

West Berkshire Council – Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers

OFSTED ACTION PLAN July 2017

This plan addresses recommendations made by Ofsted in their inspection report published 07 July 2017.

West Berkshire is a great place for children to grow up. Generally West Berkshire’s children and young people 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.

We understand children in the context of their families and communities, and we prioritise supporting vulnerable families and working with communities so that their children can do well and be safe within their own family whenever possible.

Where children and young people can’t remain with their birth or extended families, despite high quality family support, and are looked after by the local authority, we want them to know that we are ambitious, driven and committed Corporate Parents, striving to help them reach their full potential. For these children and young people we prioritise finding the best permanent home for them, so that they can have a stable base from which to build a secure future; and supporting them, while in our care, to be safe, stay healthy and achieve academically and otherwise.

The vision for children and family services in West Berkshire is of a service that is – at the very least - “**good**” across all domains, if not outstanding. To achieve this we will build on the existing strengths acknowledged in the Ofsted report and on the principles already established within the service. We will continue to build upon a service infrastructure and governance arrangements which support these strengths and principles.

Existing Strengths

- CAAS and MASH are effective and good decisions are made
- Good relationships between young people and their personal advisors and / or social workers
- Good management grip on performance
- Assessments are purposeful and timely
- Children receive effective and well co-ordinated support to keep them safe and to meet their needs
- Child Protection Conferences are timely and Core Groups regular
- Quality of court assessments and evidence is strong
- Senior and potential leaders work well in partnership with Children Looked After
- Stable foster care arrangements
- Good “adoption scorecard” outcomes
- “Adopt Berkshire” and permanency planning work well
- Strong presence at the family justice board
- Outstanding youth offending team
- Social worker positivity about West Berkshire as an employer
- Care Leavers are well supported into adulthood

West Berkshire Principles

- **Restorative approaches** (already evident, and to be built on further with the Family Safeguarding Model)
- **Focusing on strengths and assets** in families and not problems or deficits (through the planned use of Motivational Interviewing)
- **Focusing on peoples lives** – in this case through concentrating on “children’s voice”
- **Finding ways to say “yes” differently** – by building on our successful early help to keep children and families safely out of our statutory services

Appendix B

This draft improvement plan has been drawn up by West Berkshire Council. The Ofsted recommendations have been mapped to four workstreams, owned and led as follows:

Key to RAG Rating

In the **Outcomes, Actions and Success Measures** section below there is a RAG status reported for each action. The RAG status should be interpreted as follows:

RAG Shading	Action Status
	Action not yet started.
	Action in progress and on schedule to complete on time as planned.
	Action in progress but at risk of not completing on time as planned.
	Action started, but blocked; key milestone not met, or other as yet unresolved impediment to completion.
	Action completed successfully.
EV	Action completed successfully and evidence of impact available.

Improvement Workstream – Ownership

Strategic ownership of the development of West Berkshire children’s services lies with the Portfolio Holder for children’s services and the Corporate Director – Communities (the statutory DCS).

Operational ownership of the development of West Berkshire children’s services lies with the Heads of Service for children and families, education, and prevention and safeguarding.

Ownership of the specific elements of this action plan is allocated accordingly below:

Workstream	Ownership
A: Improving Leadership, Management, Governance and Partnerships	Corporate Director – Communities Head of Children and Family Services
B: Improving the Quality of our Practice	Head of Children and Family Services Principal Social Worker
C: Improving Services to Children in Need of Help and Protection	Service Manager – CAAS Service Manager – Localities
D: Improving Services to children looked after and care leavers	Service Manager – Looked After Children Team

Improvement Work streams – Objectives and Improvement Commitments

<p>A: Improving our Leadership, Management, Governance and Partnerships</p> <p>We are ambitious for children’s outcomes; committing the council’s resources to ensuring a high quality service for children, young people and families in whatever capacity we work with them, and by exercising system leadership so that our partners do so too.</p>	<p>B: Improving the Quality of our Practice</p> <p>We seek great outcomes for children by making sure we achieve consistently high quality practice in child and family social work and across the wider children’s workforce, helping children to stay safe, be healthy, and achieve their full potential and to contribute to the life of the district in a meaningful way.</p>	<p>C: Improving services to children in need of help and protection</p> <p>We improve outcomes for children by building on the strengths of our best existing teams and services, delivering innovative practice through the Family Safeguarding Model and Motivational Interviewing practice training and ensuring that purposeful direct work with children and families helps them to improve their lives and reduces risk of harm.</p>	<p>D: Improving Services to Children Looked After and Care Leavers</p> <p>We improve outcomes for children by ensuring that they remain with or return to their families wherever safely possible and in parallel we plan for permanency from the outset of a child’s time in care.</p>
<p><i>Commitments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work collaboratively with our health partners in a focused way to ensure that children who have complex mental health needs can access services when they need them. 	<p><i>Commitments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will ensure that we routinely record ethnicity and other diversity information about children and their families. • We will use ethnicity and other diversity information about children to inform assessment and planning 	<p><i>Commitments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy meetings will take place within a timescale that is in accordance with procedures. • Strategy discussions will include the right partners to enable the proper sharing of information and a comprehensive analysis of risk. • Our plans for children will prioritise actions according to urgency and will always have clear timeframes for 	<p><i>Commitments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will establish a process of reassessment for all children looked after to ensure that their changing needs are understood, prioritised and addressed. • Working with care leavers, we will develop a new pathway plan template which fully engages them and supports the achievement of their life goals.

Appendix B

		<p>completion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will simplify and clarify the language used in our plans so that they are readily understood by families as well as by professionals.• We will improve the response to children and young people who go missing from care or who are at risk from child sexual exploitation by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaking with children promptly on return from any missing episode and using these conversations to assess risk.• Improving risk screening.• Strengthening the oversight and impact of SEMRACs• Overseeing the adherence to relevant procedures.	
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Outcomes, Actions and Success Measures – By Improvement Workstream

A: Improving our Leadership, Management, Governance and Partnerships	
Outcome	We are ambitious for children's outcomes; committing the council's resources to ensuring a high quality service for children, young people and families in whatever capacity we work with them, and by exercising system leadership so that our partners do so too.
Improvement Commitments	We will work collaboratively with our health partners in a focused way to ensure that children who have complex mental health needs can access services when they need them.
Related Ofsted recommendation	6) Undertake focused work with health partners to ensure that children who have complex mental health needs can access services when they need them.
How will we know we have done it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No children with identified mental health needs left unmet / left waiting for a service • Reduction in privately commissioned therapeutic interventions consistent with improved access to local specialist mental health services • Improvement in looked after children's SDQ scores.

Improvement Commitment		We will work collaboratively with our health partners in a focused way to ensure that children who have complex mental health needs can access services when they need them.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Share details of children with currently identified complex MH problems with health partners to confirm action plan in	End Aug 2017	HoS – Prevention and Safeguarding		Initial meeting with health partners to identify children with unmet complex mental health needs undertaken.

Appendix B

respect of each child.				
Review progress of individual child action plans for MH	End Sept 2017	Service Manager - CIC		
In discussion with health partners agree revised process for securing CAMHS input for looked after children, including prioritised access, irrespective of clinical need.	End March 2018	Mac Heath		
Review updated SDQ scores	End March 2018	CFLT		

B: Improving the Quality of our Practice	
Outcome	We seek great outcomes for children by making sure we achieve consistently high quality practice in child and family social work and across the wider children's workforce, helping children to stay safe, be healthy, and achieve their full potential and to contribute to the life of the district in a meaningful way.
Improvement Commitments	We will ensure that we routinely record ethnicity and other diversity information about children and their families. We will use ethnicity and other diversity information about children to inform assessment and planning
Related Ofsted Recommendations	2) Improve the identification and recording of ethnicity and diversity. Ensure that these are fully explored to inform assessment and planning for children.
How will we know we have done it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children in Care Director records will have ethnicity data recorded. • Other relevant diversity information will be included in children's records routinely. • Assessment and plans will show ethnicity and other diversity information about individual children is taken into consideration and responded to within plans. • Records will show that children are consulted about whether their diversity needs are met.

Appendix B

Improvement Commitment		We will ensure that we routinely record ethnicity and other diversity information about children and their families.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Monitoring of Care Director records to secure ethnicity and other diversity information.	w.e.f Care Director implementation September 2017	Service Manager – CAAS Service Manager – Localities		
Ethnicity and other diversity information discussed in supervision.	December 2017	Service Manager – CAAS Service Manager – Localities		
Improvement Commitment		We will use ethnicity and other diversity information about children to inform assessment and planning		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Ethnicity and diversity training for social workers (where needed)	December 2017	All Teams		
Focused audit of the use of ethnicity and diversity information and response in children’s assessment and plans	March 2018	All Teams		
Action Plan in response to audit findings	June 2018	All Teams		

C: Improving services to children in need of help and protection	
Outcome	We will improve outcomes for children by building on the strengths of our best existing teams and services, delivering innovative practice through the Family Safeguarding Model and Motivational Interviewing practice training and ensuring that purposeful direct work with children and families helps them to improve their lives and reduces risk of harm.
Improvement Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy meetings will take place within a timescale that is in accordance with procedures. • Strategy discussions will include the right partners to enable the proper sharing of information and a comprehensive analysis of risk. • Our plans for children will prioritise actions according to urgency and will always have clear timeframes for completion. • We will simplify and clarify the language used in our plans so that they are readily understood by families as well as by professionals. • We will improve the response to children and young people who go missing from care or who are at risk from child sexual exploitation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Speaking with children promptly on return from any missing episode and using these conversations to assess risk. ○ Improving risk screening. ○ Strengthening the oversight and impact of SEMRACs ○ Overseeing the adherence to relevant procedures.
Related Ofsted Recommendations	<p>1) Ensure that strategy meetings take place within a timescale that is in accordance with procedures, and that strategy discussions include the right partners to enable the proper sharing of information and a comprehensive analysis of risk.</p> <p>3) Ensure that plans for children include actions that are prioritised according to urgency, with clear timeframes for completion. Simplify the language in plans to increase their meaning for families.</p> <p>4) Improve the response to children and young people who go missing from home or care or who are at</p>

Appendix B

	<p>risk from child sexual exploitation. Ensure that children are routinely seen and spoken to in good time after they return from going missing, and that these conversations are used to assess risk. Improve risk screening to better understand the risk of child sexual exploitation, and strengthen the oversight and impact of Sexually Exploited and Missing Conferences (SEMRACs). Robustly oversee the adherence to relevant procedures.</p>
<p>How will we know we have done it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records will show that all strategy meetings take place within 24 hours if S47 or within 5 days if planned. • Records will show social care, police and health involvement as a minimum for all strategy meetings, and for planned strategy meetings wider involvement as appropriate in the light of concerns about the child(ren) • Analysis of risk in strategy meetings will be comprehensive and will fully support decisions taken • All actions in plans will have identified timescales and as far as possible these will not be “by the next review”. • Where plans have multiple actions across various timescales, a clear rationale of prioritisation will underpin the timescales in the plans. • Plans will be written in plain English, with an absence of social work (and other professional) jargon. • Steps will be taken to make additional appropriate accommodation for parents or children with learning difficulties, language barriers or other impairments to ensure that they understand plans relating to them. • Significant increase in the uptake of return home interviews across all children going missing from home or care. • Clear use of CSE risk assessment tools in all cases where CSE risk is considered a possibility, with an explanation of why risk assessment tool is not used recorded on the case note, if not considered necessary. • Risk assessment tool used when upgrading or downgrading risks at SEMRAC, with clear decisions recorded. • Reduction in missing episodes overall and for individual children over time. • Reduction in CSE risk for children over time.

Improvement Commitment		Strategy meetings will take place within a timescale that is in accordance with procedures.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Audit of strategy meeting timescales	October 2017	Service Manager – CAAS		
>90% strategy meetings undertaken within timescales	End December	Review in DataZone		

Appendix B

	2017			
Improvement Commitment		Strategy discussions will include the right partners to enable the proper sharing of information and a comprehensive analysis of risk.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Secure agreement of health partners to engage in all strategy meetings.	October 2017	HoS		
Audit of engagement in strategy meetings	December 2017	HoS		
Review with LSCB to secure partner engagement, if strategy meetings continue to have patchy representation.	March 2018	LSCB		
Improvement Commitment		Our plans for children will prioritise actions according to urgency and will always have clear timeframes for completion.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
All early help, CIN and CP Plans to have individual timescales for every action	Immediate effect	All Teams		
Audit of timescales in plans	Spring 2018	QA Board Audit Programme		
Depending on outcome of audit, remedial action on SMART planning to be undertaken	Summer 2018	QA Board Audit Programme		
Improvement Commitment		We will simplify and clarify the language used in our plans so that they are readily understood by families as well as by professionals.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Social workers to be encouraged in improve family-friendly focus of plans	Immediate effect	Service Managers – CAAS,		

Appendix B

		Localities, CiC		
Audit of plans for family friendliness	December 2017	QA Board Audit Programme		
Training to be commissioned and made available for improving writing of plans, in collaboration with families.	Spring 2018	HoS & PWS		
Audit of new family friendly plans	Summer 2018	QA Board Audit Programme		
Improvement Commitment		We will improve the response to children and young people who go missing from care or who are at risk from child sexual exploitation by: Speaking with children promptly on return from any missing episode and using these conversations to assess risk.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Identify barriers to uptake of return home interviews	End Oct 2017	Service Manager – IYSS		
Revised procedures for RHIs to increase uptake – in place	End December 2017	Service Manager – IYSS		
Review of uptake of RHIs	Spring 2018	Service Manager – IYSS		
Based on outcome of review of uptake of RHIs, consider recommissioning RHI provider.	Summer 2018	Service Manager – IYSS		
Improvement Commitment		We will improve the response to children and young people who go missing from care or who are at risk from child sexual exploitation by: Improving risk screening.		

Appendix B

Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Review use of risk screening tool at SEMRAC to ensure that an appropriate tool is used for downgrading as well as upgrading risk.	Immediate effect	Service Manager – IYSS Service Manager – Localities		
Audit use of risk screening tool at SEMRACs	December 2018	LSCB Q&P Group		
Implement any recommendations arising from risk tool audit.	Spring 2018	Service Manager – IYSS Service Manager – Localities		
Improvement Commitment		We will improve the response to children and young people who go missing from care or who are at risk from child sexual exploitation by: Strengthening the oversight and impact of SEMRACs		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Review of impact of SEMRAC at LSCB	January 2018	LSCB and Service Manager Localities		
Implement recommendations arising from review of SEMRAC impact	March 2018	Service Manager – Localities		
Improvement Commitment		We will improve the response to children and young people who go missing from care or who are at risk from child sexual exploitation by: Overseeing the adherence to relevant procedures.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Undertake audit of missing and CSE	December	QA Board		

Appendix B

compliance with procedures.	2017	Audit Programme		
Implement Recommendations arising from CSE compliance audit.	Spring 2018	Service Manager – IYSS Service Manager – Localities		

D: Improving Services to Children Looked After and Care Leavers	
Outcome	We will improve outcomes for children by ensuring that they remain with or return to their families wherever safely possible and plan for permanency from the outset
Improvement Commitments	We will establish a process of reassessment for all children looked after to ensure that their changing needs are understood, prioritised and addressed. Working with care leavers, we will develop a new pathway plan template which fully engages them and supports the achievement of their life goals.
Related Ofsted Recommendations	5) Establish a process of reassessment for all children looked after, to ensure that their changing needs are understood, prioritised and addressed. 7) Work with care leavers to develop a pathway plan template that they are happy to engage with and that supports the achievement of their life goals.
How will we know we have done it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in care will have a fresh assessment undertaken when their circumstances change, in addition to the routine use of looked after children reviews to update care plans. • There will be a new pathway plan in place, for which there is evidence of good uptake because young people recognise its usefulness.

Appendix B

Improvement Commitment		We will establish a process of reassessment for all children looked after to ensure that their changing needs are understood, prioritised and addressed.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Develop assessment practice for use in children in care team	November 2017	Service Manager – Looked After Children		
Train children in care team in use of assessment	January 2018	Service Manager – Looked After Children		
Implement assessment in Children in Care Team,	March 2018	Service Manager – Looked After Children		
Improvement Commitment		Working with care leavers, we will develop a new pathway plan template which fully engages them and supports the achievement of their life goals.		
Action	By When?	By Whom?	RAG	Status Update
Establish care leaver working group to revise pathway planning	December 2017	Manager – Leaving Care Team		
New model of YP-led pathway planning in place	March 2018	Manager – Leaving Care Team		
All Care Leavers with new style pathway plan	July 2018	Manager – Leaving Care Team		

Appendix B