



Scan here to access the public documents for this meeting

# Meeting of West Berkshire District Council

**Thursday 14 September 2017**

***Summons and Agenda***



WestBerkshire  
C O U N C I L

To: All Members of the Council

*You are requested to attend a meeting of*

**West Berkshire Council**


*to be held in the*

**Council Offices Market Street Newbury**

*on*

**Thursday 14 September 2017**

**at 7.00pm**



Andy Day  
Head of Strategic Support  
West Berkshire District Council

**Note:** The Council broadcasts some of its meetings on the internet, known as webcasting. If this meeting is webcasted, please note that any speakers addressing this meeting could be filmed. If you are speaking at a meeting and do not wish to be filmed, please notify the Chairman before the meeting takes place. Please note however that you will be audio-recorded.

Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday 6 September 2017

---

## **AGENDA**

---

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).

2. **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman to report on functions attended since the last meeting and other matters of interest to Members.

3. **MINUTES**

The Chairman to sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017. (**Pages 7 - 12**)



**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' [Code of Conduct](#).

**5. PETITIONS**

Councillors may present any petition which they have received. These will normally be referred to the appropriate body without discussion.

**6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Members of the Executive to answer the following questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with the Council's Constitution:

**(a) Question submitted in the name of Mr Jamie Heath to the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport**

The Pothole Policy clearly states that potholes over 50mm in depth and over 300mm in diameter should be repaired within 24 hours, whereas the Intervention Levels guide states potholes over 50mm depth to be within 28 days. Why does the WBC 'Pothole Policy and Guidance' public document published in January 2017 differ to the WBC intervention levels?

**(b) Question submitted in the name of Mr Jamie Heath to the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport**

The Head of Transport and Countryside has confirmed that the Pothole Policy is not however considered as part of the Council's formal maintenance policy. Why does this Policy not form part of the formal maintenance policy and why do you issue this Pothole Policy to the public when you do not use or follow it?

**7. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES**

The Monitoring Officer to advise of any changes to the membership of Committees since the previous Council meeting.

**8. LICENSING COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of the Council, the Licensing Committee met on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Copies of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Strategic Support or via the [Council's website](#).

**9. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of the Council, the Personnel Committee has not met.



**Agenda - Council to be held on Thursday, 14 September 2017 (continued)**

**10. GOVERNANCE AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of Council, the Governance and Ethics Committee met on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2017. Copies of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Strategic Support or via the [Council's website](#).

**11. DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of the Council, the District Planning Committee met on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2017. Copies of the Minutes of this meeting can be obtained from Strategic Support or via the [Council's website](#).

**12. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION**

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of the Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission has not met.

**13. JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

The Council is asked to note that since the last meeting of the Council, the Joint Public Protection Committee has not met.

**14. APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (C3310)**

*Purpose: To agree the membership of the West Berkshire Council Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for 2017 and the scope of the allowances the IRP will consider at its next meeting. (Pages 13 - 16)*

**15. NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR APPEALS PANEL (C3361)**

*Purpose: To propose an increase in the number of Members on an Appeals Panel from three to four and to remove the requirement for a substitute. (Pages 17 - 20)*

**16. WEST BERKSHIRE'S CHILDREN'S SERVICES ARE "GOOD" (C3383)**

*Purpose: The report informs Council of the outcome of the Children's Services Ofsted Inspection of May 2017, responds to Ofsted's recommendations arising from that inspection and sets out our ambition to build on the successful 'Good' Ofsted grading to achieve excellent and sustainable Children's Services. The report also notes that future consideration will be given to going beyond the action plan in response to Ofsted's seven recommendations, to further develop and improve the service. (Pages 21 - 62)*

**17. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Members of the Executive to answer the following questions submitted by Councillors in accordance with the [Council's Constitution](#):

(a) **Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment submitted by Councillor Mollie Lock:**

“Can the Portfolio Holder please explain the delays in the Highwood Copse School building program and outline what steps they are undertaking to get this project back on track?”

(b) **Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment submitted by Councillor Alan Macro:**

“Will the Council review the payment charges at HWRC in light of the public outrage of this latest round in increase and new charges?”

(c) **Question to be answered by the Leader of the Council submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon:**

“Would the Leader of Council agree that the current proposals from the Boundary Commission do not take enough local views on board?”

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Moira Fraser on telephone (01635) 519045.



This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 3.

## DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

## COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

**TUESDAY, 4 JULY 2017**

**Councillors Present:** Steve Ardagh-Walter, Pamela Bale, Jeremy Bartlett, Jeff Beck, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Paul Bryant, Anthony Chadley, Keith Chopping, Jeanette Clifford, Hilary Cole, James Cole, Jason Collis, Lee Dillon, Lynne Doherty, Billy Drummond, Adrian Edwards, Sheila Ellison, Marcus Franks, James Fredrickson, Dave Goff, Nick Goodes, Manohar Gopal, Clive Hooker, Carol Jackson-Doerge (Vice-Chairman), Marigold Jaques, Graham Jones, Rick Jones, Tony Linden, Mollie Lock, Alan Macro, Tim Metcalfe, Ian Morrin, Graham Pask, Anthony Pick, James Podger, Anthony Stansfeld, Quentin Webb (Chairman), Emma Webster and Laszlo Zverko

**Also Present:** Joanne Bassett (Public Relations Assistant), Andy Day (Head of Strategic Support), Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager), Rachael Wardell (Corporate Director - Communities), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Honorary Alderman Royce Longton, Gabrielle Mancini (Group Executive - Conservatives) and Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Peter Argyle, Councillor Richard Crumly, Councillor Mike Johnston, Councillor Alan Law, Councillor Garth Simpson, Councillor Richard Somner and Councillor Virginia von Celsing

**Councillors Absent:** Councillor Howard Bairstow, Councillor Rob Denton-Powell, Councillor Paul Hewer and Councillor Gordon Lundie

## PART I

### 23. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Jason Collis to the Council.

The Chairman reported that he and the Vice-Chairman had attended 25 events since the last Council meeting.

The Chairman was also delighted to report on the success of the recent Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan referendum which was held on Thursday 22 June 2017. He noted that 50.1% of the electorate turned out and 88.8% voted in favour of the plan. He suggested that this was a perfect example of local democracy, with the community helping shape local housing for the future.

### 24. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 09 May 2017 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of the following amendment which was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor Graham Jones:

#### **Item 10, Proposed New Model for Scrutiny, Page 12 –**

“He also stated that the decision to increase the threshold for calling items in from four to five hampered the ability to hold the Executive to account.” *Post meeting note: The threshold for calling items in has remained at five since the Constitution was introduced in 2001.*

## COUNCIL - 4 JULY 2017 - MINUTES

Councillor Alan Macro commented that the amendment accorded with his recollection of what he said at the meeting and he apologised for inadvertently misleading Members.

### 25. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

### 26. **Petitions**

There were no petitions presented at the meeting.

### 27. **Public Questions**

A full transcription of the public question and answer session is available from the following link: [Transcription of Q&As](#). *(right click on link and 'Edit Hyperlink'. Insert URL to pdf on website in 'address' field)*

- a) *A question standing in the name of Ms Judith Bunting on the subject of the provision of sprinklers in schools, social and affordable housing developments and high rise blocks was answered in full by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure but as Ms Bunting was unable to attend the meeting she would receive a written response.*
- b) *A question standing in the name of Mr Simon Pike on the subject of the methodology and data the Council used to predict reductions in the electorate in some polling places when they made their submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission in December 2016 was answered by the Leader of the Council.*
- c) *A question standing in the name of Mr Simon Pike on the subject of ward patterns was answered by the Leader of the Council.*
- d) *A question standing in the name of Mr Tony Vickers on the subject of the impact of the revisions to district wards on town council wards was answered by the Leader of the Council.*

### 28. **Membership of Committees**

The Monitoring Officer advised of the following changes to the membership of Committees since the previous Council meeting:

#### **Governance and Ethics Committee**

Councillor Jason Collis had replaced Councillor Garth Simpson as a substitute on the Governance and Ethics Committee.

#### **Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission**

Councillor Jason Collis had replaced Councillor Garth Simpson as a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

### 29. **Licensing Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Licensing Committee had not met.

### 30. **Personnel Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Personnel Committee had not met.

### 31. **Governance and Ethics Committee**

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Governance and Ethics Committee had met on 19 June 2017.



## COUNCIL - 4 JULY 2017 - MINUTES

### 32. District Planning Committee

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the District Planning Committee had not met.

### 33. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

The Council noted that, since the last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission had met on 16 May 2017.

### 34. Local Government Boundary Review (C3319)

*(Councillor Mollie Lock left the meeting at 7.32pm)*

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 13) which sought to update Members in relation to the review of the district's boundaries and to alert them to the need to review some of the previously approved warding patterns based on greater clarity of the projections used to inform the predicted total number of electors.

**MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Graham Jones and seconded by Councillor Lee Dillon:

That the Council:

1. "rescind the decision of Council on 23 March 2017 in relation to proposed new warding patterns and new ward names, in accordance with the Council Rules of Procedure 4.9 and 4.16.
2. submit the new warding patterns and names (Appendix C refers) to the Local Government Boundary Commission in accordance with Phase 2 of the Boundary Review based on a further review of the electorate forecast figures.
3. notwithstanding the proposed changes, reaffirm that it would still like the Local Government Boundary Commission to look at whether the Greenham Ward should be two single Member Wards based on a view that there would be two distinct communities of the Racecourse development and the proposed new Sandford development."

Councillor Graham Jones thanked the Members of the Working Party and Officers for supporting this process. He noted that Map 26 referred to the Tilehurst/Calcot Ward but that it should make reference to Tilehurst South and Holybrook. Councillor Jones commented that forecasting the future was not an exact science and these predictions were based on a range of assumptions.

Councillor Jones explained that since the submission of the forecast figures in December 2016 there had been a number of factors that had led the Council to have to review them. The original number of elector figures was taken as at September 2016. The ratio applied to future electors per household was 1.75 at this point. Since submitting the forecasts in December 2016 the number of electors on the electoral role had increased from 124,492 to 130,217 and the ratio now used was 1.8. A further significant change related to the Lakeside development in Theale which was approved on appeal in February 2017 which would increase Theale's electorate by 585 electors.

Councillor Jones commented that the decision to reduce the number of councillors to 42 plus or minus one constituted a dramatic change. He appreciated that Members had built up relationships with their communities. To some extent it was easier to sub-divide urban areas as that was already the case and he recognised that it could be more problematic in rural areas. Rural wards tended to base their sense of communities on a number of factors including school catchment areas, shops, geographical features and arterial roads.

## COUNCIL - 4 JULY 2017 - MINUTES

Councillor Jones stated that the proposed submission was, in his opinion, as best a compromise as could be achieved. He accepted that Members, Parish and Town Councils and residents might be able to come up with other compromises and he encouraged them to make their own submissions to the Local Government Boundary Commission. He was sure that if Councillor Alan Law had been able to attend the meeting he would have made a case for the retention of the 'Goring Gap' community comprising Basildon and Streatley Wards. He also noted the comments that had been made in relation to the size of the Downlands Ward both in terms of its geography and the number of parishes it covered. He also noted the comments about the potential for joining the Hungerford and Kintbury Wards and making this a single three Member Ward.

Councillor Emma Webster also thanked all those involved in developing the submission but requested that the Tilehurst/Calcot Ward be renamed Calcot and Holybrook.

Councillor Graham Bridgman noted that at the 23 March 2017 meeting he had commented that a possible solution might be to include Beech Hill with Burghfield. He noted that his fellow Ward Member Councillor Mollie Lock, if she was present, would point out that the residents of Wokefield were upset at being moved out of the Mortimer Ward. He also accepted that the residents of Beech Hill looked to Mortimer for services. He recognised the validity of all these opinions but also pointed out that irrespective of which ward the parish was included in, the constituents would still be well represented. He encouraged the parish councils to submit their views to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC).

Councillor Tim Metcalfe commented that the residents of Tidmarsh and Sulham were pleased to be moved back into the Pangbourne and Purely Ward in the revised submission. He also commented that he was very supportive of the decision to reduce the number of councillors, and, in fact felt that the number could have been reduced even further.

*(Manohar Gopal left the meeting at 7.44pm).*

Councillor Alan Macro commented that he was happier with this revised submission. Both he and the parish council had submitted comments to the LGBC commenting on the increase in the size of the Theale ward.

Both Councillors Macro and Bridgman supported naming the Tilehurst/Calcot Ward the Calcot Ward.

Councillor James Cole reported that the proposal to co-join the Hungerford and Kintbury Wards had first been raised by Inkpen Parish Council. He accepted that a three councillor ward could be deemed to be problematic but that on balance it represented a better solution for the electors.

Councillor Lee Dillon commented that once a decision had been made to reduce the number of councillors it was important to smooth out the tolerance levels across the district. He accepted that the results were not perfect but they were a good compromise and met the expectations of the LGBC. He noted the comments about rural wards and where they looked to for services but he reminded Members of the comment made by Councillor Webb at a previous meeting. The services would still be there and the residents would still be able to access them. They would also still be represented by a local councillor albeit that it might not be the same councillor as their neighbouring parish.

Councillor Graham Jones commented that he was ambivalent about the names of wards and he was not well qualified to comment on what all wards should be called. He therefore encouraged local Members, parish councils and residents to make their own submissions to the LGBC on these matters. He reminded Members that the Council was making a submission to the LGBC and they were responsible for making a determination

## COUNCIL - 4 JULY 2017 - MINUTES

on the ward boundaries. When he was involved in this process previously the LGBC had in fact based their decision on a minority report which they made further amendments to.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

### 35. **New Arrangements for Licensing Sub-Committees (C3308)**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning a proposal to increase the number of members on Licensing Sub-Committees from three to four with no substitute required.

**MOTION:** Proposed by Councillor Graham Bridgman and seconded by Councillor James Cole:

That the Council:

1. “agrees that the Panel for future Licensing Sub-Committee meetings will consist of four Members with no substitute required.
2. agrees that the necessary changes be made to the Council’s Constitution.”

Councillor Graham Bridgman noted that those Members of the Licensing Committee who were in attendance at the informal meeting in March 2017 agreed, in principle, with the proposal to increase the number of Members sitting on a Licensing Sub-Committee from three to four (with no substitute required). The genesis of this proposal was the Council’s Monitoring Officer, Sarah Clarke, and he thanked her for her proactive approach.

Councillor Bridgman outlined the way the Licensing Sub-Committees operated for those Members that were not familiar with the processes. He explained that the substitute was required to sit through the pre-meeting and the whole of the meeting in case an unexpected conflict arose. Officers had confirmed they could not recollect an instance when they had to be used. The substitute was however not permitted to take part in the decision making deliberations.

This proposal would ensure that all Members of the Committee had the opportunity to sit and gain experience on Licensing Sub-Committees. It would also reduce the frustration of Members acting as substitutes who had to sit through a whole meeting but then not take part in the decision making process. He noted that as the substitute was already required to attend the meeting there would not be any additional budgetary implications associated with this proposal. He also noted that a decision could always be made as the chairman would have a casting vote.

Councillor James Cole commented that the matter had been discussed by the Governance and Ethics Committee who had unanimously supported the proposal. The Committee had also commented that as the Appeals Panel operated on similar basis, Officers would be asked to apply a similar approach to that Committee too. A paper would therefore come to a future Council meeting for approval.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

### 36. **Notices of Motion**

There were no Motions submitted.

### 37. **Members' Questions**

There were no Member questions submitted to this meeting.

*(The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and closed at 7.58pm)*

**COUNCIL - 4 JULY 2017 - MINUTES**

**CHAIRMAN**

.....

**Date of Signature**

.....

---

## Appointment of the Independent Remuneration Panel – Summary Report

---

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Council on 14 September 2017
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Graham Jones
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	17 August 2017
<b>Report Author:</b>	Jude Thomas
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	C3310

---

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To agree the membership of the West Berkshire Council Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for 2017.
- 1.2 To agree the scope of the allowances the IRP will consider at its next meeting.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the membership of the West Berkshire Council IRP.
- 2.2 To agree that the scope that the IRP will consider will include:
  - Basic Allowance
  - Special Responsibility Allowances - with particular attention to the following:
    - Governance and Ethics Committee
    - Personnel Committee
    - Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
    - Standards Committee
  - Allowances for Independent Members
  - Childcare and Dependent Carers Allowance
  - Travelling Allowance
  - Subsistence Allowance
  - The administration of the scheme

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** Expenses associated with the Panel will be met from existing budgets. Any changes to the Allowances will impact on the associated budgets
- 3.2 **Policy:** If approved by Council, changes arising from the IRP Recommendations will require Part 14 Members Allowances Scheme to be updated.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** NA
- 3.4 **Legal:** NA
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** NA

3.6 **Property:** NA

3.7 **Other:** NA

**4. Other options considered**

4.1 None

## Executive Summary

### 5. Introduction / Background

5.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require Councils to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The IRP will broadly have the functions of providing the Council with advice on its Members Allowances Scheme and the amounts to be paid. The Council has to have regard to the advice of the IRP.

5.2 Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) the Council is required to ensure that the composition of the Panel meets the following requirements:

- (1) The Panel should consist of at least three members.
- (2) The Panel members cannot be members of any local authority in respect of which that Panel makes recommendations. Anyone who would be disqualified from being elected as an elected member of a local authority is also disqualified from being a member of the Panel.
- (3) The members of the Panel cannot also be members of a Committee or Sub-Committee of an authority in respect of which the Panel makes recommendations. This includes Co-opted members and members of the Governance and Ethics Committee and Independent Persons.

5.3 The last meeting of the panel took place in February 2015 and provided an extensive review of Members' Allowances. The panel members at that time were Ms Lindsey Appleton, Mr David Danielli and Mr Declan Hall. Ms Appleton, Corporate Ethics Manager at AWE and a magistrate, is now a West Berkshire Council Independent Person and cannot, therefore, form part of the panel. Mr Hall was employed as an advisory consultant for the Panel and it is not intended that he be employed on this occasion.

5.4 Given the need to replace two of the previous panel members, and in line with the statutory requirements, the proposed membership of the Panel for November 2017 is as follows:

- Mr David Danielli - Corporate Communications Consultant and ex manager in Vodafone Group
- Mr Jonathon Hopson - Chief Executive of Camp Hopson & Co. Ltd. in Newbury from 2004 to 2014
- Mr Tim Renouf – IT Consultant and Governor at St Nicolas School

On 17 August, Operations Board was informed that Mr Geoff Knappett, Chairman of the Newbury College Corporation, had withdrawn from the Panel since the report was presented to Corporate Board on 1 August and that a replacement was being sought. It is now proposed that Mr Tim Renouf join the panel as the third member. This has been agreed with both Group Leaders.

5.5 It is proposed that the IRP will meet in November 2017 to review the Members' Allowances Scheme as follows:

- Basic Allowance
- Special Responsibility Allowances with particular attention to the following:
  - Governance and Ethics Committee
  - Personnel Committee
  - Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
  - Standards Committee
- Allowances for Independent Members
- Childcare and Dependent Carers Allowance
- Travelling Allowance
- Subsistence Allowance
- The administration of the scheme.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 A report setting out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel will be brought to Council in December 2017.

## **7. Appendices**

7.1 There are no Appendices to this report.



---

## New Arrangements for Appeals Panel

---

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Council on 14 September 2017
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Graham Jones
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	3 August 2017
<b>Report Author:</b>	Moira Fraser
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	C3361

---

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To propose an increase in the number of Members on an Appeals Panel from three to four and to remove the requirement for a substitute.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree that the Panel for future Appeals Panel meetings will consist of four Members with no substitute required.
- 2.2 Subject to agreement with paragraph 2.1 the necessary changes to be made to the Council's Constitution.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** None
- 3.2 **Policy:** The Constitution would have to be amended to reflect the changes
- 3.3 **Personnel:** N/a
- 3.4 **Legal:** TBC
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** N/a
- 3.6 **Property:** N/a
- 3.7 **Other:** N/a

### 4. Other options considered

- 4.1 To retain the current arrangements.

## Executive Summary

### 5. Introduction / Background

- 5.1 The Governance and Ethics Committee, at the 19 June 2017 meeting, considered a proposal to increase the number of Members on Licensing Sub-Committees from three plus a substitute to four with no substitute required. The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that this recommendation be adopted.
- 5.2 In addition they also requested that consideration be given to applying the same principle to the number of Members required for an Appeals Panel. The basis for this was that the two bodies were subject to very similar operational practices.
- 5.3 The function of the Appeals Panel is the determination of an appeal against any decision made by or on behalf of the Authority. The panel deals with a wide range of appeals including appeals in respect of council tax, home-to-school transport and refusal to grant permission in respect of Tourist Information Signs.
- 5.4 Currently the Full Appeals Panel comprises 12 Members appointed on a politically proportionate basis at the Annual Council meeting. Where an appeal needs to be heard an Appeals Panel of three Members and a substitute is constituted by the Head of Strategic Support. The substitute is required to attend the whole hearing in case an unexpected conflict of interest or illness arose, but they are precluded from taking part in the deliberations and final decision making.
- 5.5 Since January 2016, the Appeals Panel had heard three appeals and all of these appeals related to Council Tax.

### 6. Exceptions

- 6.1 It should be noted that while employment appeals (including Disciplinary, Capability, Absence Management, Redundancy and Grievance matters) were dealt with by Members the Panel would comprise a Corporate Director (chair), a Head of Service and an elected Member and they were therefore **not** included in this proposal.
- 6.2 School Admission and Exclusion Appeals are also heard by a panel but these panels comprised independent representatives and they would also **not** be affected by this proposal.
- 6.3 Homelessness reviews are conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations, which do not give an automatic right to an oral hearing, by a Reviewing Officer who is senior to the officer involved in making the original decision and who was not involved in the original decision. There is therefore no member involvement in these appeals and they would therefore not be affected by this proposal.

### 7. Proposal

- 7.1 Under the current arrangement a substitute Member is required to stay on in the hearing in case an unexpected conflict of interest or illness arises. There has been no requirement for the substitute to replace a panel member in the recent past and this has meant that the substitute had to attend the hearing, but then had to leave when the deliberations started. Members have found this frustrating.

- 7.2 It is proposed that in order to fully involve all Appeals Panel Members in the decision making process and provide them with the opportunity to gain necessary relevant experience, the number of Members sitting on an Appeal Panel should be increased to four, but with substitutes no longer being appointed. The quorum for a Panel would still be three Members. In the event that the number of votes to refuse or approve an appeal were equal the Chairman would be required to use their casting vote and therefore a decision could always be made.
- 7.3 There would be no budgetary implication, should Members be minded to approve this recommendation, as the current requirement for a substitute to be in attendance would no longer be necessary.

## 8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Members of the Appeals Panel have been informally canvassed and they have agreed, in principle, with the proposal to increase the number of Members sitting on Appeals Panel from three to four (with no substitute required). This proposal would therefore ensure that all Members of the Panel have the opportunity to sit and gain experience at hearings without having to endure the frustration of not being involved in the final determination of a matter.

This page is intentionally left blank

---

## West Berkshire's Children's Services are "Good"

---

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Council on 14 September 2017
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Lynne Doherty
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	31 August 2017
<b>Report Author:</b>	Dr Mac Heath, Head of Children & Family Services
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	C3383

---

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report serves to inform Council of the outcome of the Children's Services Ofsted Inspection of May 2017, responds to Ofsted's recommendations arising from that inspection and sets out our ambition to build on the successful 'Good' Ofsted grading to achieve excellent and sustainable Children's Services.
- 1.2 The report notes that future consideration will be given to going beyond the action plan in response Ofsted's seven recommendations, to further develop and improve the service.

### 2. Recommendations

- Note the progress made by West Berkshire Children Services since its Ofsted inspection in March 2015 to achieve a 'good' judgement in the inspection undertaken in May in 2017.
- Endorse the service's Action Plan in response to the seven recommendations in Ofsted's inspection report published in July 2017
- Note that further consideration will be given to the next steps for the development of West Berkshire Children Services to further embed good practice and consider what more needs to be achieved to progress beyond "good" to great services.

### 3. Policy

- 3.1 There are no major policy implications rising from this report.

### 4. Financial

- 4.1 No additional resources are sought with this report.

### 5. Personnel

- 5.1 No staff changes are proposed in this report.

### 6. Legal/Procurement

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## 7. Property

7.1 There are no property implications arising from this report.

## 8. Risk Management

8.1 Children's Safeguarding is one of the areas of highest risk for the Council including statutory, reputational, legal and financial risks. As a result of the successful achievement of a "good" grading from Ofsted, the Council's children's services are no longer subject to central government intervention. This paper shows how the service continues to mitigate these risks.

### **Key background documentation**

- Annex A - Ofsted Inspection Report
- Annex B - Ofsted Improvement Plan

# West Berkshire Council

## Re-inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

Inspection date: 8 May 2017 to 19 May 2017

Report published: 7 July 2017

<b>Children's services in West Berkshire are good</b>	
<b>1. Children who need help and protection</b>	Requires improvement
<b>2. Children looked after and achieving permanence</b>	Good
2.1 Adoption performance	Good
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
<b>3. Leadership, management and governance</b>	Good

## Executive summary

The experiences of vulnerable children have improved markedly since the last inspection in 2015, when children's services in West Berkshire were found to be inadequate overall. Leaders in the local authority have worked proactively and successfully with partners, first to address critical weaknesses and, more recently, to deliver the changes needed to provide a consistently good service. Success in building a more stable workforce, better-quality assurance processes and an ambition to innovate and learn from others have hastened the pace of change.

Children looked after, care leavers and children with a plan for adoption now benefit from a good service. Further improvements are needed before the experiences of children who need help or protection can be judged good.

The recently established multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and the contact, advice and assessment service (CAAS) are effective in ensuring that, when children are referred to children's social care, risks and needs are quickly considered and good decisions are made about what families need. Drift and delay are rarely evident, and in the vast majority of cases children are helped quickly. Children benefit from helpful early help services, but the coordination and evaluation of early and targeted support are an area for development. Senior managers are already addressing this.

Children who are at risk of harm are considered through mostly timely child protection strategy discussions. Managers make good decisions about what should happen next. However, health representatives are not always present to share information and to contribute to the analysis of risk. Decisions, including whether a child protection enquiry, conference or plan is needed, are sound. Child protection enquiries, an important part of this process, are particularly comprehensive.

Assessments are purposeful and explain children's histories and experiences well. The feelings and daily lives of children and their carers are central to the analysis of what children need. Important contextual information about children's diverse backgrounds is not always explored in assessments. Child in need and child protection plans address children's needs well. They are comprehensive and provide a clear steer to professionals, but actions and desired outcomes are not always clear enough to ensure that parents and children can understand what needs to change.

Leaders must give more attention to children who go missing from home or care, or who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Although strategic arrangements are clear, and inspectors saw good examples of work to engage and safeguard children, the low take-up of return home interviews means that many are not seen or not seen quickly enough after they return. Those at risk of sexual exploitation are appropriately considered through a multi-agency process, but the analysis of these risks is not robust enough.

Leaders demonstrate their care for children looked after through thoughtful attention to improving the services that help them and through listening to what children tell



them it is like to be in care. These children enjoy stable, warm and helpful relationships with their social workers and foster carers. The consistency of social work relationships with children and families has improved considerably since the last inspection. This reflects the strides made in securing a much more stable workforce that is loyal to West Berkshire and well trained and supported by managers.

Children looked after now benefit from timely health assessments. The creative use of the Emotional Health Academy ensures that children's emerging mental health needs are met. Focused work is needed to secure reliable and timely specialist emotional support for children looked after who have higher-level needs. The professionals supporting children looked after often do not have the benefit of an up-to-date reassessment that takes full account of children's changing needs and circumstances.

Early consideration is given to whether children who cannot live with their parents should be adopted or placed in another permanent care arrangement. When the plan is adoption, children are found the right families in good time. The adoption support that families receive is helpful and is highly valued by adoptive parents.

When children leave care, they are helped to make good decisions and to do well in their education or chosen career. Personal advisers, social workers, carers and senior and political leaders encourage young people to achieve all they can and congratulate them when they do well. However, staff are not making best use of pathway plans to help young people to realise all of their goals.

# Contents

Executive summary	2
<b>The local authority</b>	<b>5</b>
Recommendations	7
Summary for children and young people	7
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	8
The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence	11
Leadership, management and governance	17
<b>Information about this inspection</b>	<b>20</b>

## The local authority

### Previous Ofsted inspections

- The local authority operates one children's home, which was judged to be good in its most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The last inspection report for the local authority's children's services was published in May 2015. The judgements for the local authority were:
  - overall effectiveness: inadequate
  - children who need help and protection: inadequate
  - children looked after and achieving permanence: requires improvement
  - adoption performance: requires improvement
  - the experiences and progress of care leavers: requires improvement
  - leadership, management and governance: requires improvement.

### Local leadership

- The director of children's services (DCS) has been in post since March 2013.
- The DCS is also responsible for adult social care, public health and well-being.
- The chief executive has been in post since October 2005.
- The chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) has been in post since August 2014.

### Children living in this area

- Approximately 35,631 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in West Berkshire. This is 23% of the total population in the area.
- Approximately 10% of the local authority's children aged under 16 years are living in low-income families.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
  - in primary schools is 7% (the national average is 15%)
  - in secondary schools is 6% (the national average is 13%).
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 8% of all children living in the area, compared with 21% in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are children of mixed ethnicity.
- The proportion of children and young people who speak English as an additional language:
  - in primary schools is 8.4% (the national average is 20.1%)
  - in secondary schools is 5.2% (the national average is 15.7%).

## Child protection in this area

- At March 2017, 1,002 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is a reduction from 1,054 at 31 March 2016.
- At March 2017, 154 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan (a rate of 43 per 10,000 children). This is an increase from 145 (41 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2016.
- At March 2017, fewer than five children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is a reduction from five at 31 March 2016.
- In the two years before inspection, there have been no serious incident notifications submitted to Ofsted. One serious case review has been completed.
- There were no serious case reviews ongoing at the time of the inspection.

## Children looked after in this area

- At March 2017, 163 children were being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 46 per 10,000 children). This is an increase from 155 (44 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2016. Of this number:
  - 55 (or 34%) live outside the local authority area
  - eight live in residential children's homes, of whom five live out of the authority area
  - fewer than five live in residential special schools,<sup>1</sup> of whom most live out of the authority area
  - 131 live with foster families, of whom 31% live out of the authority area
  - five live with parents, of whom a minority lives out of the authority area
  - 11 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months:
  - there have been 12 adoptions
  - six children became subject of special guardianship orders
  - 78 children ceased to be looked after, of whom 2.5% subsequently returned to be looked after
  - 24 children and young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living
  - 13 children and young people ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

---

<sup>1</sup> These are residential special schools that look after children for 295 days or less per year.

## **The casework model used in this area**

- The local authority uses 'Signs of Safety' in child protection conferences, casework supervision and targeted services. A restorative practice approach has been adopted across the service.

## **Recommendations**

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.
2. Improve the identification and recording of ethnicity and diversity. Ensure that these are fully explored to inform assessment and planning for children.
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.
4. Improve the response to children and young people who go missing from home or care or who are at 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.
5. Establish a process of reassessment for all children looked after, to ensure that their changing needs are understood, prioritised and addressed.
6. Undertake focused work with health partners to ensure that children who have complex mental health needs can access services when they need them.
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.

## **Summary for children and young people**

- Last time Ofsted inspected children's services in West Berkshire, inspectors found that children and families often did not receive the help and protection that they needed quickly enough.
- After the inspection, council leaders decided to work harder and more quickly to improve services for children. They talked to other people who work with children, such as local schools, the police and health professionals, and they made a good plan.

- This plan has mostly worked. In this inspection, inspectors found that families who have problems and children who are at risk of harm are helped much more quickly than they were previously. This support makes a positive difference to their lives.
- One of the things that is still not good enough is the help that children receive when they go missing from home or care, or when they are at risk of being sexually exploited. Senior managers need to make sure that the risks that these children face are properly understood, and that they are safer as a result.
- Children who cannot live with their parents are found good foster carers or adoptive parents, or they live with their aunts, uncles or grandparents. A few children live in children’s homes. They hardly ever have to move to a different placement, and this helps them to settle, make friends and do well at school.
- Senior managers and council leaders listen to what children looked after say about their experiences, and leaders are always looking for better ways to help children to share their thoughts. It would be good if the Children in Care Council (CiCC) could be helped to grow in numbers and to make even more of a difference to all children in care.
- When young people are ready to leave care, they live in nice homes and most carry on with their education or get a job. They are supported to do well in their lives.
- Social workers and personal advisers show children and young people how much they care about them by spending time with them, listening to their worries and being proud of all their achievements, big and small.

<b>The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
--	-----------------------------

### Inspection findings

8. Since the last inspection in 2015, the identification, assessment and support provided to children in need of help or protection have improved. Overall, children are more effectively and more swiftly helped and safeguarded.
9. At the time of the inspection, senior managers were in the process of reviewing and redefining the early help offer, in order to provide more targeted services. They recognise that there is more work to be done to embed the use of early help assessments and to build partners’ confidence in taking the lead in supporting families who have lower-level needs. Although inspectors saw effective work with children and families, provided through a broad range of interventions, the overall impact of early help is not evaluated.

10. The recent development of a MASH within the CAAS has strengthened the identification of children's needs, including those of children at risk of significant harm. Social workers triage concerns about children effectively, and, in the vast majority of cases, thresholds are applied well. Decisions made by managers are timely, proportionate and well recorded, and show helpful critical reflection and challenge. For a small number of children, partners do not identify risks or refer their concerns quickly enough. For example, there have been delays in police notifying children's social care about incidents of domestic abuse.
11. Most children experience a swift multi-agency response when they have suffered, or are at risk of suffering, significant harm. When potentially serious risks are identified, strategy meetings are held. These meetings involve good multi-agency information sharing and appropriate decision-making. However, some meetings are not held soon enough after concerns are identified. This is sometimes due to the police or other agencies not being available to attend. Some telephone strategy discussions only involve the police and social care, without the engagement of health. This narrow participation means that, in some cases, decisions about risks to children are not informed by sufficiently comprehensive information. (Recommendation)
12. Assessments are timely and they explore historical factors well. Social workers ensure that the views of children and carers inform their analysis of risks and strengths. Management oversight of assessments includes a detailed account of the reasons why a decision has been reached. Overall, assessments include too much description. Some lack a sharp enough focus on each child's world. Children's ethnicity is not routinely recorded, and diversity is not sufficiently explored to ensure that plans take account of the wider context of children's lives. (Recommendation)
13. Social workers clearly understand children's lives and personalities well, and children enjoy strong relationships with their workers. Social workers see children regularly and listen to what they have to say. The quality and consistency of these relationships are a strength in West Berkshire and constitute an important change for children from the last inspection. This is enhanced by an effective advocacy service, which children use regularly.
14. Children in need of help and protection, including children who have disabilities, receive effective and well-coordinated support to keep them safe and to meet their needs. Initial child protection conferences are timely, and review conferences and core group meetings are regular. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Ninety-seven per cent of initial child protection conferences take place within 15 days of the strategy meeting, compared with the previous performance of 78%. This means that multi-agency plans to keep children safe are put in place more quickly after children are considered to be at risk. These meetings are well coordinated, with firm support from partners, ensuring that the right interventions and services are provided to make children safer.

15. The introduction of a child protection surgery has led to more assertive action when plans do not lead to sufficient change in children's lives. The surgery reviews all children who have been subject to a child protection plan for nine months. It considers whether a 'pre-proceedings' phase should commence, during which parents are advised that their children's welfare and future care may need to be considered by a court. The surgery promotes a sharper focus on children's welfare, outcomes and permanence.
16. The timeliness and quality of care planning have also improved since the last inspection. Child protection and child in need plans are comprehensive and include desired outcomes. This is helpful to professionals who have a clear set of goals to guide them in addressing their worries about children. However, some timescales default to the date of the next review, and it is often unclear what the most urgent actions are. The language used in plans is not always clear enough to help families to understand what needs to happen, or to understand fully the reasons for the plan. (Recommendation)
17. The response to children who go missing from home or care is underdeveloped. Inspectors saw good examples of effective information sharing with the police and persistent work by social workers and personal advisers to re-engage children and reduce the risks that they face. When they occur, return home interviews can lead to advice, information and meaningful help for children and their families. However, the overall take-up of return home interviews is low, and conversations with children do not always take place soon enough after they return. This means that, all too often, the reasons why children go missing, or the potential links with other local children or places, are not fully explored. Procedures are not consistently followed. For example, when a risk of significant harm has been identified, this is not always considered through a child protection strategy discussion. The partnership does analyse overall trends in order to understand overarching themes and patterns, but there has been insufficient drive at a senior management level to establish why so few children engage with a return home interview, and how to encourage more children to do so. (Recommendation)
18. The response to the small number of children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation is not consistent or robust enough across all service areas. Indicators of exploitation are not always identified or acted on at the earliest opportunity, and screening tools are not completed quickly enough to fully understand or address concerns. SEMRACs provide a platform to share information and to make decisions about levels of risk. However, decisions made in this forum are not always informed by an updated risk assessment, and judgements are not clearly enough linked to known information. The potential of SEMRACs is not fully utilised and, although senior managers and partners articulate a clear commitment to tackling child sexual exploitation, current arrangements do not track all children well enough. Multi-agency plans are not always properly scrutinised or reviewed to ensure that the right action is taken when new information is shared. (Recommendation)



19. Senior managers take allegations against professionals seriously and have strengthened systems, following lessons learned from a recent serious case review. Safeguarding concerns about adults working with children are identified and considered at the earliest opportunity, with all referrals to the designated officer channelled through the CAAS. Effective management systems are in place to track enquiries, referrals, decisions and actions.

<b>The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence</b>	<b>Good</b>
---	-------------

### Inspection findings

20. Since the last inspection, senior leaders have worked closely with first-line managers and social workers and have made significant improvements for children looked after by West Berkshire. These children now receive consistently good services that support positive outcomes for them.
21. Children on the edge of care benefit from a range of support to help them to remain with their families. When children need to become looked after, managers appropriately consider whether this is the right decision through legal planning meetings. Managers have reviewed arrangements for all children who are looked after through a voluntary agreement with parents, to ensure that this meets the children's need for permanence. As a result, the number of children looked after under a voluntary arrangement has reduced from 43% at the time of the last inspection, to 18%.
22. Senior managers are implementing a new system to track children who are in pre-proceedings or care proceedings. Pre-proceedings work and the use of the Public Law Outline (PLO) is generally effective. However, for some children, managers are not assertive enough in ensuring that plans are progressed quickly, for example, in identifying options for care within children's wider families.
23. Effective support, regular reviews of plans and good management oversight help to keep children who return to live with their families safe and settled.
24. The quality of assessments and evidence presented to the court to support care proceedings is a strength. However, the reassessment of children's changing needs once they are in long-term care is not routine. Many of these children have experienced trauma and disruption before entering care. The lack of ongoing assessment of their lives and experiences, and of how they are coming to terms with past harm, means that children's needs are not always understood or fully reflected in their plans. For example, children looked after who go missing or who are at risk of sexual exploitation do not

consistently benefit from an up-to-date assessment and plan that considers and addresses these risks and needs. (Recommendation)

25. Once a plan for permanence is made, all children looked after are allocated to a social worker in the children in care team, which was established in September 2016. Children benefit from meaningful and close relationships with their social workers, who visit them regularly and show them care and understanding.
26. The timeliness of health assessments and dental checks was poor at the time of the last inspection. Leaders and managers have worked assertively with health partners to transform performance in this area, ensuring that relevant staff are properly trained and robust arrangements are in place for children, wherever they live. As a result, 99% of health assessments and 97% of dental checks were completed on time during the year ending 31 March 2017.
27. Senior managers and health partners have also taken action to improve the completion of strengths and difficulties questionnaires, so that 100% were completed in the year ending 31 March 2017. This identifies children who need extra help and ensures that they are supported more quickly. The introduction of the Emotional Health Academy, a creative multi-agency approach to deciding how children's emotional health needs should be met, has benefited a number of children looked after. However, more work is needed to ensure that those who have more complex difficulties have prompt access to specialist child and adolescent mental health services when they need it. (Recommendation)
28. West Berkshire supports the achievement of its children looked after well. The majority attend schools judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted. The Looked After Children's Education Service (LACES) provides helpful targeted support to children looked after and good-quality training for designated teachers. While personal education plans (PEPs) are variable in quality, senior and virtual school leaders recognise this and are currently undertaking a review of them.
29. The local authority's children looked after strategy is now up to date and is aligned to the new sufficiency strategy. These documents would be stronger if they included more specific actions, but they provide a helpful direction of travel and a set of objectives to guide leaders as they further improve services for children looked after. Senior managers are implementing plans to address the challenges of providing enough suitable accommodation for certain groups of children, such as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The vast majority of children live in long-term settled placements. While a relatively high proportion of children live outside of the area, these children are well supported. Social workers are particularly aware of the potential impact on them of living a long way from their friends and families, and they are persistent in keeping in touch with them.

30. Senior managers have taken steps to strengthen permanency planning for children. While long-term plans are not always settled by the time of children's second looked-after review, careful thinking about their permanent care is evident. A matching matrix helps social workers and managers to identify the most suitable placements, and family finding strategies are informed by children's needs and experiences. For most children, this results in decisive action to find the best possible family for them.
31. Children are well matched to long-term foster care placements, and these are always approved by the fostering panel. Foster carers demonstrate a strong commitment to, and sensitive understanding of, the children placed with them. Foster carers benefit from effective recruitment, timely and careful assessments, extensive training and good supervision. They feel part of the improvement work in West Berkshire and several carers are involved in task and finish groups aimed at further strengthening fostering services.
32. Senior managers recognise that life story work has been slow to start for a number of children in long-term care placements. Inspectors found that recent training is beginning to have a positive impact, with an increasingly therapeutic approach taken to help children to make sense of their journeys in a sensitive and child-centred way.
33. All children looked after are allocated to an independent reviewing officer (IRO) who comes to know them well. Children benefit from good access to advocates. Sensitivity is shown to parents, alongside a commitment to ensuring close involvement of family members in children's lives. Reviews are held and recorded in good time and, in most cases, IROs are proactive in ensuring that actions and care plans are progressed. Inspectors saw evidence of IROs challenging and appropriately escalating their concerns.
34. Senior and political leaders work well in partnership with children looked after; indeed, their views are listened to at all levels of the organisation. The CiCC worked closely with senior managers to co-produce the Pledge. However, despite the enthusiasm of children, the council is not sufficiently helped to influence services and developments for all children looked after. Senior leaders, including the corporate parenting board, recognise the importance of maintaining the ongoing momentum of the group and have explored other ways of working with children, such as a young ambassador scheme and the recent introduction of 'Mind of my own', (MOMO) to capture feedback from children.

**The graded judgement for adoption performance is that it is good**

Inspection findings

35. Adoption performance was judged at the last inspection to require improvement, as too few children were able to leave care through adoption, and life story work to support them to understand their earlier lives was weak. Improvement has been secured in both areas.
36. A stronger emphasis on achieving permanence for children across children's social care is evident, with proactive intervention, parallel planning and options being pursued for children when they cannot return home, including 'foster to adopt' placements. This has increased the number of children leaving care through adoption. In 2014–15, the year up to the last inspection, six children were adopted and seven were matched, a total of 13. At the time of this inspection, this has risen to 18 children in the process, with 10 of these children adopted in the last 12 months.
37. Good use is made of regional consortium arrangements. Regular liaison with managers from the commissioned adoption service ensures an early start to finding families for children who are unable to return home. The service appropriately prioritises the recruitment of adopters for children whose needs are likely to make finding a family more difficult. Prospective adopters are promptly allocated a named worker, and most are assessed within expected timescales and are considered at the first available adoption panel. Appropriate training and relevant information ensure that applicants are realistic about the challenges as well as the rewards of adoption.
38. This purposeful approach means that approved adopters do not have to wait too long for a match. Performance against the three-year scorecard performance measures is slightly behind the national thresholds. However, over the past year, children have experienced swift progression from being looked after to permanency through adoption.
39. The quality of prospective adopter reports is good, but child permanence reports are more variable, and the overall standard requires further improvement. The adoption panel is effective and well run. Minutes show careful consideration of children's needs and clearly explain the reasons for the panel's decisions and recommendations.
40. Social workers and foster carers understand the importance of children of all ages having memory boxes. Life story work is completed more promptly than at the time of the previous inspection, and some children have a life story book before they move to live with their new families. For other children, this is received shortly after their move. Life story books are attractive and child-friendly, explaining family history appropriately. Later life letters are also well

written and are likely to be helpful to children in understanding their earlier lives when they are old enough to read them.

41. Post-adoption support is effective and is provided by skilled and experienced specialist staff, alongside the LACES team. Families can quickly access help when they need it. The service would benefit from the systematic gathering of views from families about the impact of this support. The effectiveness of these services means that very low numbers of children experience disruption after being placed with their adoptive family, and no children have experienced disruption after an adoption order has been granted in the past four years.

**The graded judgement about the experience and progress of care leavers is that it is good**

### **Inspection findings**

42. Care leavers in West Berkshire are well supported into adulthood by a stable and experienced team of social workers and personal advisers who are knowledgeable about, and committed to, the young people they support. Decisions about the timing of the transition of young people from social workers to personal assistants are thoughtfully considered, taking into account the needs of each care leaver. In some cases, young people remain allocated to social workers well past their 18th birthdays.
43. Staff develop strong relationships with young people and are tenacious in maintaining contact with them if they disengage. Workers keep in touch through third parties, liaise with other agencies and take every opportunity to visit if they become aware that a young person is in custody, or is likely to be attending appointments with agencies such as probation. The strength of these relationships is demonstrated by young people, who frequently contact their personal advisers or social workers when they need help or when they want to share good news.
44. The range of housing available to young people has increased significantly since the last inspection. More young people benefit from remaining with their foster carers after their 18th birthdays through 'staying put' arrangements. Young people are helped to obtain private tenancies, which the local authority supports by providing deposits. Others, including unaccompanied asylum seekers, appreciate the support they receive through supported lodgings. Young people spoken to during the inspection all said that they feel safe where they live and value the quality of their housing. Those who attend university receive funding for accommodation during the holidays; this was used creatively to support one young person to go travelling. Ninety-one per cent of young people are recorded as living in suitable accommodation, which is positive.

45. The quality of pathway plans is variable. They are often detailed and are regularly updated, an improvement from the last inspection, but they are not owned or valued by young people and do not represent a vibrant account of care leavers' changing lives. Pathway plan templates are not helpful because they are not user friendly. Young people often do not want to engage with pathway planning, even though they are happy to work with their personal advisers. An intuitive and young person-led pathway planning process would complement the purposeful relationships that care leavers already enjoy with their personal advisers. Managers acknowledge this and are exploring how pathway plan templates might be improved. (Recommendation)
46. Strong systems and processes support care leavers who are not in education, training or employment to access these opportunities. Effective partnerships are in place with a range of work readiness providers. The number of young people in education, employment or training has increased and is now a strength in this local authority. Seventy-eight per cent of 19–21-year olds are in education, training or employment, compared with 47% in 2015–16. This is also testament to the assertive and young person-centred work undertaken by personal advisers to support young people to achieve their goals.
47. Young people have easy access to advice on health matters, including sexual health and drug and alcohol misuse, through a drop-in session facilitated by the looked-after children's health nurse and a separate specialist service that is highly valued by young people. All young people receive helpful summaries of their health histories, which is an improvement from the previous inspection.
48. The local authority demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting young people to achieve their potential, and to celebrate and develop their talents and interests. The music studio and other bespoke activities have been effective in successfully re-engaging young people, and in supporting those who have experienced severe trauma to develop their interests. For some young people, this has led to their turning a talent into a career.
49. Young people speak highly of the support that they receive to develop their independence skills, to set up their homes and to manage their finances. Thoughtful work was seen in building the confidence of an unaccompanied asylum-seeking young person to deal with form filling and bureaucracy. An easy-to-read booklet sets out young people's entitlements clearly.
50. Young people's achievements are marked with a lively annual celebration. Birthdays and holidays, such as Eid and Christmas, are celebrated with a gift. These important gestures cement the personal relationships between young people and their personal advisers, and between care leavers, managers and senior leaders within the council. Formal participation processes are less well developed, but there are a range of events and initiatives where young people are increasingly involved in shaping services, such as piloting the MOMO 'app', interviewing staff and refreshing the Pledge.

<b>Leadership, management and governance</b>	<b>Good</b>
--	-------------

### Inspection findings

51. Significant improvements in children’s services have been achieved since the last inspection. An effective, internal improvement programme board rigorously oversees and drives progress. Additional arrangements, such as the quality assurance and performance boards, ensure that progress is monitored in a variety of ways, for example, through data analysis, case auditing, supervision and gathering feedback from staff and service users. This enables leaders to build on the gains already established.
52. Staff stability has improved considerably since the last inspection and the workforce, including the senior management team, is now predominantly permanent. The vacancy rate has fallen from 50% at the time of the last inspection to 10%, a notable achievement that leaders are rightly proud of. The ongoing significant investment in training means that newly acquired knowledge and skills increasingly benefit children. Social workers understand the importance of relationships and direct work with children and the need for up-to-date good-quality assessments, plans, reviews and chronologies. Children’s cases generally evidence recent management oversight, and social workers feel well supported by their managers. Children and young people benefit greatly from consistency in their relationships with social workers.
53. Vulnerable children and young people are well protected and supported to achieve positive outcomes. Through processes such as the resource panel, managers listen to the recommendations of social workers and ensure that children receive packages of support appropriate to their needs. An important caveat to these findings is that the arrangements to reduce the risks for children who go missing and those at risk of sexual exploitation are not consistently robust. Focused attention from senior leaders is needed in order to secure the necessary improvements. (Recommendation)
54. Improvements in the timeliness of health assessments for children looked after demonstrate well the effectiveness of multi-agency problem solving, with remedial action taken by senior staff from different partner agencies. Good progress has also been made in ensuring that children and young people who have lower-level emotional health needs can access support via the Emotional Health Academy. However, leaders and partners have not been able to ensure that children who have complex mental health needs can access services swiftly enough.
55. The local authority understands the profile of its community well, anticipates future demand on services and uses this information to help to shape services. Some formal plans and strategies, such as the sufficiency strategy,

lack detail. However, the scale and size of the local authority, coupled with other ways of agreeing and securing services, means that children and families do not experience adverse effects as a result.

56. Productive relationships pan-Berkshire, as well as membership of wider forums, support children and families and the workforce. For example, the joint work undertaken with other local authorities to regionalise adoption arrangements evidences a careful and joined-up approach. Similarly, the DCS's leadership of a regional workforce network benefits the training and support of social care staff.
57. Elected members understand the responsibilities of being corporate parents and demonstrate their strong commitment through the Corporate Parenting Panel. The panel is proactive; it ensures that it receives full information about how well children are progressing and commissions suitable reports to keep up to date. Issues of concern are acted on and lead to tangible improvements for children and young people. For example, the visibility of children who have disabilities, identified as an area for development by the peer review, resulted in an inquiry involving and informed by young people who have disabilities themselves.
58. Led by the DCS and head of service, managers have developed a good understanding and grip of performance in their service areas. Data is interrogated regularly to identify potential areas of concern and ensure compliance. Managers understand the benefits of data as a tool to help improve performance. Social care services benefit from corporate support to assist with data collation and analysis, and auditing of practice. Close engagement with other local authorities in the south east region through a benchmarking group enables leaders to measure their progress and performance against that of others.
59. The auditing of casework is a key tool in the quality assurance framework. All managers are involved in auditing, and this has ensured wide acceptance of case scrutiny. Staff report that they find audits helpful in identifying strengths and weaknesses in practice. Auditing is sufficiently independent of line management and compliance is monitored closely. Case audits are generally thorough, but a few are insufficiently critical of practice.
60. Clear and productive lines of communication and accountability are in place between the local authority and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). Work streams, such as the quality assurance sub-group, contribute effectively to improvements within children's social care. Learning from multi-agency audits and serious case reviews is used to reshape and improve services. Topics selected for inquiry by the sub-group reflect priority areas and improvement activities in children's social care.
61. The poor-quality recording system does not support good practice. It is difficult to store and retrieve key documents on children's cases. The local



authority's focused efforts to replace this are commendable and the new system is now at the point of implementation.

62. Leaders and managers regularly seek feedback from the social care workforce, using it well to inform strategies for improvement. For example, feedback from workers has shaped the recruitment and retention strategy. Feedback on the auditing process has influenced how this works in practice. Creative engagement with children and families is instrumental to service delivery; for example, families contributed to the recent multi-agency enquiry into neglect cases. This positively affected the future direction of this work.
63. Leaders have embedded clear lines of accountability and responsibilities across the council. Children's social care services enjoy strong and consistent support from elected members, the chief executive and leaders in partner agencies. Despite financial constraints, children's social care remains sufficiently well funded to achieve its improvement targets.
64. Senior and political leaders demonstrate a commitment to innovation and learning from other local authorities to inform their improvement journey. They actively seek out opportunities to develop new ways of working, for example, through securing funding from the Department for Education (DfE) Children's Social Care Innovations Programme to implement a family safeguarding model. Leaders are ambitious to improve services further, while being rigorous about maintaining core standards.
65. Relationships with the judiciary are strong, and the designated judge reports positively on leadership in the local authority. Other strengths that he identified include the timeliness of court applications and reports, consistency of social workers, and support from line managers.
66. Senior representatives from partner agencies are very positive about a range of developments led by the council, some in partnership with others. In particular, since the introduction of the MASH, partners express increased confidence in reporting their concerns, understanding thresholds and feeling supported in these processes.
67. Social workers speak highly of the support they receive. More meaningful management support and challenge at key points of children's journeys mean that social workers feel safe in their decision-making. Although supervision is regular and often includes a detailed update on children's circumstances, this could be improved with greater reflection, challenge and analysis of the child's world to drive forward children's plans with a critical eye.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences of children and young people who have needed or still need help and/or protection. This also includes children and young people who are looked after and young people who are leaving care and starting their lives as young adults.

Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children, young people and families. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with families and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the local authority knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

The inspection of the local authority was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Ofsted produces this report of the inspection of local authority functions and the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board under its power to combine reports in accordance with section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The inspection team consisted of five of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted.

### **The inspection team**

Lead inspector: Steph Murray

Deputy lead inspector: Sheena Doyle

Team inspectors: Lisa Summers, Natalie Trentham, Janet Fraser

Senior data analyst: Claire Atkinson

Quality assurance managers: John Mitchell and Carolyn Adcock

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance, 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD  
T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)  
© Crown copyright 2017

This page is intentionally left blank

## **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:

<b>RAG Shading</b>	<b>Action Status</b>
	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.
<b>EV</b>	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><b>A: Improving our Leadership, Management, Governance and Partnerships</b></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>B: Improving the Quality of our Practice</b></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><b>C: Improving services to children in need of help and protection</b></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><b>D: Improving Services to Children Looked After and Care Leavers</b></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"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Commitments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure that we routinely record ethnicity and other diversity information about children and their families.</li> <li>• We will use ethnicity and other diversity information about children to inform assessment and planning</li> </ul>	<p><i>Commitments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy meetings will take place within a timescale that is in accordance with procedures.</li> <li>• Strategy discussions will include the right partners to enable the proper sharing of information and a comprehensive analysis of risk.</li> <li>• Our plans for children will prioritise actions according to urgency and will always have clear timeframes for</li> </ul>	<p><i>Commitments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will establish a process of reassessment for all children looked after to ensure that their changing needs are understood, prioritised and addressed.</li> <li>• Working with care leavers, we will develop a new pathway plan template which fully engages them and supports the achievement of their life goals.</li> </ul>

		<p>completion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will simplify and clarify the language used in our plans so that they are readily understood by families as well as by professionals.</li> <li>• 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"> <li>• Speaking with children promptly on return from any missing episode and using these conversations to assess risk.</li> <li>• Improving risk screening.</li> <li>• Strengthening the oversight and impact of SEMRACs</li> <li>• Overseeing the adherence to relevant procedures.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
--	--	---	--

## Outcomes, Actions and Success Measures – By Improvement Workstream

<b>A: Improving our Leadership, Management, Governance and Partnerships</b>	
<b>Outcome</b>	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.
<b>Improvement Commitments</b>	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.
<b>Related Ofsted recommendation</b>	6) Undertake focused work with health partners to ensure that children who have complex mental health needs can access services when they need them.
<b>How will we know we have done it?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No children with identified mental health needs left unmet / left waiting for a service</li> <li>• Reduction in privately commissioned therapeutic interventions consistent with improved access to local specialist mental health services</li> <li>• Improvement in looked after children's SDQ scores.</li> </ul>

<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		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.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>By When?</b>	<b>By Whom?</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
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>B: Improving the Quality of our Practice</b>	
<b>Outcome</b>	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.
<b>Improvement Commitments</b>	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
<b>Related Ofsted Recommendations</b>	2) Improve the identification and recording of ethnicity and diversity. Ensure that these are fully explored to inform assessment and planning for children.
<b>How will we know we have done it?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children in Care Director records will have ethnicity data recorded.</li> <li>• Other relevant diversity information will be included in children's records routinely.</li> <li>• Assessment and plans will show ethnicity and other diversity information about individual children is taken into consideration and responded to within plans.</li> <li>• Records will show that children are consulted about whether their diversity needs are met.</li> </ul>

Appendix B

<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		We will ensure that we routinely record ethnicity and other diversity information about children and their families.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>By When?</b>	<b>By Whom?</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
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		
<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		We will use ethnicity and other diversity information about children to inform assessment and planning		
<b>Action</b>	<b>By When?</b>	<b>By Whom?</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
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	
<b>Outcome</b>	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.
<b>Improvement Commitments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy meetings will take place within a timescale that is in accordance with procedures.</li> <li>• Strategy discussions will include the right partners to enable the proper sharing of information and a comprehensive analysis of risk.</li> <li>• Our plans for children will prioritise actions according to urgency and will always have clear timeframes for completion.</li> <li>• We will simplify and clarify the language used in our plans so that they are readily understood by families as well as by professionals.</li> <li>• 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"> <li>○ Speaking with children promptly on return from any missing episode and using these conversations to assess risk.</li> <li>○ Improving risk screening.</li> <li>○ Strengthening the oversight and impact of SEMRACs</li> <li>○ Overseeing the adherence to relevant procedures.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Related Ofsted Recommendations</b>	<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><b>How will we know we have done it?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Records will show that all strategy meetings take place within 24 hours if S47 or within 5 days if planned.</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• Analysis of risk in strategy meetings will be comprehensive and will fully support decisions taken</li> <li>• All actions in plans will have identified timescales and as far as possible these will not be “by the next review”.</li> <li>• Where plans have multiple actions across various timescales, a clear rationale of prioritisation will underpin the timescales in the plans.</li> <li>• Plans will be written in plain English, with an absence of social work (and other professional) jargon.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Significant increase in the uptake of return home interviews across all children going missing from home or care.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Risk assessment tool used when upgrading or downgrading risks at SEMRAC, with clear decisions recorded.</li> <li>• Reduction in missing episodes overall and for individual children over time.</li> <li>• Reduction in CSE risk for children over time.</li> </ul>

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

Appendix B

	2017			
<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		Strategy discussions will include the right partners to enable the proper sharing of information and a comprehensive analysis of risk.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>By When?</b>	<b>By Whom?</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
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		
<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		Our plans for children will prioritise actions according to urgency and will always have clear timeframes for completion.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>By When?</b>	<b>By Whom?</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
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		
<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		We will simplify and clarify the language used in our plans so that they are readily understood by families as well as by professionals.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>By When?</b>	<b>By Whom?</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
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		
<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		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.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>By When?</b>	<b>By Whom?</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
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		
<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		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		
<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		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		
<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		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	
<b>Outcome</b>	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
<b>Improvement Commitments</b>	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.
<b>Related Ofsted Recommendations</b>	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.
<b>How will we know we have done it?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• There will be a new pathway plan in place, for which there is evidence of good uptake because young people recognise its usefulness.</li> </ul>

Appendix B

<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		We will establish a process of reassessment for all children looked after to ensure that their changing needs are understood, prioritised and addressed.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>By When?</b>	<b>By Whom?</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
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		
<b>Improvement Commitment</b>		Working with care leavers, we will develop a new pathway plan template which fully engages them and supports the achievement of their life goals.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>By When?</b>	<b>By Whom?</b>	<b>RAG</b>	<b>Status Update</b>
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		



This page is intentionally left blank