
“Getting to Good”: A model for improving service delivery and building sustainable service development within Children's Social Care frontline Teams – Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 West Berkshire Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted in March 2015. Although some examples of good practice were found, they remained concerned about drift and delay in a number of cases, particularly within the frontline social work teams. They identified the teams of concern as the Contact, Advice and Assessment Service and the two Localities Teams. The service was clear that it had significant challenges to improve timeliness and quality of social work practice and reduce drift and delay in care planning.
- 1.2 Since the Inspection the service has been progressing a development and improvement path, specifically to address those issues highlighted by Ofsted as inadequate or requiring improvement, and to deliver the Council's agreed priority of securing "Good" Children's Services in the future. Delivering the required standard of children and family social work expected within statutory, legislative and national frameworks requires a level of resourcing, infrastructure and governance that enables effective responses and secures good outcomes for children and young people, set within the principles of best value and public accountability. It has been increasingly clear through the improvement journey of the last six months that the service needs to continue to prioritise social work practice and standards and ensure appropriate resources and financial management to address concerns.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 The Ofsted Framework outlines the following judgement criteria for a 'Good' judgement to be secured.

"In a 'Good' local authority:

- Children and young people are protected, the risks to them are identified and managed through timely decisions and the help provided reduces the risk of, or actual harm to them.
- Children and young people looked after, those returning home and those moving to or living in permanent placements outside of their immediate birth family have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.¹ Children and young people are helped to live in permanent homes or families without unnecessary delay. The development of safe, stable and secure relationships with adults is central to planning for their futures and this supports the development of secure attachments that persist over time and wherever they are living.

¹ Children Act 1989, section 17; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/17.

- Young people leaving care or who have left care receive help and support tailored to their individual needs and comparable with that which their peers would receive from a reasonable parent. They are provided with opportunities, support and help to enable them to move successfully to adulthood.
- Leadership, management and governance arrangements deliver strong, strategic local leadership that measurably improves outcomes for vulnerable children. The local authority works with partners to plan and deliver early help, to protect children and young people, to improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged and it acts as a strong and effective corporate parent for children looked after and those leaving or who have left care.
- There is a clear and up-to-date strategy for commissioning and developing services and there are sufficient resources to meet the needs of children and young people in the local authority area. Leaders, both professional and political, drive continuous improvement so that the local authority is consistently effective as both the lead agency for the protection and care of children and as a corporate parent."

2.2 The Children and Families frontline social work teams have not been able to deliver a service that consistently meets the criteria for ‘Good’. In addition to capacity issues, opportunities to work in partnership with other services around the most vulnerable children and families have been under developed and engagement with the Brilliant West Berkshire programme for Building Community Cohesion is yet to fully realise its potential.

2.3 The frontline social work teams have struggled in achieving consistency in timely interventions that are proportionate to the presenting needs. This can result in drift, delay in the work as they endeavour to respond to the most risky situations as a priority, and although significant progress has been made in these areas this is not yet robust enough to consistently meet the required standard. Further, the current deployment of the frontline teams does not always allow for reasonable caseloads.

2.4 To deliver a ‘Good’ service, all of the above has to be underpinned by a realistic and appropriate level of resourcing in the frontline operational teams, inclusive of qualified social workers and Team Managers. This is required to ensure that all cases have an allocated worker with the appropriate level of experience and skills that can respond timely and effectively to presenting risks and needs. Managers must have capacity to deliver reflective supervision, timely and robust managerial oversight and Service Managers must support the oversight, throughput and increasing sustainability of the Service.

2.5 In addition the service requires an infrastructure that:

- Provides robust governance
- Provides professional challenge
- Enables the service and individual's professional development
- Creates a learning culture

- Has a robust recruitment and retention strategy
- Has a secure quality assurance framework that can demonstrate a positive impact on practice and outcomes
- Demonstrates the achievement of good outcomes

2.6 ‘Good organisations take account of the recommendations made by The Social Work Reform Board Health Check that promoted five key areas which should underpin all healthy children’s services organisations. Each of these five areas makes a significant contribution to the development and delivery of good services which in turn links to staff morale, recruitment and retention.

2.7 The five areas within the framework are:

- Effective Workload Management (managing workloads and vacancies)
- Proactive Workflow Management (strong processes and effective tracking of cases)
- Right Tools (including IT, mobile working, access to research)
- Healthy Workplace (frequent and high quality supervision, accessibility of managers)
- Effective Service Delivery (effective feedback mechanisms)

2.8 These key factors should continue to be subject to review and reported on for Children and Family Services to secure a view from the workforce and quickly identify challenges and blockers that may prevent service development.

2.9 The custodian of this activity is usually the role of the Principal Social Worker as recommended by Eileen Munro. This role advocates the workforce’s view to managers as well as challenging the workforce about practice, performance and quality standards.

2.10 Underlying these core requirements should be a clear governance infrastructure supported through Strategy, Policy and Procedures that reflect statutory and legislative requirements underpinning social work practice in particular. Investment has recently been agreed for Tri.X (an online child protection policies and procedures) which will significantly contribute to this.

2.11 Social workers in “Good” Local Authorities are clear about the model of intervention they are applying and it is consistent. They have access to an early help offer and a range of direct services that are supported and managed through commissioning activity that secures cost effectiveness and best value principles when sourcing support for the most vulnerable children and young people in the community.

2.12 “Good” Local Authorities can respond to change effectively and quickly and enable children, young people and their families to help themselves, help each other and receive help when there is no other option. They do this through tangible interventions that make a difference in people’s lives, reducing risk and meeting need at the right time from the right resource.

- 2.13 “Good” Local Authorities also demonstrate effective partnerships that work collaboratively without silos.
- 2.14 West Berkshire's Children and Family Services have an opportunity to embrace this review and secure a service development plan that links to the Council's Prevention and Developing Community Resilience approach, alongside the existing well recognised and robustly applied, local threshold into children's social care.
- 2.15 There should be a transparent journey of the child from early help to statutory intervention, where necessary, that can be described and understood by all partners, children, young people and their families. This should allow travel in both directions along this pathway as the intention should always be to maintain the lightest touch intervention consistent with protecting children and supporting families.
- 2.16 The building of the post-Ofsted Service Development Plan will help secure the actions required to meet the Council's priority of a children's service judged to be “Good” by Ofsted and to be financially sound.

3. Current Service Provision

- 3.1 The current workload model in children’s social care statutory teams is delivered by the:
- Contact, Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS)
 - Localities Teams, West Central and East
 - Leaving Care Team (LCT)
 - Disabled Children’s Team (DCT) (located within the Education Service)
 - The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service (QAAS), (located within the Prevention and Developing Community Resilience Service) is a core Social Care Service with a scrutiny function, particularly for child protection and looked after children cases.
- 3.2 The teams are responsible for all new referrals and children, young people and their families requiring a social work intervention. They are overseeing children and young people, either assessing their circumstances, providing a child in need package, a child protection intervention and /or a Looked After intervention including securing permanence and adoption.
- 3.3 CAAS have responded to 2084 enquiries (ytd – Jan 2016). This is all information sent in to the “front door” requiring oversight by a social work practitioner to decide if there is a requirement for a social work intervention at that time, or if another intervention is appropriate, e.g. giving professional advice to partners, families and friends.
- Of these contacts, approximately 20% would be expected to be progressed through to a referral to children’s social care.
 - To date, 1129 referrals have been subject to a full children’s social work single assessment. This high number of Single Assessments has been due to the

additional number of assessments requiring completion to move us from our position of inadequate. Single Assessments should usually be completed within 45 working days (though there are always some exceptions).

- The number of open cases within the CAAS at any one time does fluctuate but the average is 235.
- The average number of caseloads in the Locality Teams, including children in need, child protection, looked after and court proceedings has been as high as 25 cases per qualified worker.
- The average caseload in the Leaving Care Team stands at approximately 24 cases per worker.

3.4 Frontline social work is also undertaken within the Disabled Children’s Team. This includes assessment, child in need, child protection and looked after children. Their caseload has reached an average of 21 open children at any one time. Whilst Ofsted noted good practice within this team, their specialism is crucially linked to the Special Educational Needs reforms and their social work capacity and resources should be considered alongside the other core teams given the practice and services they are delivering.

4. Current Teams Operational work

4.1 The Contact, Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS) has responsibility for;

- All new contacts
- All new referrals,
- All new single assessments
- Child protection enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989
- Complex Strategy meetings
- Development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub: a partnership “front door” where colleagues collaborate and make decisions together about the best approach to assist or intervene. This is a Thames Valley Police priority and is being rolled out across Berkshire alongside national policy.
- 16/17 year old “Southwark judgement” assessments where young people are presenting as homeless in the first instance and the onus is upon the Local Authority to accommodate as a Looked After Child if family and friends options are exhausted.
- Initial intervention with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in line with our statutory duties to assess their status and make plans for securing the most appropriate interventions.
- Assessing the circumstances of “No Recourse to Public Funds” presenting families, where there are children within the family who may be deemed in need or in need of protection.

- Managing the step up / step down process from services and teams working alongside children, young people and their families.
- Receiving step up cases from early intervention and prevention services.
- Currently the Help For Families Team (an early intervention service) sits alongside CAAS and requires line management and oversight
- All of this statutory activity has expected timescales ranging from 24 hours to six months which require managerial oversight and ongoing decision making.
- An average of 31 Single Assessments are allocated in any one week, including immediate response to child protection enquiries and complex presenting needs.

4.2 Caseloads include many of the activities noted above all with competing timescales and demands ranging from one hour to six months dependent upon the statutory duties, urgency and levels of risk and need presented. Child protection matters require a same day response and often have to result in meetings with police and visits to families, children and partner agencies on the same day to secure a safe plan whilst assessments are undertaken.

4.3 If a child becomes looked after as a result of significant harm, often their placement requires identification the same day and workers have to establish their medical and emotional needs very quickly. Placement searches impact on workers’ time and transporting children and young people to placements is also undertaken by the workers in the team.

4.4 Court appearances are often required and some meetings have competing demands including child protection conferences, reviews and multi agency information sharing forums to gather assessment input.

4.5 We know the cases in CAAS meet our thresholds appropriately, as assessed by the recent DfE Advisors, and are usually requiring a response to mitigate risk and ensure children and young people’s safety. They are often complex and demanding matters that demand a high level of focus, timeliness and skills to ensure children and young people’s situations are secured.

4.6 The current core capacity of the team does not enable throughput to be consistently and effectively managed, monitored or challenged and over the last three months this has only been achieved through posts in excess of the establishment being utilised.

4.7 To date, social workers have struggled to complete these assessments in a timely manner that enables quality, as they have no respite from the daily duty requirements of the service. Work is frequently demand-led and cannot always be predicted. It is therefore crucial that social workers in this team have capacity to complete the assessments allocated to them. This is usually achieved through a rota when workers can have at least one working week in between duty turnaround.

4.8 All decisions made within this service are required to have management oversight and an Ofsted expectation is that a manager signs them all off as approved or otherwise. These decisions are required initially on the day the information is

received and subsequently at key points dependent upon presenting circumstances and the statutory requirement set for that activity.

4.9 The current core management capacity is not fully sufficient to reasonably expect timeliness and consistency across the team and again has required agency staff above the level of the establishment to address this.

4.10 The front door of the service is crucial to act as a robust gatekeeper applying a consistent approach to thresholds, stepping cases down to early help, responding in a timely way to avoid escalation into localities teams and looked after children’s status.

5. The main transfer points for the CAAS are:

- First child in need meeting on completion of the Single Assessment
- First core group post Initial Child Protection Conference.
- First hearing post initiation of care proceedings.
- First Looked after Children’s Review in Section 20 arrangements.
- Step down to Help for Families Team

5.1 If the cases require a continuing social work service they are transferred into the Disabled Children’s Team and Localities Teams.

6. There are currently two Localities Teams whose core workload includes:

- Children in Need plans and meetings.
- Updated Single Assessments.
- Private Fostering Assessments.
- Receiving in Child Protection Conferences from out of area.
- Section 37 Court Welfare reports which are commissioned by the Court when they require assessment of a child or young person’s circumstances as a result of concerns about potential risk of harm being raised through private law proceedings.
- Children subject to child protection plans.
- Strategy Meetings if an open case escalates to child protection.
- Initial Child Protection Conferences.
- Review Child Protection Conferences.
- Core Groups
- Legal Planning Meetings.

- Instigating Care Proceedings.
- Managing Police Protection and emergency protection orders when required.
- Managing Care Proceedings to their conclusion.
- Initial Assessments for siblings of children already open to the FST service.
- Permanence planning including adoption.
- Viability Assessments and Regulation 24 Assessments, are required to assess relatives circumstances when they have been identified as a main carer for a child or young person due to issues of significant harm in their parents care.
- Child Permanence reports/Adoption
- Looked after Children Care Planning.
- Looked After Children Reviews.
- Children and young people subject to dual processes whilst care plans are agreed and risk mitigated, e.g. subject to child protection plans and Looked After Children status.
- All Looked After Children.

6.1 Within the current team infrastructure, timeliness and effective throughput continue to be challenged leading to a risk of drift and delay and to quality and performance being compromised.

7. Leaving Care Team

7.1 The Leaving Care Team, working with young people aged 16-24 yrs, includes:

- Social work interventions for care leavers; our most vulnerable young people
- Personal Advisor statutory interventions
- Pathway plans
- Risk Assessments
- Preparing for and brokering young peoples’ transition into adulthood
- Staying Put Policy to strengthen permanency arrangements

8. Disabled Children’s Team

- In addition to the Locality Teams, the Disabled Children’s Team also provides assessment and oversight of all short break packages and work within Education Services to ensure good support for those children and young people with Educational, Health and Social Care needs.

9. The strengths and challenges of this model are:

9.1 Strengths:

- Reduced points of transfer and likely change of social worker during care proceedings. This assumes a low staffing turnover rate.
- One team oversees the decision making during the assessment period and care proceedings.
- Development of workers’ skills across a wide range of safeguarding and child protection core activities is possible. This assumes they have the experience and professional capacity to deliver as individuals, e.g. there are some extraordinary practitioners that want to, and can, manage this workload but they are significantly in the minority and we should not usually expect newly qualified social workers to practice at this level initially.
- Developing skills and expertise relating to children in need, child protection, court proceedings and permanence planning is focussed in one part of the service. This assumes reasonable caseloads are consistently applied to all posts.

9.2 Challenges:

- Management capacity in CAAS and the Localities is thin in relation to the amount of work they must have oversight of.
- Likelihood of rehabilitation for Looked After Children may be reduced given the focus of Localities on child protection cases and court proceedings. This can be to the detriment of looked after children and their families.
- The capacity for necessary reflective supervision and timely oversight and throughput is reduced given the demand, volume and complexities of the workload involved.
- CAAS and Localities are trying to manage competing statutory requirements at the same time.
- Teams are less likely to be able to prioritise child in need cases to ensure throughput and prevent them escalating into child protection or LAC status.
- This structure is less likely to enable staff development because of the competing demands on their time.
- Assistant team managers and senior social workers not being able to have the consistent capacity to support managers with supervision, mentoring and team development as a result of high and complex caseloads.
- Lack of equity across the service in relation to pressures on individual staff and team managers.

- Risk that the focus of Team Managers is on performance rather than quality in Localities Teams is more likely, given the numbers of complex cases requiring their oversight.
- Auditing is likely to demonstrate concern about lack of attention to detail if capacity pressures on workers and the managers isn’t sustainably addressed, e.g. supervision notes, case recording, visit recording and RAISE updates.
- Locality Team Managers could be under pressure to audit and quality assure a disproportionate amount of work currently in relation to other teams.
- Team Managers are may be expected to have a disproportionate knowledge base related to their current team’s responsibilities.
- Locality Team Managers are evidencing high levels of additional hours across the service and annual leave is often being carried over.
- Change of team, worker and managerial oversight once care plans have been finalised for children and young people can impact and result in drift and delay.
- Developing skills and expertise across the service is not always best managed if there are limited opportunities for learning and experience
- Travelling distances to undertake statutory visits to children are challenged given the numbers of young people that are Looked After do not live within 20 miles of the Council’s boundaries which impacts on all workers’ time and capacity.
- Implementing permanence plans and rehabilitation plans provides complex caseload with significant amounts of competing statutory requirements.
- Whilst the Leaving Care Team has been implemented there is still work to do to secure robust pathway plans that begin at 15 years of age. With a complex workload the Locality Teams cannot always prioritise this piece of work.
- Care Proceedings and their initiation are at risk of delay, contributing to drift for children and young people.
- Rehabilitation work is not always prioritised whilst child protection matters are taking precedence.
- There can be a lack of focus on children in need cases and therefore better clarity of our Early Help Offer in ensuring targeted support where necessary needs to be fully established.

9.3 The Locality Safeguarding Teams and Disabled Children’s Team can be involved from 24 hours to ten years in some instances. Managing this complexity within the current model does not consistently foster improvement in a timely way to the ambition set for the service.

9.4 This model may dilute good care planning and challenge the system with child in need cases that if addressed and prioritised, could result in step down and community interventions being accessed. This allows the social work staff to

concentrate on effective interventions that make a difference and reduce the likelihood of children and young people requiring statutory intervention.

10. Options for Consideration

10.1 Effective workload Management

10.2 The recommendation following consultation with teams, management and reviewing the Ofsted report is to create a discrete Looked After Children’s Team. This will result in the Looked After Children work being reassigned to a specific team and releasing the Locality Safeguarding Teams from this activity to concentrate on children in need and children in need of protection.

10.3 There will be an expectation that the Looked After Children’s Team will require resourcing, training and skills development and that some staff will need to move into the new service from the Locality Teams.

10.4 The culture of all the teams’ approaches will also need to establish clearly that rehabilitation should always be a consideration in planning for any children at all stages of the process.

11. Operating Model Principles to be applied:

11.1 One case equates to one child at any one time.

- Any caseload will take account of the individual worker’s experience, learning needs and capability.
- Throughput of cases will be effectively managed at each stage. (See Transfer Protocol and LSCB Procedures)
- There will be no unallocated cases in the service and any case identified as unallocated will be addressed within 24 hours.
- Permanence options will always be secured in a timely manner
- Court proceedings will be completed in a timely manner unless directed otherwise by the courts
- Family Support Workers will not be allocated assessments.
- Maternity leave vacancies will be covered.
- Long term sickness absences will be covered.
- Newly qualified social workers will have a protected caseload that does not exceed ten children and young people prior to their placement in the frontline social work teams (six months after joining the Local Authority). This takes into account training days, academic learning days, increased supervision requirements including casework management fortnightly and separate professional development supervision and time for their portfolio building.

- Learning and Development opportunities for all staff will be identified. Two to three hours of specific time for all staff will be set aside each month for Learning and Development opportunities.
- Turnover of staff will be subject to monthly monitoring.
- Managerial capacity will equate to one supervisor to 6/8 supervisees (headcount, not FTE).
- Caseloads will vary dependent upon team function and statutory requirements.,
- CAAS triage will develop into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- CAAS Assessment social workers will have caseloads from between 16 children and 20 children at any one time.
- Locality Safeguarding Teams approximately 18 children at any one time.
- Looked After Children approximately 14 children at any one time.
- Leaving Care from 18 children up to 25 children.
- Disabled Children's Team approximately 18 children at any one time.
- In addition to social work capacity the teams will require business support; each team will have Business Support Officers that have clear roles and functions in their area of the Service.

11.2 The Social Work Reform Board recommendations, encourage flexibility in workload management, the importance of learning and development time to underpin the individuals’ developing practice and capacity for reflective supervision. These are all key to effective workload management.

11.3 Increased (sustainable) capacity in social work frontline teams, increases the likelihood of developing the practitioner’s abilities, retaining experienced workers and enhancing the service’s ability to develop a learning culture, based on evidence based practice and reflective supervision. Workers enhanced ability to engage in direct with work with children, young people and their families is shown to increase the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes.

11.4 Effective capacity to deliver good workload management will also reduce the likelihood of drift, secure consistent decision making and enhance the ability of the workforce to engage with families collaboratively.

12. Proposals

12.1 West Berkshire is committed to ensuring workload management is effective, sustainable and safe for all the principles outlined above.

12.2 To assist clarity there will need to be a slight change in names to cover Teams and Services. Contact Advice and Assessment Service will remain, Localities will become Localities Safeguarding Teams and the new team will begin as Looked After Children Team (LACT).

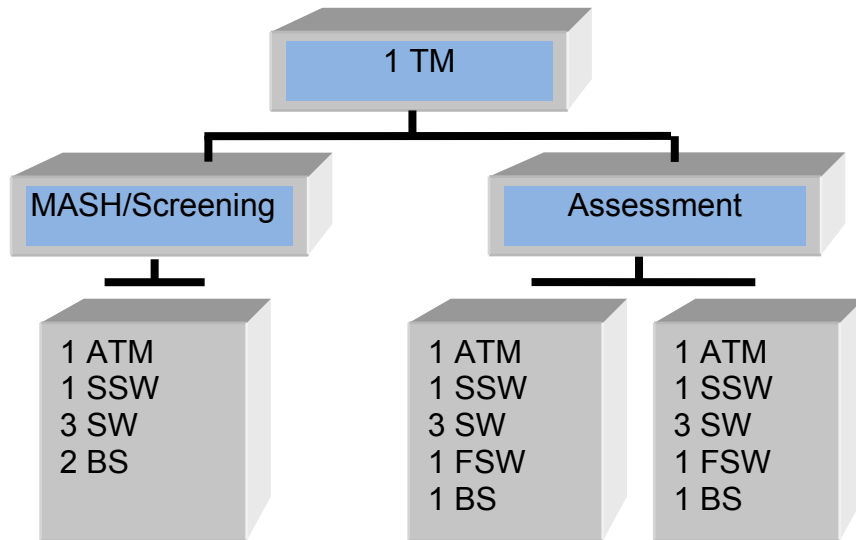
- 12.3 We plan to consult with Looked After Children, to establish what they think the Looked After Children Team should be called in the future and the Leaving Care Team will remain the same pending a consultation with young people through the Children in Care Council (CiCC) participation group.
- 12.4 The Disabled Children's Team (DCT) will retain its current functions..
- 12.5 The Service is recommending the establishment of the Principal Social Worker role. The Principal Social Worker will offer opportunities for reflective supervision activities, oversight of particularly complex cases, building the quality of practice and will have delegated responsibilities in the Managers’ absence. They will respond to new national and statutory initiatives and ensure the service is statutorily compliant and responding to service users’ feedback and recommendations. They will also work alongside the Head of Service and Children and Families Leadership Team to secure a learning environment that takes accountability for quality, practice and securing good outcomes, whilst holding a level of service responsibility.
- 12.6 Team Managers will have overall supervisory accountabilities for the team but in addition will resume their responsibilities for staffing, capability and competence measures, performance management and quality assurance across the team. They will also contribute more robustly to the strategic vision and its delivery across the service.
- 12.7 The following charts outline the proposals and team structures. They have been calculated on the volume of cases across the service and challenges within each team, and projected referral rates going forward.
- 12.8 It takes into account the significant work that has been taking place across the service over the last six months in revisiting thresholds, progressing work from its delayed state and improving services from the position judged as “inadequate” during the Ofsted Inspection of March 2015.

Chart 1

Contact, Advice and Assessment Service

Posts	CAAS Current	CAAS proposed
Team Manager	1	1
Assistant Team Manager	2	3
Senior Social Worker Case Holder	3	3
Social Worker	5	9
Family Support Workers	2	2
Business support	3.5	4

12.9 The team is separated into a front door, taking all new information and two assessment teams to undertake the work required when children and young people meet a social care threshold.



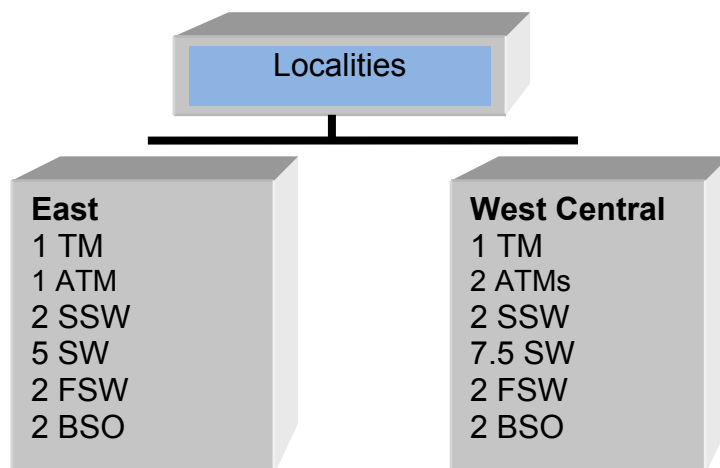
12.10 On current volumes, each CAAS worker would be allocated approximately 16 – 20 cases per qualified social worker

Chart 2

East and West Central Locality Safeguarding Teams

Posts	Localities East	Localities Central/West	Localities proposed
Team Manager	1	1	2
Assistant Team Manager	1	2	3
Senior social workers	3	2	4
SW	5	8	12.5
FSW	3	5	4
Business Support	3	3	4

12.11 Two separate Locality Safeguarding Teams will deliver children in need of protection and children in need of intervention Services. The teams will reduce in size in order for a Looked After Team to be created. It is a reduction on current establishment due to the redirection of resources to create a Looked After Children’s Team.



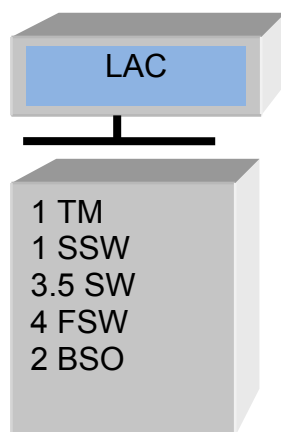
12.12 On current volumes each Locality worker, on the removal of LAC cases would be allocated approximately 18 cases per qualified social worker.

Chart 3

Looked After Children’s Team

Posts	LAC proposed
Team Manager	1
Senior social worker case holder	1
Social worker	3.5
Family support worker	4
Business Support workers	2

12.13 There will be one Looked After Children’s Team undertaking all work related to looked after children subsequent to the final hearing of the Care Proceedings. This Team will ensure improved focus on permanency, life journey work and mitigate social work changes.



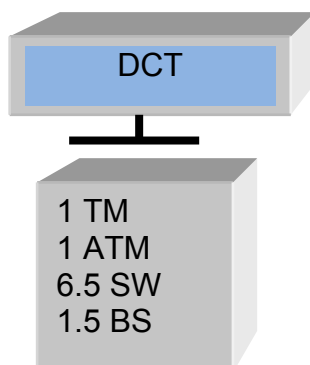
12.14 On current volumes, each LAC worker would be allocated approximately 14 cases per qualified social worker.

Chart 4

Disabled Children’s Team

Posts	DCT Current	DCT proposed
Team Manager	1	1
Assistant team Manager	1	1
Social Worker	5.5	6.5
Business support	1.5	1.5

12.15 Due to the volume with DCT, one further social worker is required in order to address caseloads and although this sits outside of Children and Family Services and within the Education Service. An additional post is required to ensure good social work practice.



12.16 On current volumes, each DCT worker would be allocated approximately 18 cases per qualified social worker.

12.17 In light of the additional volume it is proposed that there is also one further Independent Reviewing Officer post within the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service to meet the demand of Child Protection and Looked After Children cases and a Principal Social Worker post to enhance the support across the service and assist the recruitment and retention of our qualified social care workforce.

12.18 The IRO’s currently hold an average caseload of 78 against a recommended caseload of between 60-65 cases. This additional post will allow caseloads to be within acceptable levels and ensure opportunity for the Service to fulfil its quality assurance function.

12.19 The Leaving Care Team currently holds an average caseload of 24 cases per allocated worker. This is considered to be within the parameters of an acceptable caseload, albeit at the higher end, but with the introduction of a LAC Team, it is hoped that, in time, this volume will reduce

12.20 Leaving Care Team resourcing will remain as it is currently but will require review as the influence of the increased capacity elsewhere secure permanence and decisions more effectively. This should result in a decrease in social work interventions at the “leaving care” stage and manageable numbers of looked after children that may require a leaving care service.

12.21 All teams will require support and challenge from an infrastructure that demands their application to legislative and statutory guidance to secure a “Good” Ofsted rating.

13. Governance

13.1 The Ofsted framework for the Inspection of Children’s Services focuses on the provision of social care services, from early years’ provision, safeguarding, looked after children and leaving care, and adoption. For these services to deliver effective

responses to social needs in the local authority area, clear governance arrangements including policy and procedures have to be in place.

- 13.2 Unfortunately whilst the underpinning legislation tends to remain static, updates to legislation, statutory guidance, Ofsted expectations and national pressures including issues such as child sexual exploitation require response and service development to ensure practice is updated and secured.
- 13.3 In order to deliver effective Children’s Social Care, it is therefore necessary that key procedures are in place and Tri.X arrangements are embedded with the Service ensuring compliance with these procedures.
- 13.4 These documents are required under Legislation, Statutory Guidance or in order to meet National Minimum Standards. These documents require annual review and presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. Such an arrangement ensures corporate oversight, ownership and accountability.

14. Procedures

- 14.1 In addition there will be procedures or strategies requiring joint agreement due to inter-disciplinary working. These may be signed off at Health and Wellbeing Board or at Local Safeguarding Children Board. This will include:
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
 - Commissioning Strategy
 - Interagency Safeguarding Procedures including: the action to be taken where there are concerns about a child’s safety or welfare, including thresholds for intervention; training of persons who work with children or in services affecting the safety and welfare of children;
 - Recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children;
 - LADO: investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children;
 - Safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered;
 - Cooperation with neighbouring children’s services authorities and their Board partners;
 - Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy
 - Early Help Strategy
 - Serious Case Review procedure
 - Child Death Overview procedure
 - Information Sharing Framework
- 14.2 Authorities requiring significant improvement need to engage staff in a shared commitment to improvement and an agreement to delivering services in a consistent way which will ensure that service users respond positively.

- 14.3 Such procedures can be fairly prescriptive initially but once staff are delivering consistent services, there is an opportunity to introduce creativity and innovative practices and to minimise the prescriptive nature of the procedures.
- 14.4 Procedures implemented will be consistent with the declared values principles of the “Brilliant West Berkshire” programme.

15. Learning and development

- 15.1 Learning and Development lacks a single point of contact across children's services to deliver the complex career progression model and a robust recruitment and retention package.
- 15.2 Learning and development opportunities for newly qualified workers have benefitted from significant investment and this will secure a competent workforce for the future.
- 15.3 There is not yet a consistent approach to the identification of learning needs through appraisal or a subsequent training and development needs analysis to inform the courses required for the next financial year e.g. training needs analysis and further work is required to embed this into the service.
- 15.4 Courses are delivered across West Berkshire, inhouse ad hoc training and the Safeguarding Board makes some provision; corporate training is available to all. To ensure the best social workers for our children and young people we must take a strategic view of the need for bespoke learning and development model to meet this need.
- 15.5 Learning and development strategic oversight is required to secure the culture of the organisation and ensure it is sustainable and work will be progressed through the Principal Social Worker role and the secondment of a Senior Social Worker to assist in this review.

16. Staffing

- 16.1 The model above reflects the links that need to be established to secure a high challenge and high support environment that encourages learning, responsiveness to change and sustainability.
- 16.2 The proposed workload infrastructure has the capacity to create a learning culture that enables social workers to make a difference, grow in their professional capabilities and be securely challenged if and when competence issues may arise. It will create significant opportunities for the service to establish an increasing permanent workforce and sustainable approach to social work in the future.
- 16.3 It will enable social workers to ‘make a difference’: Most social workers have a very high level of commitment to their work. They are motivated by contact with families and the difference that they can make to the lives of young people. Loss of job satisfaction is one of the major reasons why social workers leave their profession.
- 16.4 Services that can structure themselves in a way that maximises worker time with families and are therefore likely to be more productive as well as making themselves very attractive as an employer.

16.5 High quality supervision and opportunities for staff development are highly valued by staff within children’s services and help to mitigate the stresses and pressures of their work. Perceptions of support from both supervisor and peers are a strong predictor of an intention to remain within an organisation. Low support is related to the intention to leave.

17. Role of the Principal Social Worker

17.1 A key recommendation from the Munro Review 2011 placed an expectation on Local Authorities to appoint a designated Principal Social Worker. This role can report directly to the Director of Children’s Services but line management is usually delegated to the Assistant Director (Head of Service). Their role is to act as custodian of practice and be the voice of the frontline workforce within strategic environments.

17.2 In authorities judged as “Good” they play a key role in any improvement or service development journey and should be undertaking an annual health check of the frontline social work teams. There is a national group that meets regularly with the lead social worker Isabella Trowler in Westminster and regional groups are also in place.

17.3 This role is crucial and should be secured permanently within the next six months. This also provides another stage in the career progression framework. The role has been a supernumerary post within Children and Family Services in West Berks but should be a established position to strengthen the social care improvement journey.

18. Conclusion

18.1 In West Berkshire, core activities of decision making, care planning, management oversight and timely assessments are improving and these will continue to address any delay in care planning. However, good quality social work practice is not consistently secured or sustainable within the current resources and infrastructure, and this additional resource and organisational change will ensure a sufficiency and sustainability to address the challenges outlined and put the service in an improved position to deliver ‘Good’ Children’s Services.

19. Consultation and Engagement

19.1 Consultation has taken place across the Managers and staff in the frontline teams, alongside consultation with our DfE Improvement Advisers relating to caseloads and capacity and with the Heads of Service for the Disabled Children’s Team and Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval



Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aims:

X P&S – Protect and support those who need it

X MEC – Become an even more effective Council

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priorities:

- X P&S1 – Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults**
 - X HQL1 – Support communities to do more to help themselves**
 - X MEC1 – Become an even more effective Council**
-

Officer details:

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Appendix B

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity.

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Name of policy, strategy or function:	Delivery of frontline Children’s Social Care Services
Version and release date of item (if applicable):	04/01/2016
Owner of item being assessed:	Mac Heath
Name of assessor:	Mac Heath
Date of assessment:	04/01/2016

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	No	New or proposed	Yes
Strategy	Yes	Already exists and is being reviewed	No
Function	No	Is changing	Yes
Service	Yes		

1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy, strategy function or service and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To ensure Children’s frontline social care teams are appropriately recorded and fit for purpose to deliver a ‘Good’ Service.
Objectives:	To provide good, timely and safe Children’s Social Care Services.
Outcomes:	To strengthen service delivery and improve outcomes for children and their families.
Benefits:	To safeguard children, improve their opportunities and help Children and Families realise their potential.

<p>2. Note which groups may be affected by the policy, strategy, function or service. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.</p> <p>(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender</p>
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Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Children & families who have reached the threshold of requiring Children’s Social Care intervention.	An improved response and service to those children and families supported through the Children’s Social Care Service.	Datazone alongside national and local benchmarking indicators.
Further Comments relating to the item:		
In order to achieve ‘Good’ Children’s Services, investment is necessary to address the increase in workload and address concerns raised within the Ofsted Inspection 2015.		

3. Result	
Are there any aspects of the policy, strategy, function or service, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	Yes
Please provide an explanation for your answer: The service provides a range of safeguarding and support functions and works with the most vulnerable and ‘at risk’ families within our Community.	
Will the policy, strategy, function or service have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: It is considered improved investment will have a positive impact on those with whom we are working.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered ‘yes’ to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.

4. Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	
Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	
Stage Two not required:	✓

Name: Dr Mac Heath

Date: 04/01/2016

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, the Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) for publication on the WBC website.