

Title of Report:	Children's Services Improvement Plan
Report to be considered by:	Council on 20 July 2015
Forward Plan Ref:	C3000

Purpose of Report: To advise the Council of the Communities Directorate's response to Ofsted's judgement of our children's services as being "inadequate"

To provide the Council with the draft Ofsted Improvement Plan that includes the resources that are immediately required to move the service out of inadequate and start the journey to good.

Recommended Action: For Council to approve the Improvement Plan to ensure Children's Services are no longer "inadequate".

Reason for decision to be taken: Improvement Plan (Appendix A) needs in principle council approval before submission to the Department for Education no later than 24 August 2015

DfE "improvement partners" are working with the service and are due to visit on the 21st July 2015. They will expect confirmation of the Council's position on the Improvement Plan to reassure Ministers in the Department for Education.

Other options considered: The Improvement Plan is a requirement from the Department of Education following any Ofsted judgement and its content has been carefully considered.

Key background documentation: Ofsted Inspection Report May 2015
Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services.

<p>The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aim:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSA3 – Protect and support those who need it</p> <p>The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSP5 – Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</p>
<p>The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy aim and priority by:</p> <p>Directing the activity of colleagues in children's services and beyond to ensure that our children's safeguarding work ceases to be "inadequate" and in due course becomes "good" and that the recommendations following the Ofsted inspection of March 2015 are implemented.</p>

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Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	09 July 2015

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Implications

Policy: There are no major policy implications arising from this report

Financial: There is evidence that in order to be able to successfully implement the requirements of Ofsted Service improvements social worker caseloads need to be reduced and management oversight strengthened. This has led to the identification of resources required immediately to secure this position and safe service delivery. The plan also outlines some one off costs to carry out those activities required by the Improvement Plan that cannot be achieved within existing resources.

The anticipated costs of the Improvement Plan are incorporated within the Ofsted Improvement Plan at Appendix A and can be seen on page 47.

Personnel: All staff in children's services and beyond will find that the requirements of this improvement plan place greater demands on them in terms of quality and consistency. The requirements themselves are not controversial and are simply good practice in the domain of safeguarding. However, they may place demands on staff, due to capacity issues, which some staff find problematic. There may therefore be an unsettled period as everyone adjusts to consistently higher expectations

Legal/Procurement: One area of recommendations specifically relates to the timely commissioning of legal advice and the pursuit of care proceedings in circumstances where we may previously have waited longer before acting. This is likely to lead to increased activity from the Joint Legal Team, which will need to be planned and budgeted for.

Property: There are no immediate property implications from this report.

Risk Management: Children's safeguarding is one of the areas of highest risk for the council including statutory, reputational, legal and financial pressures. This improvement plan mitigates against these risks for the council itself, and more importantly for individual vulnerable children and families we are working with. If successfully implemented it will enable the service to improve from its current position of "inadequate".

Is this item relevant to equality?	Yes	No
Please tick relevant boxes Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> • Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> • Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality? <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> • Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> • Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 		
Outcome (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality) Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at http://intranet/EqIA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not relevant to equality <input type="checkbox"/>		

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Report is to note only	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2015, Ofsted carried out an inspection of West Berkshire's Children and Families' Services. The outcome of this inspection was that our "services for children in need of help and protection" were judged to be "inadequate" and therefore the local authority's overall effectiveness in delivering children and family services was judged to be "inadequate" too.
- 1.2 The Ofsted report contained 17 recommendations which we must implement effectively. Of these, four are for "Priority and Immediate Action" and a further 13 are "Areas for Improvement".
- 1.3 The Council is also publicly committed to achieving "good" standards of safeguarding, which is delivered through its children and family services.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 Ofsted's recommendations cover five domains. The Improvement Plan (See Appendix A) makes clear our vision for children, young people and families. It then outlines these five domains and within them a number of improvement commitments West Berkshire has made - statements of intent which demonstrate our commitment to getting to "good" for our safeguarding practice and achieving our vision.
- 2.2 The Improvement Plan shows how our improvement commitments link to Ofsted's recommendations and in a section headed "How will we know we have done it?", shows what will be measured, monitored, observed or established to demonstrate that we have met our improvement commitments.
- 2.3 For each domain (e.g. "Improving our Leadership, Management, Governance and Partnerships") the Improvement Plan shows how the improvement commitments are translated into SMART actions. These detailed actions have a "By when?" date set against them, a lead officer with responsibility for completing them, a RAG status (except for those actions which haven't yet been initiated) and a Status Update which outlines our progress to date. Where the improvement required cannot be achieved within existing resources, the costs of the improvement appear clearly in the plan. The total anticipated cost - both one off costs and recurring, is provided in the plan.
- 2.4 Once approved by the Department for Education (no later than the 24th August 2015), this Improvement Plan will be the core document against which children and family services improvement will be monitored and evaluated.
- 2.5 In addition to this Improvement Plan the service has reviewed its frontline social work teams and is developing recommendations for "Getting to Good". These considerations will be ongoing in light of the impact of the Ofsted Improvement Plan on issues of performance, quality and capacity.
- 2.6 "Getting to Good" recommendations will continue to be reviewed and refined in the light of the service's ongoing improvement and will be presented to the Council's Executive for consideration and agreement in January 2016, by which time the main

elements of the Improvement Plan will have been implemented and the next phase of our service improvement can be considered from a secure evidence base.

3. Equalities Impact Assessment Outcomes

An outline equalities impact review has been undertaken on this plan, indicating that the proposals could impact upon all groups with protected characteristics.

The work of children and family services impacts on the most vulnerable children, young people and families in our district, including some who have protected characteristics under the Equalities Act. A more comprehensive EqIA will therefore need to be carried out. It will also be important to share and consult on the Improvement Plan with those likely to be affected by it, even though the focus of the work is on improvement, so any change should be beneficial.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Improvement Plan is a required mandatory response to an Ofsted "inadequate" judgement. The Council is recommended to approve it and to monitor its implementation.
- 4.2 The focus at this time is on taking the necessary remedial actions to bring the service out of "inadequate". In January 2016 firm proposals to carry forward the next phase of service improvement will be brought to the Council's Executive for consideration and agreement.

Executive Report

5. Introduction

- 5.1 In March 2015, Ofsted carried out an inspection of West Berkshire's Children and Families' Services against the "Single Inspection Framework" (known as a SIF inspection).
- 5.2 The outcome of this inspection was that West Berkshire was judged to "require improvement" in relation to services for looked after children and care leavers, leadership management and governance and for our Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). However, "services for children in need of help and protection" were determined to be "inadequate". Because this is what is known as a "limiting judgement" the local authority's overall effectiveness in delivering children and family services was judged to be "inadequate" too.
- 5.3 The Ofsted report contained 17 recommendations which the local authority must implement effectively. Of these, four are for "Priority and Immediate Action" and a further 13 are "Areas for Improvement".
- 5.4 The Council is also publicly committed to achieving a "good" standard of safeguarding, which is delivered through its children and family services.
- 5.5 The recommendations, taken directly from the Ofsted report and numbered accordingly are:

Priority and immediate action

Leadership management and governance

1. Implement the following areas for improvement from the previous inspection:
 - Legal advice is sought when necessary and this leads to appropriate action and timely legal intervention.
 - Management oversight is both reflective and challenging and focused on the child's experience, current risks, needs and strengths and the effectiveness of the current plan and interventions.
 - Ensure core groups and child protection conferences effectively monitor cases to ensure that where there is a lack of progress in improving a child's situation this leads to robust action.

Quality of practice

2. Prevent unnecessary drift and delay in all stages of social work intervention. Ensure, through robust management oversight and decision-making, that work with children and their families is purposeful, timely and of a consistently good standard.

Child Sexual Exploitation

3. Ensure that screening tools are always used where there is a potential risk of child sexual exploitation, and that action plans are outcome-focused and shared with all professionals working with the child.

Workforce

4. Implement the workforce strategy as swiftly as possible to improve workforce stability and ensure that children have consistent social workers, who see them on their own and with whom they can develop meaningful relationships.

Areas for improvement

Leadership management and governance

5. Develop a revised and updated looked after children strategy, aligned with the sufficiency strategy and based on a clear analysis of current and future need, with clear actions to address these.
6. Ensure that the corporate parenting board and children in care council (R:Vue) consistently contribute to improved outcomes for looked after children.
7. Conduct a robust test of assurance of the dual role of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and act on its findings.
8. Ensure that all operational and strategic managers understand and use the management information and data available to them in order to oversee and improve practice and performance.

Quality of practice

9. Ensure that assessments and plans are of a consistently good standard, with analysis and consideration of risk and protective factors and the individual needs of all children in the family.
10. Ensure that staff and case supervision complies with the local authority's own supervision policy, and that rigorous tracking of plans for children takes place through this process.

Looked after Children and Adoption

11. Ensure that all looked after children receive timely health and dental assessments and that looked after children and care leavers have prompt access to services from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
12. Ensure timely assessment and updating of children's care plans following significant changes in their circumstances.
13. Ensure that, following reviews, all looked after children receive a timely written record of the outcome of their review.
14. Ensure that life story work is completed for looked after and adopted children, and that good quality life story books and later life letters are completed for adopted children in a timely manner.

Care Leavers

15. Establish effective processes to enable care leavers' views to inform service development.
16. Ensure that all care leavers have access to good quality information about their health histories and their entitlements.
17. Improve the quality of pathway planning by:
 - ensuring that assessments and plans are updated when young people transfer into the care leaver service
 - strengthening the involvement of care leavers in their pathway planning process

- ensuring that care leavers have detailed pathway plans that address their health and educational needs, with clear targets and outcomes.

6. Proposals

- 6.1 The Improvement Plan (See Appendix A) starts by laying out West Berkshire's vision for our children and young people, and their families. In it we note that West Berkshire is a great place for children to grow up; that West Berkshire's children and young people generally do well. They are safe and healthy, achieve high educational standards through attending good schools, and move on into higher education or employment and a secure and prosperous future. Our vision is for our most vulnerable children, including those looked after by the local authority itself, to achieve outcomes that are every bit as good as their peers across all areas of their lives.
- 6.2 Ofsted's recommendations cover five domains where improvements will help us achieve our vision. These domains are:
- Improving Leadership, Management, Governance and Partnerships.
 - Improving the quality of our practice.
 - Strengthening, stabilising and improving the quality of our workforce
 - Improving services to children in need of help and protection
 - Improving services to looked after children and care leavers
- 6.3 The Improvement Plan outlines these five domains and within them West Berkshire has made a number of improvement commitments - statements of intent which demonstrate our commitment to getting to "good" for our safeguarding practice and for achieving our vision for children, young people and families. For example, under the improvement domain of Leadership, Management, Governance and Partnerships, our first improvement commitment is "West Berkshire will become good at safeguarding". This explicitly references the council's public commitment made in its Council Strategy 2015-2019.
- 6.4 The Improvement Plan allocates a workstream for each domain of improvement. Each workstream has a strategic sponsor and an operational lead.
- 6.5 The main section of the improvement plan takes each workstream in turn and for the improvement commitments within the workstream it outlines which Ofsted recommendations the commitments relate to.
- 6.6 In a section headed "How will we know we have done it?", the plan shows what will be measured, monitored, observed or established to demonstrate that we have met our improvement commitments. For example, in the "Improving the quality of our practice" workstream, we will measure the effectiveness of our improvement by showing improved timeliness of single assessments, initial child protection conferences, child protection reviews, LAC reviews and child protection visits. Within this workstream there are also eight other measurable components which will also be used to demonstrate our improvement.
- 6.7 For each improvement workstream the Improvement Plan also shows how the improvement commitments are translated into SMART actions. Workstream C "Strengthening, Stabilising and Improving the Quality of Our Workforce", has two improvement commitments in it: having a stable and secure workforce and securing

consistency in practice and working relationships with children, young people and families. These improvement commitments in turn have four smart actions each in order to secure progress against the commitment.

- 6.8 All these detailed actions have a "By when?" date set against them, a lead officer with responsibility for completing them, a RAG status (except for those actions which haven't yet been initiated) and a Status Update which outlines our progress to date.
- 6.9 The DRAFT Improvement Plan has already been shared with the Department for Education (DfE) who are in an ongoing dialogue with us about the form any intervention should take. In order to satisfy the DfE, it may be subject to further iterations. A final Improvement Plan agreed by the portfolio holder must be submitted for the approval of the DfE by no later than 24 August 2015. We are well-placed to submit a final plan earlier. In some cases, actions in this version of the DRAFT Improvement Plan will already be completed by August 2015. The DfE is aware that we are in an advanced stage of managing our own improvement (as reflected in the Ofsted report itself).
- 6.10 Once approved by the DfE, this Improvement Plan will be the core document against which children and family services' improvement will be monitored and evaluated.
- 6.11 The main governance points for this work are:
- LSCB – this has multi-agency oversight of the whole children's safeguarding system
 - Council / Executive – this has the political oversight of what we are doing, and where decisions may be made about resources and policy and owns the council's vision for children, young people and families
 - Children's Service Improvement Programme – this is the practical programme management vehicle for making sure the changes are carried out within the service
- 6.12 We anticipate that all three bodies will require regular updates of the progress on the Improvement Plan.
- 6.13 In addition, we will want to make use of other bodies such as relevant LSCB sub-groups, an increased role for children's scrutiny, and the QA Board to help us drive the service improvement.
- 6.14 In addition to this Improvement Plan the service has reviewed its frontline social work teams and is developing recommendations for "Getting to Good". These considerations will be ongoing in light of the impact of the Ofsted Improvement Plan on issues of performance, quality and capacity.
- 6.15 "Getting to Good" recommendations will continue to be reviewed and refined in the light of the service's ongoing improvement and will be presented to the Council's Executive for consideration and agreement in January 2016, by which time the main elements of the Improvement Plan will have been implemented and the next phase of our service improvement can be considered from a secure evidence base.

7. Resource requirements identified in the Improvement Plan

- 7.1 Improvement Plan page 9.

Identify and implement immediate resourcing requirements to secure teams and social work practice.

- 7.2 Resource requirements have been identified as necessary in two of the four frontline social work teams in order to secure safe caseloads and timeliness of assessment and planning.
- 7.3 Additional posts are in place in frontline social work teams to secure caseloads and enable a safe response to volume capacity and demand. These posts are outlined below at agency rates and a full year cost starting April 2015 as they are currently in the teams to ensure cases can be allocated and caseloads are not unsafe.

Contact Advice and Assessment Service

4 Social work posts @ £67,689 = £270,756

1 ATM @ £80,158 = £80,158

East Locality Team

1 SW @ £67,689 =£67,689

1 ATM @ £80,158 = £80,158

Total costs if these posts remain for the year and they remain as agency posts = £498,761

- 7.4 The service is not in a position to recruit permanent workers to this additional capacity as the roles are not yet agreed as permanent establishment posts. However, if the posts are agreed as establishment posts and permanent staff successfully recruited, the full year impact could be reduced to £300K
- 7.5 This social work and first line management capacity is crucial at this time to ensure the service can always allocate work, improve performance and drive quality issues forward.
- 7.6 Currently the service including Castlegate respite unit for children with disabilities, Contact and Assessment Service, East Locality, West Locality, Disabled Children's Team and Family Resources Service has a permanent social work establishment of 53.54 full time equivalent qualified social work posts (this includes Team Managers, Assistant Team Managers, Senior Social Workers, Social Workers and family Intervention Workers).
- 7.7 The current % of agency capacity covering permanent posts as of 10/07/16 is 33%, having reduced from 46% at the time of inspection and is evidence of the positive impact of the recruitment and retention strategy
- 7.8 The table outlines all posts and the current position and clearly evidences that key management posts have been secured to date the concentration for the next recruitment campaign should be for frontline qualified social workers.

- 7.9 The campaign will have a strap line of "children and young people at the heart of everything we do" ensuring that it represents the Councils commitment for children's services to be Good.

POST	No of establishment posts	Current agency cover	Percentage by post and end total.
Team Manager	6	0	0
Assistant Team Manager	9	1	11%
Senior Social Worker	9	7	77%
Social Worker	24.54	10.54	42%
Family Intervention Worker (Double check these.)	7	0	0
Totals	55.54	18.54	33% #as at 12/07/15

- 7.10 33% is an unsatisfactory percentage of the workforce and the service remains committed to securing permanent workers going forward as we are clear that the agency cohort is necessary only when there are vacancies we have been unable to fill.
- 7.11 Training of 3 newly qualified workers in the social work academy is in place and the second cohort of 4 newly qualified social workers will be starting in September 2015 the service would have secured if successful up to 7 permanent qualified social workers by the summer of 2016.
- 7.12 The service is planning to secure them full time posts and this will contribute significantly to reducing the need for agency cover.
- 7.13 In addition up to 2 unqualified workers are being supported in the service to secure their social work qualifications so adding and securing the workforce for the future.
- 7.14 Starters with the organisation since 10th July 2014 include 1 Team Manager, 1 Assistant team Manager, 1 Senior Social Worker, 8 Social Workers, 3 Newly Qualified Social Workers and 1 Trainee social worker.
- 7.15 Leavers since that date have included 3 Senior Social Workers and 8 Social Workers. So reflecting that the service has secured a baseline and now needs to drive forward with securing more permanent staff to reduce the current 33% in place.

7.16 This also reflects that the recruitment and retention strategy agreed last summer and implemented from October of 2014 has had a significant impact on the services ability to recruit ensuring that we have been able to replace leavers to date, sustaining and improving our level of permanent workers to date.

7.17 However we need to see an increase of its influence to secure a reduction in the 33% and the financial modelling for this will be clearly outlined in the service quarter one report to Corporate Board due in the next fortnight.

7.18 *In addition the quarter one financial report will clearly outline the pressure of agency workers on the service establishment budget.*

7.19 Improvement Plan Page 10

Council's Executive to review the recommendations of the Strategic Review (subject to its further amendment after staff consultation and health check recommendations) and consider implementation in pursuit of "Getting to Good" strategy.

7.20 The Strategic Review, which is the first action in the Improvement Plan, has been completed. The total provisional cost of implementing the recommendations of the Strategic Review, based on the current position of the children and families' service, is £1.3 m. However, if implemented, this will be the Council's longer term response to improvement, spanning 2016/17, and will follow a further analysis by the service of the impact of the Ofsted Improvement Plan to ensure that any future requests are evidence-based and absolutely necessary.

7.21 Note: The supernumerary posts and capacity discussed in 7.1 are included as part of the recommended increase in permanent posts in this £1.3 m but are necessary now as interim increased capacity to secure the safe running of the service.

7.22 The Strategic Review continues to be under scrutiny as improvement work progresses and volume, capacity and demand is interrogated weekly and monthly. This will ensure the service does not request additional resources for which the requirement is not properly evidenced.

7.23 Any recommended increase in permanent establishment will be modelled and presented for Council in January 2016 and will clearly outline the proposed impact and intended outcomes.

7.24 Improvement Plan Page 11

Undertake analysis of current and future needs of looked after children. Identify actions to address these.

7.25 The service regularly interrogates data about the cohort of looked after children and their status.

7.26 As a result of agreements secured last year an interim Children's Commissioner has been in place since April 2015 to offer advice, guidance and consultation in relation to children's services business processes for commissioning and financial management of placements.

7.27 The Children's Commissioner has worked with adult social care colleagues who successfully led the adult social care efficiency programme in order to assess these

issues objectively. Together they have confirmed that although there is some work to do to improve the resources panel infrastructure, which will be in place by the 23rd July 2015, the children and families' service is applying the principles of best value to its commissioning.

- 7.28 There is no establishment budget for the Children's Commissioner Post. Last year the service proposed that if this role identified sufficient savings it would effectively be cost neutral. The demand for placements has meant that it is not yet possible for the service to evidence cashable savings through a reduction in placement spend against this budget. However there are specific case examples where the commissioner has influenced the price agreed for several placements. These requirements would have caused additional cost pressure had the Commissioner not been in post. Therefore the service is likely to report a reduction in the forecast year end over spend rather than a saving.
- 7.29 The service can evidence that it is accessing placements at the lowest cost possible consistent with ensuring it can deliver a service that is protecting children and young people at the point of need.
- 7.30 The Children's Commissioner role is proving invaluable when considering the needs of our looked after children and ensuring a robust business approach to placement searches particularly for those that are higher cost.
- 7.31 The service is currently undertaking a sufficiency assessment to determine future need for placements and other relevant interventions. This is also being influenced by the Commissioner's input. The continuation of this work is intended to secure sustainable business process and professional challenge about placements available. It will enable the service to reassure the Council that spend is managed, necessary and approached with best value principles and intentions.
- 7.32 The cost of this non establishment post for the Children's commissioner @£350 per day for 5 days a week and 6 month period, Total £42,000
- 7.33 Management Board has asked for a report about the Children's Commissioner role and placement commissioning to be submitted to Procurement Board as soon as possible. This report is in train.
- 7.34 Improvement Plan Page 15

Commission "test of assurance" of dual role of the DCS from external provider

- 7.35 The statutory guidance for the role of the Director of Children's Services (DCS) requires local authorities to "undertake a local test of assurance so that the focus on outcomes for children and young people will not be weakened or diluted as a result of adding such other responsibilities".
- 7.36 Such a "test of assurance" must be completed to reassure the Council and the DfE that the Council's appointment of a single Director to cover other operational functions of the local authority (in this case adult social care and housing) is compatible with effective discharge of the DCS's statutory functions.
- 7.37 The external commissioning of this piece of work is currently being explored. Early proposals from commercial third parties were expensive and offered little added value. The service is now considering a peer review and other better value

alternative. If a commercial provider were commissioned to undertake this work the likely cost would be approximately £12K.

7.38 Improvement Plan Page 21

Commission audit of open cases to review for drift and delay (and quality of life story work where relevant) and provide assurance over levels of actual current, remediable delay in casework.

- 7.39 The Ofsted inspection report asserts that there is evidence of "significant drift and delay" across the service. However this assertion is based on the audit of only a small sample of our open cases. A regular external audit of cases will respond to that assertion in a pragmatic, methodical and transparent way and is a method known to reassure Ofsted that the organisation is taking concerns seriously.
- 7.40 Externally commissioned audit would offer the service an independent benchmark of quality. It would support and develop practitioners' own understanding of what good looks like and benchmark our own quality assurance process.
- 7.41 The service does have its own quality assurance and care planning infrastructure in place. These processes are being strengthened as part of the Improvement Plan. However, the inclusion of externally commissioned audit will provide additional reassurance about capacity, competence and any skills gaps in the internal arrangements for quality assurance and care planning.
- 7.42 We will aim to secure auditing capacity that costs no more than £85 per case audited and have 20 cases subject to independent audit every month. These 20 will include 10 cases already audited through our own quality assurance process to secure an independent benchmark and 10 new cases.
- 7.43 This process will be required to the end of the financial year from August 2015, which will include 8 months. 8 x 20 cases @ £85 per case is a total of £13,600.

8. Training

8.1 Improvement Plan Page 23

Social Workers and first line managers to receive training in reflective supervision.

- 8.2 This action is necessary to "skill up" and boost our frontline managers' and social workers' reflective skills, knowledge and capacity. The training positively influences the officers' capacity to make timely decisions that are well evidence-based. Improving reflective practice helps to ensure the child or young person is appropriately made the priority in all discussions.
- 8.3 This training will need to be a recurrent cost of £20K per year, although it may reduce in pressure as the permanent workforce is sustained. Fewer leavers and new starters requiring this training will reduce costs. This will need review annually through training needs analysis.
- 8.4 Improvement Plan Page 24

Managers to receive initial or refresher training in: Restorative practice, Signs of Safety and Solutions focused practice methods.

- 8.5 As a service we have recognised the need for a consistent theoretical framework applying to our social work practice and how we approach the work we do with children, young people and their families.
- 8.6 The methodologies outlined above are evidence based, nationally and internationally recognised models of good practice.
- 8.7 They complement each other and will enable significant development of the frontline workforce's ability to implement approaches that demand confidence in implementing high support and high challenge skills.
- 8.8 As a result the workforce and their clients become more likely to embrace change, manage it and mitigate against risk. Furthermore these methodologies underpin and support the evolving culture of the organisation to seek resolutions that allow families to help themselves when crises or risky situations arise within their networks. In time, practicing this way should influence the reduction of children and families requiring a statutory intervention. This has been evidenced in other local authorities including those evaluated by Ofsted as "good".
- 8.9 Training across these three practice domains for the first year requires an investment of £60K, of which the first £20k has already been found within the existing budget.
- 8.10 This training will need to be a recurring offer to the workforce. However the total investment should be able to reduce as the permanent workforce is sustained. Fewer leavers will mean fewer new starters requiring this training. The position will be reviewed annually through training needs analysis.

9. CSE Strategy

- 9.1 Improvement Plan Page 37
- 9.2 There is a national commitment to eradicating child sexual exploitation and there are very local instances where it has had a dramatic effect on young people lives and their communities.
- 9.3 All Local Authorities children's services have to demonstrate a robust strategic and partnership approach to addressing this significant issue.
- 9.4 Ofsted expect to be able to see agreed strategies that evidence the work we are all doing, how we are coordinating ourselves and how we are ensuring operational officers are well briefed and practicing effectively and consistently in this area.
- 9.5 During the inspection the lack of a documented strategy meant that the comprehensive work done to date by the partnership in relation to CSE could not be fully evidenced.
- 9.6 For the foreseeable future children's services will need a dedicated post holder to coordinate strategic endeavours across the multi agency partnership to develop oversight and understanding of the local intelligence and operational data and to enshrine these findings in a high quality strategy.

9.7 The in year cost as outlined is £21,600 for interim cover 2 days a week @£540.

10. Life story training

10.1 Improvement Plan page 40

10.2 Life story work is a crucial part of a child's journey when becoming adopted and requires significant skills and time to undertake it.

10.3 There is a need to quickly up skill our social workers in regards to this activity to secure a baseline of practice, an independent view about our current practice and ensure we are able to demonstrate to Ofsted we have taken their concern seriously.

10.4 This again needs to be an initial investment of £20K this year for training and to then be considered going forward through a service training needs analysis.

10.5 We will also be negotiating with our adoption service "Adopt Berkshire" to consider how we secure this training and make it sustainable going forward.

11. Conclusions

11.1 The Improvement Plan is a mandatory in response to an Ofsted "inadequate" judgement. The Council is recommended to approve it and to monitor its implementation.

11.2 The Improvement plan has been crafted to secure the services move out of inadequacy and move requiring improvement services into good.

11.3 The focus at this time is on taking the necessary remedial actions to bring the service out of "inadequate", so members are asked to note the recommendations in this paper. In due course firm proposals to carry forward the next phase of service improvement will be brought to the Council's Executive for consideration and agreement as stated in January.

11.4 Children and young people at the heart of everything we do.

Appendices

Appendix A - Ofsted Improvement Plan

Appendix B - Ofsted Report

Appendix C - Draft EIA

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: Not yet.

Officers Consulted: Catherine Parry, Andrea King, Ian Pearson, Mac Heath, Service Managers in the Children and Families Service, Corporate Board.

Trade Union: Not yet.