has been made to the quality of social work practice and partnership working. Plans are increasingly outcome focused, SMART, and responsive to family circumstances. There is strong commitment to improvement across the partnership, and children and young people are increasingly influencing how we are continuing to develop and improve services at all levels. These improvements have been recognised in the Ofsted Inspection report from July 2015.

"Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in the quality of services provided to children in need of help and support, particularly in the identification and assessment of risk within families."

In order to improve services, since April 2013 we have completed a wealth of activity, which has included but is not limited to the following key achievements:

Improving frontline practice, to ensure it is consistently good, effective and outcome focused

- Launched a new, more robust, front door to Children's Social Care – the Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS).
- Created the Cheshire East Practice Standards for Social Workers, to ensure expectations on the quality of Social Work practice are clear.
- Realigned the Social Care Teams to reduce the number of system enforced transfer points so children and young people experience less changes in Social Workers
- Redeployed staff to ensure there is a permanent Group Manager leading each Social Work Team to provide consistent leadership
- Developed and successfully rolled out a Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Children's Social Care.
- Introduced fortnightly Performance Challenge Sessions, where senior managers analyse the performance of Social Work teams and hold frontline managers to account, in order to improve timeliness
- Introduced the annual Social Care Staff Survey, which is used to gain staff's views on how the service operates, what is working well and what isn't, and what factors would influence them to remain working in Cheshire East to inform our recruitment and retention strategy.
- Introduced a modern case management system which is much more effective at supporting good Social Work Practice.
- Implemented Practice Alerts from Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to ensure areas of concern are responded to and improved, and making challenge from IROs visible.

- Provided bespoke coaching and mentoring training for frontline Social Work managers
- Delivered Practice Excellence Training to Social Work Staff
- Implemented a robust audit process, including the views of children, young people and parents within Cheshire East Council, and on a multi-agency basis from the LSCB



Improving listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people

- Invested in a service for participation with children and young people, advocacy and independent visiting, which is four-fold increase on the previous service.
- Developed a Children and Young People's Participation and Rights Strategy and standards for Participation in partnership with young people
- Launched the Young Advisors Service, which has a diverse makeup and includes young people from a range of backgrounds, including those who have disabilities, are or were cared for, and have used mental health services
- Introduced November Children's Rights Month to raise awareness of the importance of listening to children and young people, and including them meaningfully in decision making, using a variety of activities and awareness raising across the partnership throughout the month of November
- Provided training on participation with children and young people across the partnership
- Included young people on the panel for the LSCB Sector Specific Challenge Sessions, which challenge organisations and services on the quality of their provision for children and young people
- Implemented a feedback survey for children, young people and parents on their experience of support through Child in Need Plans.
- Improved the involvement of the young people on the LSCB Board and the Children and Young People's Trust

Improving the partnership, so it effectively protects and ensures good outcomes for all children and young people in Cheshire East

- Developed a clear vision and ambition for Children's Services across the partnership – to create a great place to be young
- Appointed a new Chair of the LSCB to improve effectiveness, support and challenge
- Realigned the support to the LSCB with support to the other children and young people's Boards, including the Improvement Board and Children and Young People's Trust, to ensure plans to develop Children's Services are aligned.
- Reviewed and reformed the structure and business of the LSCB Board and its subgroups, including establishing an Executive Group to the LSCB to drive change.
- Revised the thresholds for the levels of need and communicated these across the partnership
- Introduced LSCB Sector Specific Challenge Sessions to scrutinise and challenge service areas on the quality of their provision to children and young people
- Introduced frontline visits by members of the LSCB to each other's services to develop understanding of services across the partnership and bring the views of frontline staff to the LSCB.
- Launched an awareness campaign across the partnership on child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- Developed and launched a strategy for addressing neglect, including tools for workers
- Trained elected members on their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities
- Introduced a partnership performance scorecard for the LSCB to monitor and challenge partnership services
- Improved the coverage of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on children and young people's safeguarding and child protection needs.
- Revised the multi-agency information sharing protocol

The recent Ofsted Inspection confirms what we have found in audits, that these improvements are resulting in improved outcomes for children and young people.

In relation to the key areas identified for improvement from the previous inspection, the Ofsted Inspection confirmed that we have improved:

✓ **Timeliness of planning and assessment**

“Timeliness of assessments is good with timescales appropriate to the needs of the child.”

✓ **The rigour of the front door to Children’s Social Care**

“Children in need of a social work assessment are identified and swiftly provided with appropriate levels of help through new arrangements by Cheshire East Consultancy Service.”

✓ **Management oversight**

“Formal and case supervision are regular and social workers report that managers at all levels are available, visible and take a direct interest in individual children and families.”

“Elected members and senior managers fully understand that establishing a stable and skilled group of first-line managers is fundamental to providing consistently good support to children and families. They are taking appropriate steps to strengthen management skills through a comprehensive management development strategy.”

✓ **Capturing the voice of children and young people**

“The participation of children and young people is a real strength in Cheshire East. Political and senior leaders create meaningful opportunities for young people to join them in strategic thinking and planning. Young people from the youth council, which includes children looked after and care leavers, are consistently represented and exert influence at most key forums such as Corporate Parenting Board, Children’s Trust Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.”

✓ **Engagement with partners**

“The local authority has worked hard to ensure that all partners now take responsibility for the improvement of services for children and families.”

“Partnership working has considerably improved with schools, health and the police working well with the local authority to help protect and support children and young people.”

✓ **Quality and consistency of Social Work Practice**

“Children’s views and ideas are included in assessments and recorded on case files. Social workers see children regularly and speak warmly about them.”

“Senior managers have consciously lowered their tolerance of poor practice, resulting in some social workers and managers changing roles or leaving the local authority. While this purposeful strategy has contributed to high staff turnover, it has also led to improvement in the experiences of children and families.”

The Ofsted recommendations from the inspection in March 2013 and the directions from the notice to improve are outlined in full in the supporting documents.



Our Strengths in Cheshire East

This Improvement Plan will utilise the strengths we have in Cheshire East to continue to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Our strengths in Cheshire East:

- **Strong commitment and ambition** for children and young people to receive the best help and support

“Leaders, managers and partners share a strong commitment and ambition for children and families to receive the best help and support.”

- The **plans, resources and political commitment** are in place to enable us to achieve this
- **Young people are actively involved** in strategic decisions and plans

“Engagement is a real strength, with young people exerting influence at a strategic level in all the key decision-making forums.”

- **We know our own strengths and areas for improvement**, and have strong ways to assess and drive progress through internal and external scrutiny and challenge

“The local authority embraces external scrutiny and challenge through peer reviews and multi-agency auditing, and is fully aware of areas of practice that still require improvement to be good.”

- **Our plans** to address the areas for improvement **have been robust and effective**
- **Staff** are on board with us, **are committed to children and young people and willing to make and shape changes**

“Social workers feel well supported. They are engaged in the improvement journey and can articulate achievements.”

- **Our strategic response to children who go missing or are at risk of child sexual exploitation is strong**
- **Strong Front Door to Children’s Social Care - Identification and referral to children’s services for assessment, intervention and support is swift**

- **Improving stability in Social Work Teams, reduced caseloads** for most social workers, and greater continuity for children.

“The local authority is actively addressing workforce instability and this is a key challenge in providing consistently good services for children and families. The local authority has introduced an ambitious and thoughtful range of recruitment and retention initiatives.”

- Child protection chairs and independent reviewing officers have **good oversight of individual cases**
- **Planning for permanence** is improving with a **good focus on adoption**.
- **Good Adoption Service with good support for adopters**

“Children with adoption plans are now matched with adopters in a timely manner. The local authority has effective collaborative arrangements for recruiting and training adopters and has more than sufficient numbers of adopters for children, leading to appropriate matching.”

Strengths of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB):

- **Clear commitment from everyone to improve effectiveness of the Board**
- **The right support mechanisms for monitoring and challenge are now in place**, resulting in significant progress to the Board's effectiveness and operations, especially over the last year

The Chair “has led significant development work and is a strong and credible chair who has assisted partner agencies to take joint ownership and accountability for safeguarding across Cheshire East.”

- **The Board holds partner agencies to account, causing effective change**

“There is significant evidence of the Board holding partner agencies to account. An independent panel of Board members and young people undertake sector-specific challenge sessions with partners to help identify where they need to improve their safeguarding arrangements and oversight.”

“All board members spoken to were able to provide examples of effective challenge and how this had changed their practice.”

- **The voice of the child is central to the LSCB's work, and is "innovative and influential"**

"The voice of the child is an area of real strength within the work of the board. Engagement with young people is innovative and influential, and there are clear examples of where this has had an impact on policy development and service delivery."

- Arrangements to protect children and young people at risk of **child sexual exploitation (CSE) are well coordinated**, with good intelligence sharing, and are effectively delivering the multi-agency strategy
- We have a **clear learning culture**, and we use external scrutiny and challenge well to help the LSCB's development

"The Board has a clear learning culture using external scrutiny and challenge well to help its development. This has included a recent peer challenge, the use of reflective reviews and the introduction of 'True for Us' reviews."

- **Our training offer is comprehensive** with a good take up of places at 87%
- **The work and priorities of the LSCB is well aligned with the other Children's Boards**
- **Our procedures are comprehensive, up to date and interactive**

"The CESC website is accessible, easy to navigate and well used, especially for details about training. It has a comprehensive, up-to-date set of procedures which are interactive."

- **Good information and resources on the LSCB website**, which is well used by practitioners

Over our improvement journey, we have developed effective ways of planning, driving, delivering, monitoring and challenging, to make change happen. We know ourselves well, and we have the drive and ambition to continue to improve to the next level. We want to create a great place to be young, and we will build on what we have already achieved, using the methods we know are effective, to improve our service so we deliver the very best service for our children and young people.

Our Improvement Plan

Focus for Improvement in 2015-16

We have made considerable improvements as a partnership; however, we still have more work to do to make Cheshire East a great place to be young for all children and young people.

Our new Improvement Plan concentrates on the areas we know we still need to focus on and develop to continue to improve, and will specifically address the areas for improvement highlighted in the Ofsted Inspection Report.

Because listening to children and young people is so important in ensuring we have the right services for them, embedding this throughout all services will remain a priority of our new plan.

The plan has four priorities which set out what we want to achieve to improve outcomes for children and young people:

- 1. Embedding listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people throughout services**
- 2. Ensuring frontline practice is consistently good, effective and outcome focused**
- 3. Improving senior management oversight of the impact of services on children and young people**
- 4. Ensuring the partnership effectively protects and ensures good outcomes for all children and young people in Cheshire East**



1. Embedding listening to and acting on the voice of children and young people throughout services

We have made real progress embedding the voice of children and young people in our services, and this was sighted by Ofsted as a strength for both Cheshire East Council and the Local Safeguarding Board. Children and young people's views are key to helping us to continue to develop our services, so how we will ensure we build on what we have achieved so far, and continue to create opportunities to find out what children and young people think, feel, and want is included within our action plans. The views of children and young people receiving services will also be a main part of assessing how well we are doing in improving the quality of the services we provide.

The key area that Ofsted identified for improvement under this priority was:

- **Strengthening the use of feedback from complaints** to drive improvements to services

2. Ensuring frontline practice is consistently good, effective and outcome focused

Although social work practice has considerably improved, overall practice needs to be more consistent to provide a good service to children and young people. We need to support managers to be leaders for good practice, and we need to continue with our successful recruitment programme attracting the right people to work with our families in Cheshire East. Good, effective and outcome focused social work will result in children and young people being safer, having confidence and trust in their Social Worker, and the right support at the right time based on what's important for the child and young person, which will result in better outcomes.

The key areas that Ofsted identified for improvement under this priority were:

- **Management oversight and challenge** – ensuring managers effectively challenge practice to improve outcomes for children and young people, and that evidence of their guidance and challenge is clearly recorded.
- **Consistency in the quality of practice** – we need to ensure that all children and young people get a consistently high quality service – that assessments and plans are clear and action is taken in a timely way.
- **Use of all information to inform planning** – making sure that all relevant information is used to inform our planning for children and young people, so that this is the best possible quality.

- **More timely access to early help** when families do not meet the threshold for social work intervention – reducing delays families sometimes experience
- **Achieving permanence quicker** – we need to ensure permanence for children and young people is a top priority and is achieved as quickly as possible
- **The child's record and the reasons for decisions** – need to be clearer for children and young people so they can understand their stories.

3. Improving senior management oversight of the impact of services on children and young people

We need to improve how we measure the impact of services on children and young people so that we have a clear picture of this and a joined up approach for all our services. This will help us to effectively target our efforts on the areas that need it most, and help us to learn from the services we know are working really effectively. We need to ensure that all managers have the information they need to know how effectively their service is operating in order to drive improvements day to day within their teams. Senior managers will have oversight of the most complex cases to ensure that where children and young people have a range of needs, the right support is being given to them to support them.

The key areas that Ofsted identified for improvement under this priority were:

- **Scrutiny of performance of services for cared for children and young people** – developing and improving these services, and ensuring that progress is reported to the partnership Boards.
- **Commissioning arrangements** – ensuring children and young people have the right services in place that they need to support them effectively
- **Timely identification, assessment and monitoring of private fostering and connected persons' arrangements** – we need to ensure we have good oversight of children and young people who are in the care of other families

4. Ensuring the partnership effectively protects and ensures good outcomes for all children and young people in Cheshire East

We need to unite our services and continue to develop partnership working by developing one way of working. This will make it clear what is expected from each person's role, and will ensure that everyone is focused on achieving the best outcome for children and young people. We will improve links between the strategic decision making partnership boards, and we will involve practitioners across the partnership in driving changes to services. This will help us to continually improve our services and will make sure that services are joined up.

The key areas for improvement identified by Ofsted for the Local Safeguarding Children Board were:

- **Performance Management** – we need to continue to develop how we capture partnership performance
- **Scrutiny of services for cared for children and young people** – the Board needs to have greater oversight and focus on this
- **Impact of our Neglect Strategy** – we need to assess and evaluate what impact this Strategy has had on outcomes for children and young people
- **Links with the Family Justice Board** and the Board need to be strengthened
- **Quality of Private Fostering casework** – the Board needs to drive improvements to this through the Private Fostering Sub Group
- **Influence at the Health and Wellbeing Board** – the Board needs to ensure that the agenda for children and young people is championed and is a greater focus at the Health and Wellbeing Board
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) strategy** – needs a coordinated plan
- **Protocol around notifications, Serious Case Reviews (SCRs), and the national panel** – needs formalising and agreeing by the Board.

Our Action plan outlining the activity we complete to meet our areas for development and the Ofsted recommendations is sectioned under these priorities.

Our approach

We have used the recent Ofsted Inspection as an opportunity to review and refocus our improvement across the whole continuum of need.

Our previous improvement activity was rightly focused on ensuring that we had the right people, systems and support to keep children and young people in need of help and protection safe. Now that we have achieved this, and services are robust and effective, we can broaden our focus to developing a consistently good approach to all services.

Our Improvement Plan runs from November 2015, but we have not been resting in between then and the Ofsted visit in July. In that time we have implemented a number of improvements in response to the Ofsted recommendations, these have included but are not limited to the following activities:

- Introduced a monthly permanence case tracking meeting, chaired by the Principal Manager for Cared for Children and Care Leavers, with Group Managers and IROs, the Children and Families' Commissioning Manager and Head of the Virtual School, to ensure clear senior management oversight and drive for permanence
- Introduced a standing item on sharing and celebrating good practice in Practice and Performance workshops – Social Workers and Practice Managers present examples of their own good practice
- Extended the practice coaching audit programme to reflect the practice standards for cared for children's services
- Held focused sessions on Child Sexual Exploitation, Reg 24 and Connected Persons arrangements, and Female Genital Mutilation, in the Social Work Practice and Performance Workshops
- Launched the new Pan Cheshire Missing from Home and Care Protocol
- Held the first LSCB Children and Young People's Challenge and Evidence Panel which challenged key members of the LSCB on changes children and young people want to safeguarding services based on the LSCB Children and Young People's Survey
- Researched good practice in other LSCBs around performance frameworks
- Realigned the support to the Corporate Parenting Board and Corporate Parenting Operational Group with the support to the other Children and Young People's Partnership Boards to ensure strategic links and oversight between these Boards is strengthened
- Ensured that Private Fostering is included in the Level 1 Multi-agency Safeguarding Training

Following the publication of the report, we have had conversations and discussions with all the key people who will be involved in delivering and scrutinising the plan, and have gained their views on what action we need to take to develop our services to the next level.

This has included all social work staff, the Improvement Board, the Corporate Parenting Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board, The Children and Young People's Trust, the LSCB, LSCB Executive and Sub Groups to the LSCB – including the Safeguarding Children Operational Group of frontline partnership managers, Cheshire East Council's Children and Families Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Families' Senior Leadership Team. Young people are members of the Corporate Parenting Board, Children and Young People's Trust, and LSCB, and have contributed their ideas as well, and will be carrying out some of the improvements to services outlined in this plan.



We are always looking for opportunities to learn and develop, so in the production of this plan we have sought an external and independent view of our plan from a consultant with considerable experience quality assuring plans to improve.

As part of our continuing development and improvement, key managers within Cheshire East Council will be attending all the Ofsted 'Getting to Good' Seminars in autumn 2015 and spring 2016. These seminars focus on different areas of practice and look at what common areas for improvement across local authorities contribute to a judgement of 'requires improvement'. They consider contemporary research, inspection and survey findings. The learning from these seminars will be used to develop our services over 2016.

Cheshire East is also part of the North West Working to Improve Group, which brings together other local authorities and shares ways of working to improve services. We will continue to contribute to this group and use ideas from this forum to develop our services throughout 2015-16.



Who we involved in our plan:

Scrutiny and Challenge from independent bodies – Ofsted and the DfE, the Improvement Board and Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Strategic Decision Makers through the LSCB and LSCB Executive, Children and Young People's Trust, and Corporate Parenting Board



Senior Leaders for Children's Services in Cheshire East Council through the Children and Families Senior Leadership Team



Key partners delivering improvements to safeguarding through the LSCB Sub Groups



Frontline Managers across the Partnership through the Safeguarding Children Operational Group



All Social Care frontline Staff at the Practice and Performance Workshops, and the Safeguarding Unit through Team meetings



Children and Young People in Cheshire East – who's views were a key part of the inspection, and are represented on the Partnership Boards



Outcomes

We want all children, young people and families in Cheshire East to receive the best support from our services to improve outcomes for them.

We want all children and young people in Cheshire East to:

- **Be safe, and protected from harm**
- Have a **loving, caring and stable environment** where they can grow and develop
- Have a **permanent home as soon as possible** when they need to become cared for by the local authority
- **Achieve to their full potential**
- Have a range of opportunities for and the **right support to go into employment, further education or training** when they reach adulthood

Children, young people and parents have told us they want:

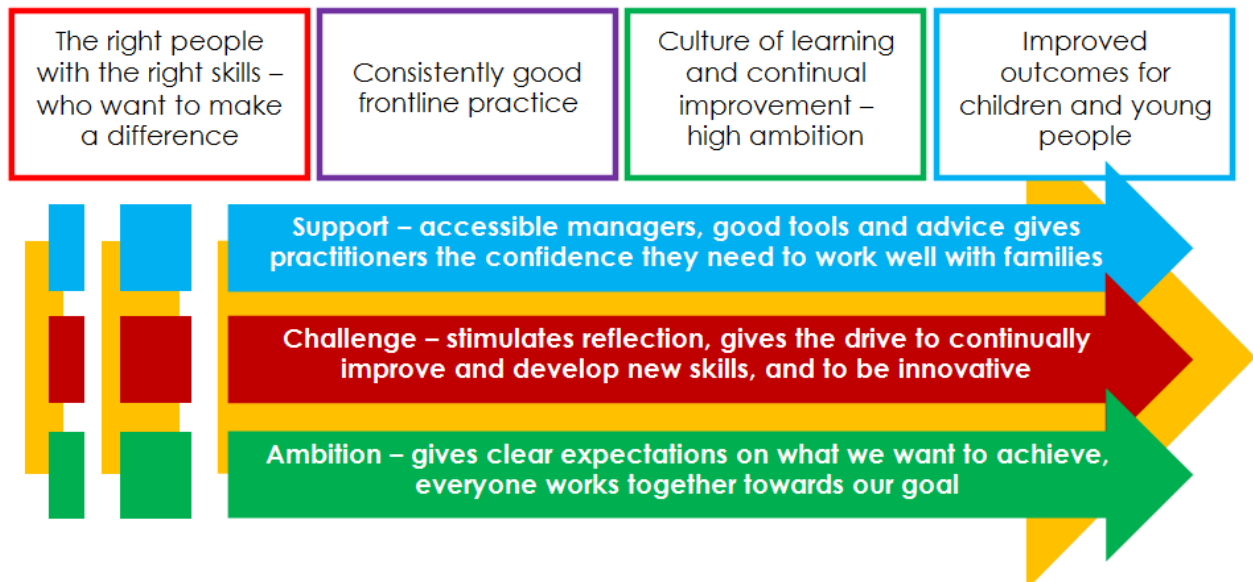
- **To be listened to**
- **To be included in their plans**, and **understand what the concerns are** and why they need a plan
- For **professionals to be clear with them** about what is going to or could happen

We know that children, young people and parents experience better outcomes when they understand what professionals are doing, how and why.

We want to develop and embed **consistently good practice, and a culture of continual learning, support and challenge**, where everyone supports each other to get the best outcomes for children and young people, and is confident to speak up for young people and challenge any practice that is not putting them at the centre.

We want children, young people, parents and carers to be involved in decision making from the outset, as they are the people best placed to know what works for them.

We want to invest in and recognise the skills of our staff. We have very passionate, committed and creative professionals in Cheshire East, we want to cultivate these people and make the most of their skills, and we want to continue to attract new highly qualified people excited to work with us.



Action!

Our staff are passionate and committed, and they are the key to making the changes a success.

We already involve staff in decision making and planning, and staff understand and are committed to our improvement journey, but we think we can do more to make sure **everyone is a champion for young people and for change.**

So how will we make this happen?

Inspire
Believe
Succeed



We will focus on **empowering staff** to **make their views heard and to make changes** through:

- Widespread culture change on including staff in decision making across all of children's' services, led by the Children and Families Senior Leadership Team
- Celebrating good practice – this will be a feature in all supervisions and Practice and Performance workshops, and will help staff to identify and call attention to good practice in themselves and others, receive recognition, and create a positive culture of learning and sharing

- Giving more responsibility for making and instigating changes to the Practice Champions Group
- Developing the operation of the LSCB Safeguarding Children Operational Group, consisting of frontline partnership managers, to make this group more interactive and a driver for change
- Improving how we communicate learning and tools directly with frontline workers
- Continuing to use existing effective engagement forums, such as the Practice and Performance Workshop and the annual Social Work Staff Survey

We will empower **managers to be leaders for change** through:

- Modelling constructive support and challenge through the Group Manager role
- Group Managers taking more responsibility for leading and challenging, for example leading Performance Challenge Sessions, and developing Policies and Procedures for their service areas
- Giving Practice Managers the skills and confidence to be good leaders through the management training programme
- Developing the operation of the LSCB Safeguarding Children Operational Group, consisting of frontline partnership managers, using this to develop and raise awareness of tools to support practitioners and managers, and agree one consistent way of working across the partnership

We will continue to **invest in our staff** by:

- Seeking and listening to their views
- Continuing with our successful recruitment strategy, recruiting the right people to work with us in Cheshire East
- Continuing to offer the Aspirant Managers course to develop the next generation of our leaders
- Developing continual professional development opportunities and raising the profile of these
- Continuing to monitor and reduce caseloads
- Continuing to offer ICT support and equipment for remote and mobile working

We also need to focus on improving consistency in practice for children and young people across all our services, so that they receive the right support for

their needs at the right time, and all professionals work together to achieve the best outcome.

We will continue to **improve our quality of practice** through:

- Developing one way of working
- Developing multi-agency practice standards
- Reviewing and revising the Cheshire East Practice Standards so Social Workers are clear on what is expected from their roles in Cheshire East

The core training offer to support good practice for Social Workers and Managers is included within the supporting documents.

This plan is the first stage of a three-year improvement programme to develop consistently good and outstanding services for children and young people.



The plan is focused on activity to improve services over the next year, creating a blueprint for the future. We recognise that the plan and the improvement programme will evolve in response to feedback from young people and staff, audit findings and external review. Our progress and the plan will be regularly reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that we are achieving the impact we need for children and young people, and will be revised to include any new activity as needed.

Three-Year Improvement Programme Overview

Nov 2015

Sept 2016

Sept 2017

Sept 2018

1. Developing the Cheshire East Way (Year one)

- Researching good practice in other local authorities
- Developing one way of working
- Young people's views driving service development
- Sharing and celebrating good practice
- Increase engagement opportunities with staff
- Empowering staff and frontline managers to lead and make changes
- Responding to the recommendations and areas for improvement from the Ofsted Inspection
- Developing an overarching quality assurance framework for Children and Families Services
- Strengthening governance arrangements and links between partnership boards across children's and adult services

2. Embedding the Cheshire East Way (Year two)

- Embedding the Cheshire East way
- Implement communications strategy to support to embedding the Cheshire East way
- Senior Leaders to monitor performance and impact, completing deep dives of service areas
- Revisit themes from the Ofsted inspection through audit to assess progress
- Refresh Improvement Plan to address areas for improvement from audit, children and young people's feedback and staff feedback (Sept 2016).
- Peer Review of progress (March 2017)

3. Aiming higher (Year three)

- Increase ambition for children's services
- Look wider for best and cutting edge practice
- Consider innovative ways to develop services further
- Increase focus on early help and building resilience
- Refresh Improvement Plan to address areas for improvement from audit, children and young people's feedback and staff feedback (Sept 2017).

Driving, Monitoring and Reviewing our Progress

Measuring our Progress

Assessing and monitoring where we need to improve is one of our strengths in Cheshire East, so our Quality Assurance Framework builds on our existing system, extending it to cover services for cared for children.

“The quality assurance framework is comprehensive and includes a strong emphasis on case auditing.”

An overarching quality assurance framework for Cheshire East Council's Children's Services will be developed in 2015-16 to ensure there is a consistent, joined up and comprehensive assurance process for all Children's Services.

Progress against our plan will be measured on a quarterly basis. We will measure and demonstrate progress through:

- The progress of the activity undertaken to meet the recommendation or area for improvement within the timescale
- Performance on the key measures specified in the plan for each area
- Audit findings and other quality assurance activity
- Feedback from children, young people and parents on our services
- Feedback from staff and partners on improvements.

An overarching Children and Families Performance Scorecard will be developed in 2015-16, which will report on all the key areas of Cheshire East Council's Children's Services. This will be scrutinised by the Children and Families' Senior Leadership Team. This scorecard will include thresholds to judge the standard of performance, and will be based on the Improvement Board Performance Book, which was positively received by Ofsted and the Improvement Board.

“Detailed and comprehensive performance information ensures managers at all levels have a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in services for children. Where commentary and analysis are included this is particularly useful, such as the performance book’ used by the Improvement Board.”

The LSCB Performance Scorecard will also be further developed, and will incorporate key performance measures around the Improvement Plan in order to effectively monitor and challenge progress across the partnership.

Impact

We are improving our services so that children and young people experience better outcomes. To assess the impact of our improvements on children and young people, we will use information from four different sources.

Performance

An up to date, month by month picture, showing a clear trajectory of progress. Allowing us to set targets and evaluate our performance against our statistical neighbours.

Feedback from Children and Young People, Parents and Carers

What children and young people, parents and carers want and is important to them, what their experience is of our services.

Qualitative Information

Detailed information on what is working well and areas for improvement for specific services, including what the causes of issues are.

Feedback from Staff

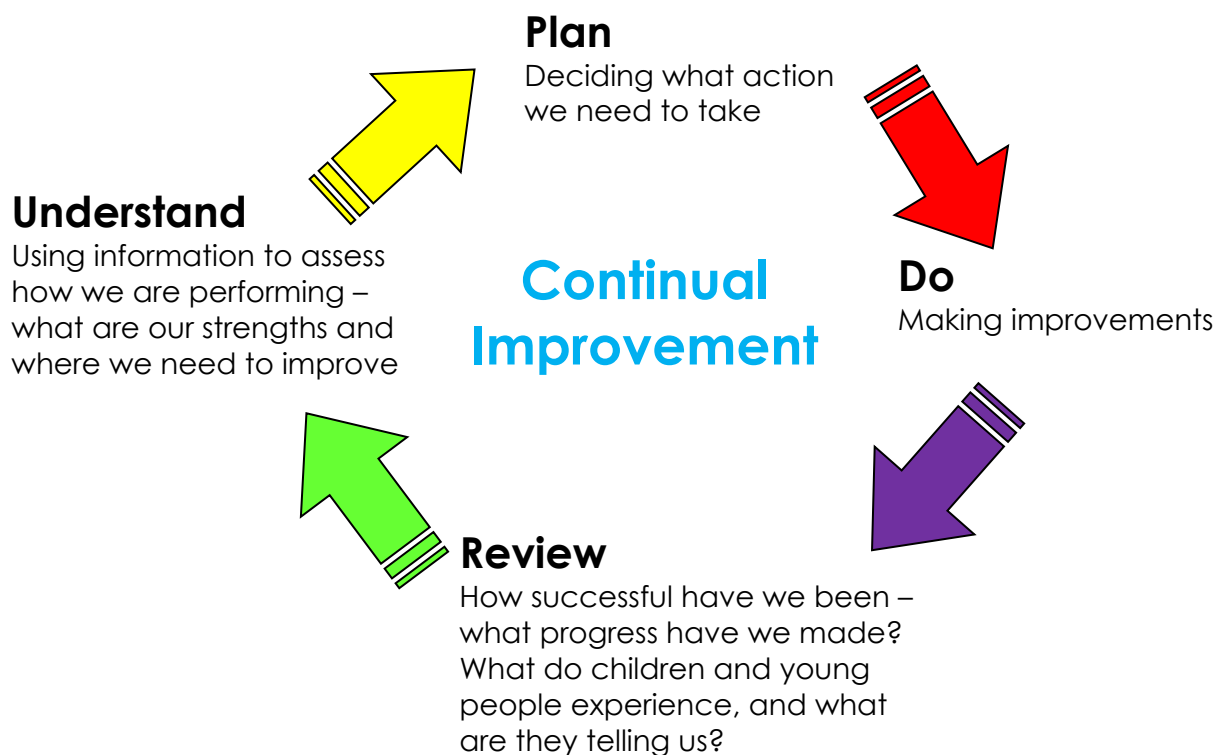
What staff know would help them to work with families, what is working well, and what could work better.

This will allow us to triangulate the evidence so that we know what impact improvements are making. They will also help us to drive and shape further improvements, as they will tell us more about our service, what we are doing well, and where we can improve further.

In assessing our progress against our action plan we will review information from each of these four sources where possible.



We think it is important to have a continual learning and self-improvement culture, and we will use information from these sources to continually evaluate and improve our services throughout the year.



We will continue to communicate the findings of this activity to staff, children and young people, partners, and other key stakeholders through our e-newsletters, staff forums, and partnership Boards. An overview of the ways we engage with stakeholders is included in the supporting documents.

An overarching children and families Quality and Assurance Framework will be developed in 2016 which will ensure that we have a coordinated and consistent approach to evaluating the impact of all services for children and young people to effectively drive improvements to all services.

More detail on the sources we will use to evaluate impact is given in the Quality Assurance Framework, and our Improvement Action Plan.

Scrutinising, Challenging and Monitoring Progress

The delivery of the Improvement Plan will sit with a number of key partnerships. The Improvement Board has taken the lead role in scrutinising, challenging and monitoring progress, and this will continue until the Minister is satisfied that Cheshire East has made sufficient improvements, and has robust arrangements in place to ensure we continue to improve.

The governance arrangements described below will be put in place once the existing Improvement Board is disbanded, to take up this lead role to ensure that progress is closely monitored and scrutinised, and that the pace of progress is challenged and driven.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will be responsible, as the overarching partnership board, for monitoring, scrutinising and challenging the progress and effectiveness of the plan to address the recommendations and areas for improvement identified by Ofsted, and will take over the role currently occupied by the Improvement Board.

As the accountable body, the Health and Wellbeing Board will receive quarterly updates on progress against actions, performance and quality assurance information.

There will be two levels for sign off of activity against the plan:

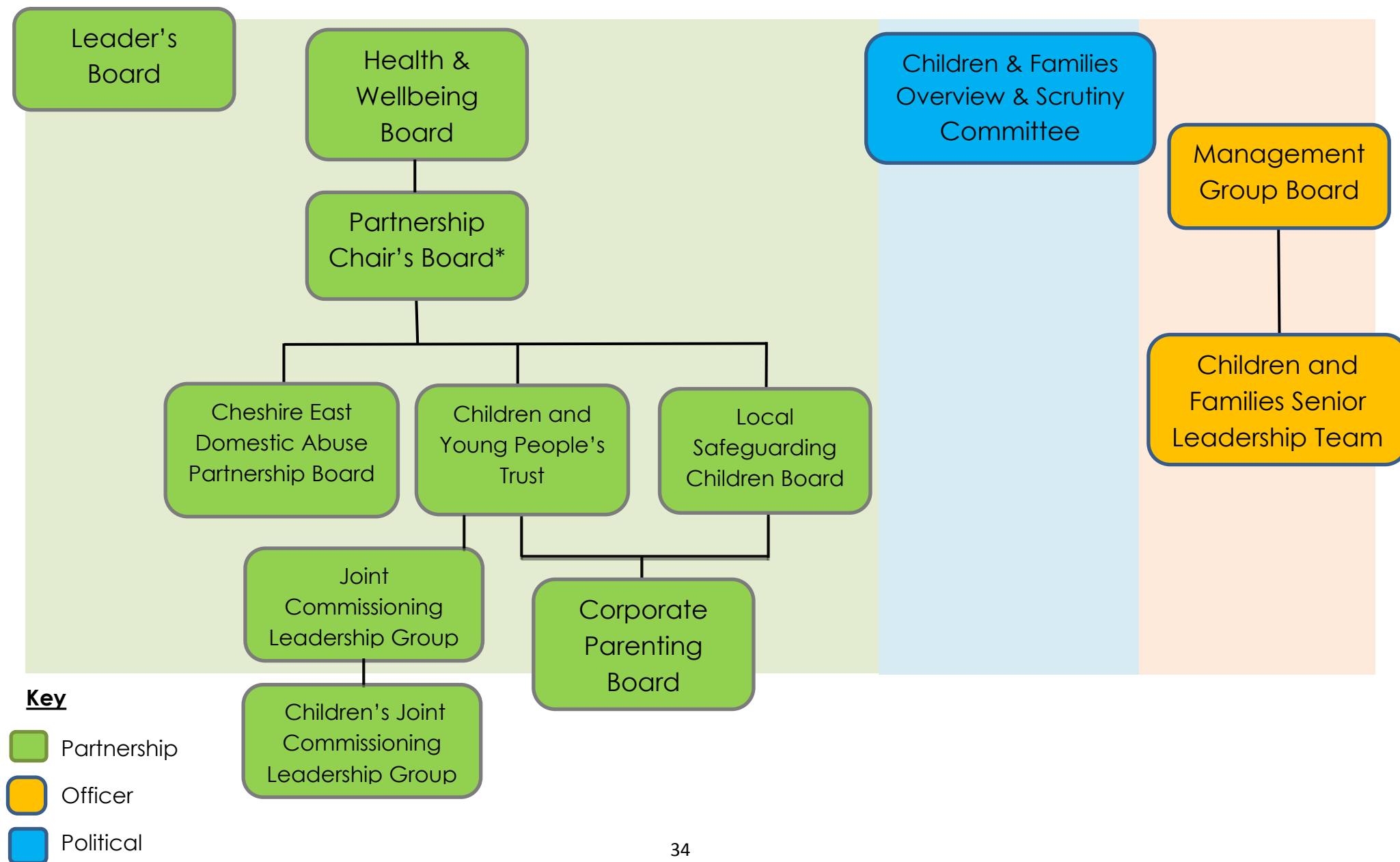
1. **Phase 1 sign off** - the Board is satisfied that the activity to address the recommendation has been completed;
2. **Phase 2 sign off** - the Board is satisfied that the activity has resulted in improvements for children and young people, evidenced by the quantitative and qualitative information, and feedback from children, young people and staff.

The Health and Wellbeing Board will also receive the updated risk register for the plan, and will request further more detailed reports where performance suggests there are risks or issues in delivering on the improvements.

The strategic partnership boards responsible for improving outcomes for children and young people in Cheshire East are the Local Safeguarding Children Board, the Children and Young People's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board under the priorities of 'Starting Well' and 'Developing Well'. The Corporate Parenting Board is also key for driving improvements for cared for children and young people.

A framework showing the reporting structures and accountabilities between the Boards and sub-groups is included on the next page, and the remits of each Board are explained.

Governance for the Improvement Plan



Partnership Governance

Leader's Board

The **Leader's Board** is responsible for joint commissioning and integrated delivery. The members of this Board are high level representatives from the Council, Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and Fire Authority. Any issues or risks to the implementation of the improvement plan that cannot be resolved by the other partnership boards, will be escalated to the Leader's Board.

Health and Wellbeing Board

The **Health and Wellbeing Board** provides the vision and coordinated drive to address the health and wellbeing needs of the local population of Cheshire East to reduce unacceptable and avoidable variations in health and healthcare. Services for children, young people and their families come under the 'Starting Well' and 'Living Well' priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Board. This Board will hold the other children and young people's partnerships to account for their delivery of the improvement plan.

Partnership Chair's Board

The **Partnership Chair's Board** is a proposed new Board to be made up from the Chairs of the other children and young people's partnership boards, and relevant officers. This Board will ensure that cross-partnership issues are effectively delivered. This Board will also report progress against the improvement plan to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Local Safeguarding Children Board

The **Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB)** is an independently chaired statutory partnership board that works together to ensure that where children are harmed, or at risk of harm, all agencies actively cooperate to safeguard them and promote their welfare. The LSCB is supported by an LSCB Executive Group and a number of sub-groups that progress separate work streams of the LSCB Business Plan. The LSCB will monitor and challenge partnership progress against the improvement plan.

Children and Young People's Trust

The **Children and Young People's Trust** is a partnership Board that aims to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Cheshire East through strategic leadership and decision making, determining joint priorities, joint planning, and ensuring integrated working. The Trust is responsible for ensuring that the Children and Young People's Plan and the wider partnership supports the improvement plan.

Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Partnership Board

The **Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Partnership Board** co-ordinates the shared work of all key statutory and voluntary sector communities to keep people safe from domestic abuse and make best use of resources.

Corporate Parenting Board

The **Corporate Parenting Board** is mainly made up from officers from across the Council's services and partners that can impact on outcomes for cared for children and young people. The Board will be responsible for ensuring delivery of the improvement plan areas for cared for children and young people.

Joint Commissioning Leadership Group

The **Joint Commissioning Leadership Group** co-ordinates joint commissioning across the partnership for children's and adults' services to ensure this is joined up and the partnership works effectively together to meet the needs of people within Cheshire East.

Children's Joint Commissioning Leadership Group

The **Children's Joint Commissioning Leadership Group** is focused on joint commissioning arrangements for children's services to ensure these are prioritised. It co-ordinates joint commissioning across the partnership for to ensure this is joined up and the partnership works effectively together to meet the needs of children and young people within Cheshire East.

Council Member Governance

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The **Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is part of the Committee structure of the Council and will carry out the overview and scrutiny functions of the improvement plan on behalf of the Council.

Council Officer Governance

Management Group Board

The Council's **Management Group Board** brings together Chief Officers from across Council departments and oversees delivery of the improvement plan across Council services. The Board will also deal with risks and issues that need to be resolved at a wider council level.

Children and Families Senior Leadership Team

The **Children and Families Senior Leadership Team** are senior managers from across the Council's Children's Services and is responsible for ensuring delivery of the improvement plan at a service level. The team will monitor,

challenge and ensure appropriate reports are presented to other bodies in respect of the improvement plan.

Reviewing our Progress

The Boards that are leads for delivery for the action plans will scrutinise and drive progress against their plans on a bimonthly basis. They will recommend when plans are ready for consideration for sign off by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Partnership Chair's Board will review progress against all the action plans, and will coordinate the strategic drive for improvement.

Progress against the plan will be reviewed by the Health and Wellbeing Board on a quarterly basis.

A new Improvement Plan will be developed in September 2016 for the next stage in our improvement journey.



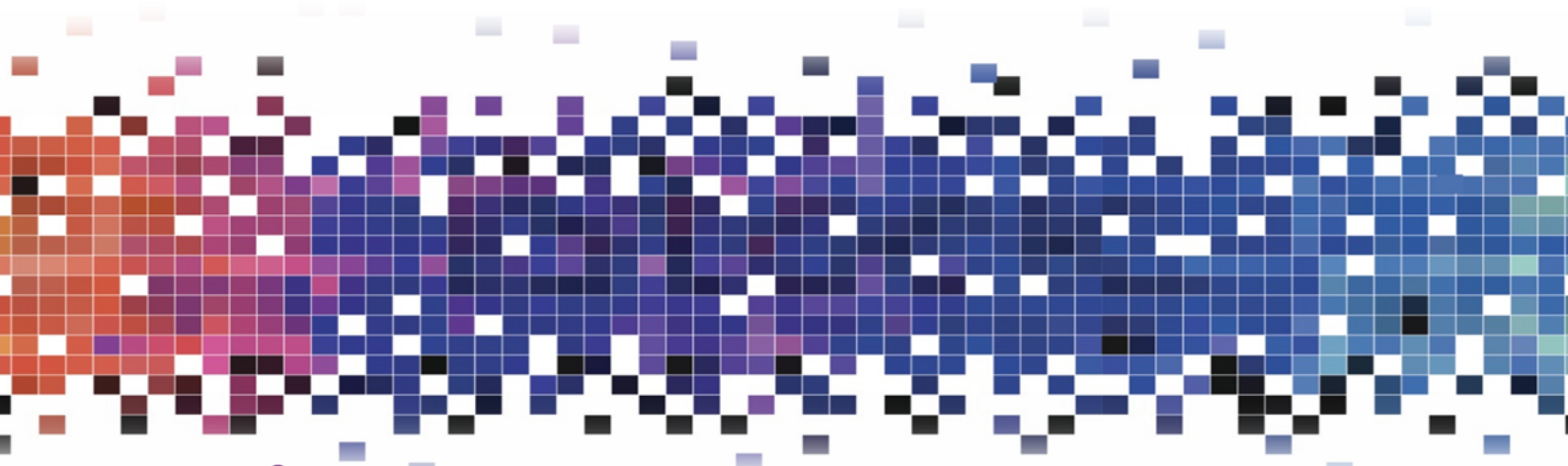
Supporting Documents

There are a number of documents that support this plan and should be read alongside it. These are all available on [our website](#).

- Improvement Action Plan
- Quality Assurance Framework
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Core Training Offer for Social Workers and Managers
- Risk Register
- Ofsted recommendations from the Inspection in July 2015
- Ofsted recommendations from the Inspection in March 2013 and Improvement Notice Actions

Feedback

If you have any thoughts or views on this plan, or how well we are progressing, please do contact us at **C&FSpeakUp@cheshireeast.gov.uk**



Cheshire East
Children & Young
People's Trust



Cheshire East Local
Safeguarding Children Board

