



Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan 22 November 2023 Improvement Board

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Background

Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.

The inspection report was published on 21 September 2022 and is available on the Ofsted website¹.

The overall judgement was that Herefordshire Children's Services are 'inadequate'. The judgements contributing to this outcome are as follows:

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate

Following the inspection, we have moved openly and swiftly to acknowledge the key areas for improvement, many of which we had already identified and incorporated into our existing Transformation Programme. We have taken immediate action to increase capacity where it was needed to strengthen our MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and other frontline services for children and young people.

At the time of the inspection, we were already developing a number of practice priorities within the service and were focussing on addressing some wider systems issues. We have increased the pace of this activity and we know that in order to realise our vision and aspiration for improved children's outcomes, a comprehensive transformation of our service is required to achieve the long-term and sustainable changes that local children, young people and families in Herefordshire need, deserve and expect.

This high-level Improvement Plan has been prepared in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including children, young people, parents and carers, our workforce and our multi-agency / cross sector partners. Some of this engagement has been very challenging, particularly given the impact and legacy of inadequate service delivery. It has been necessary to do this however so that we can confront and abate the current problems and make improvements as quickly as possible. We intend to continue engaging with our stakeholders to further develop a local

¹ [Ofsted](#)

conversation whereby we will listen, address feedback and take appropriate action as an integral part of our improvement journey as we move forward.

Our transformation programme

Our plan sets out the first phase of our post-inspection improvement activity as a direct response to receiving the inspection feedback and report. Having accepted the service's shortcomings, we are focusing on what we need to do to deliver safe and effective core services as quickly as possible. It focuses on the next 12-18 months although the transformation activity will necessarily take longer than this and the plan will be reviewed, refreshed and further developed as required. This builds upon the activity undertaken before the inspection to diagnose the extent of existing weaknesses and is followed up with a focus on strengthening core systems, clearing backlogs, securing thresholds and stabilising the service. We will continue to work at pace to problem solve and assure the quality of our practice moving forward.

The plan carries forward the key elements of the previous plan and reflects changed priorities following the recent Ofsted inspection. Our transformation programme has a number of Projects, including Workforce, Service and Practice Development, Performance and Quality Assurance, Commissioning Resources, Early Help and Partnerships, Corporate Parenting and Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities (SEND). Improving outcomes for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disability is not restricted only to the SEND work stream and is included in each of the work streams. Each work stream has a member of the Corporate Leadership Team as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO)

The corresponding project plans have all been reviewed and aligned to address the high level actions for each of the priority improvement areas identified by Ofsted inspection, and the LGA peer review of SEND services. A diagram outlining the governance arrangements is included at Appendix A and outlines the relationship between the Projects, the plan, and the Improvement Board.

For ease of accountability, responsible leads are primarily senior officers of the council but there is an increased focus on partnership working reflected in the various task and finish groups and in the project plans that sit behind this high-level plan.

Our improvement activity will be supported and driven by strengthened performance management and quality assurance arrangements, with clear lines of accountability that are overseen by single and multi-agency governance arrangements reporting into our Improvement Board, which is independently chaired by our Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Advisor.

We will be reflective and embrace the learning opportunities that are afforded to us from working in partnership with our Commissioner, Sector Led Improvement Partners and through an open dialogue with support and challenge provided by our colleagues in the DfE and Ofsted.

How we will achieve success

Success is dependent upon a county-wide approach working together with the Service, the Council and all stakeholders, including working in partnership with parents and carers and taking full account of children and young people's voices.

High support and high challenge will be essential, backed by robust governance arrangements and effective partnerships. In addition to the work of the Improvement Board, key partnerships including the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP), Corporate Parenting Board, Children and Young People's Partnership, SEND Partnership Group, Health and Wellbeing Board and Community Safety Partnership will each have a significant contribution to make to deliver improved services and achieve better outcomes for children, young people and families in Herefordshire.

Our workforce

Our workforce is our greatest asset and we are building an organisational culture characterised by strong relationships, high support and high challenge. We are committed to working with our workforce and have established a Staff Reference Group, have appointed a Principal Social Worker and developed other engagement fora, to ensure our workforce has a voice that is championed to inform and influence our improvement activity. The Staff Reference Group meets monthly and their representation is heard at the Improvement Board.

Evidencing Improvement Activity and Impact

Improvement priorities set out in this plan will be measured in terms of progressing the pace of improvement activities as well as the impact that these are having on outcomes for children, young people and families. The progress reporting will provide a BRAG rating to determine if the progress of improvement activity is on track as well as BRAG rating the impact it is having. BRAG Ratings will be informed by the Transformation Programme Delivery Dash Boards, including consultation with Senior Responsible Officers and Service Leads as well as analysing quality assurance reporting about the standard of practice and performance reporting in respect of management information data.

Activity and Impact 'BRAG' rating guide:

The BRAG ratings will report on the status of both the improvement activity (the tasks/actions) and the overall impact and outcome of these in respect of improving outcomes with children, young people and their parents, carers and families. This will show the status of the activity being undertaken both in terms of its timeliness and progress as well as confirming if it is having the desired impact to deliver improved outcomes. Details of the BRAG descriptors are as follows:

Blue ratings in terms of improvement activity will indicate when activity has been completed according to agreed plans. In terms of impact, the improvement activity delivers a consistently good or better impact on practice and performance that is secure, embedded and improves outcomes for all/vast majority of children.

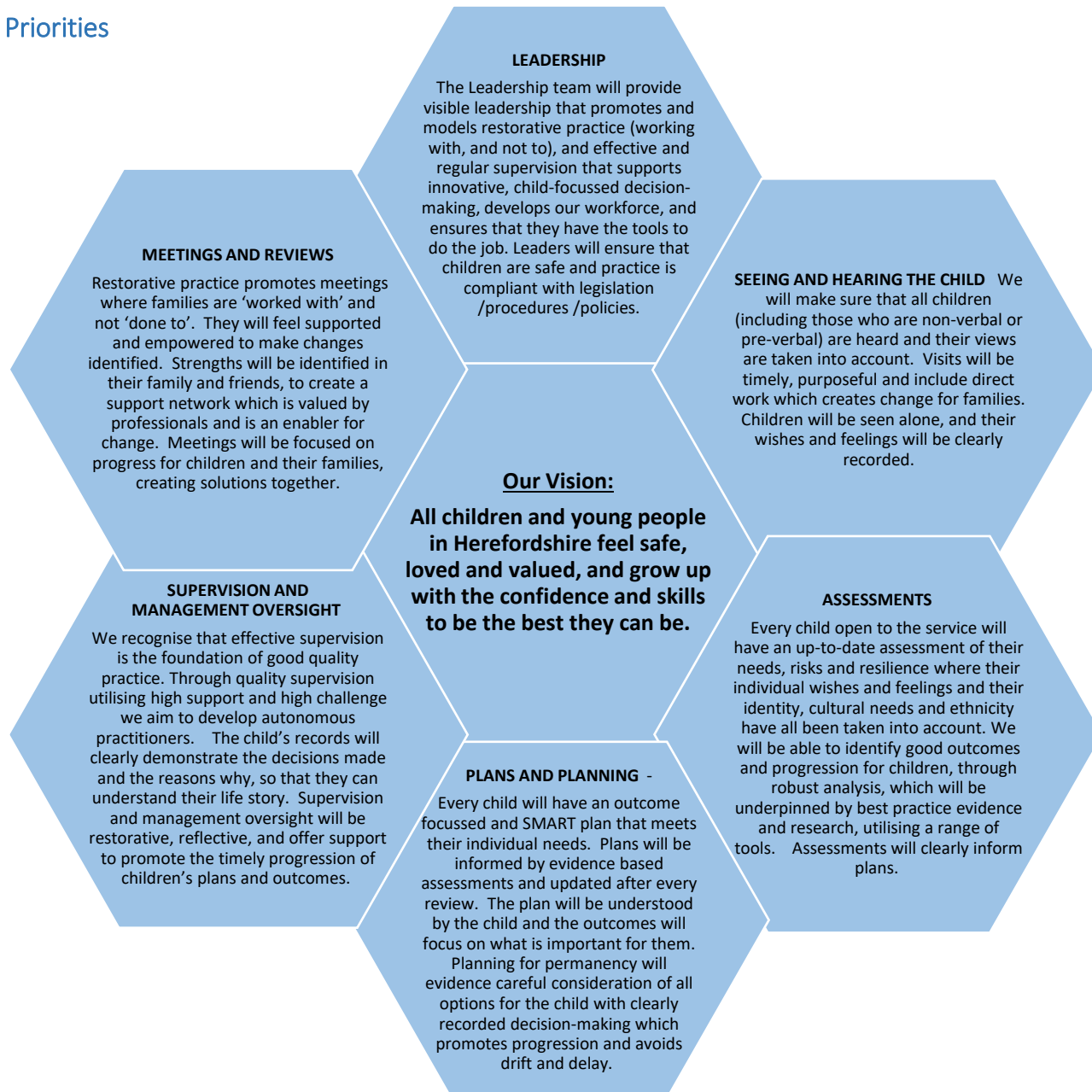
Red ratings in terms of improvement activity will indicate where activity has not started, has stalled or stopped due to unresolved issues which are preventing progress, causing delay and presenting significant risks. Inevitably, this has an adverse impact so children, young people and their parents/carers experience very limited or no positive outcomes.

Amber ratings in respect of improvement activity will indicate where activity has started and although some issues have been identified these are being dealt with but are causing some delay. In terms of impact, an Amber BRAG rating indicates that whilst there is some positive impact this is not yet consistent or widespread for all/most children.

Green ratings in terms of improvement activity will indicate when activity has started, is on track and progressing according to agreed plans. In terms of impact, a Green BRAG rating indicates that this is impact is positive with most children and young people experiencing a consistently good service that improves outcomes.

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Our Practice Priorities



Areas for Improvement

The Ofsted inspection report identifies the following nine improvement areas which provide the framework for this high level Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan:

1. Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care and care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships.
2. The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, including sufficient numbers of foster carers, so children receive a timely response to having their needs identified and met across the service.
3. The timely and robust identification and multi-agency response to children and young people who are at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care.
4. The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need.
5. Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements to ensure children are protected and enter care when required.
6. Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the Public Law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes.
7. The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation.
8. Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision.
9. Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.

In addition to the nine improvements areas outlined above, the plan also includes a tenth improvement area that focuses on Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). This improvement priority has been included following a SEND Peer Review undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) in October 2022.

Updating, Streamlining and Coordinating

In July 2023, the Improvement Board agreed recommendations to update, streamline and coordinate arrangements in relation to the Improvement Plan and Improvement Board infrastructure. These changes included:

- Removing progress updates from the Improvement Plan
- Agreeing to receive progress updates directly from the Senior Responsible Officers (using a new reporting template) for the following:
 - Practice and Service Delivery
 - Workforce
 - Commissioning and Resources
 - HSCP
 - Corporate Parenting Board
 - Children and Young People's Partnership
 - SEND Strategic Board
- Ensuring change requests, particularly in respect of delivery deadlines, are approved by the Improvement Board
- Adding two new priority improvement actions to the Improvement Plan regarding Housing (at 7.6) and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (at 5.9) in response to feedback from the Ofsted second monitoring visit
- Updating details of Senior Responsible Officers / Lead Officers and adding Partnership representatives

1: Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care and care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
1.1 Allocate additional corporate resources with dedicated project management support to strengthen strategic and operational planning for the improvement and transformation activity.	Director of Programme Management Office & Performance	October 2022		
1.2 Introduce trauma awareness as part of the partnership's learning and development offer for all relevant staff and elected members of the council so they are informed and can be signposted when appropriate.	Independent Scrutineer (HSCP)	April 2023		
1.3 Re-establish the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) to create a multi-agency/cross sector forum to develop an Early Help offer with families	Director of Public Health	March 2023		
1.4 Work quickly and collaboratively with the community and voluntary sector to utilise assets and increase capacity for undertaking Early Help assessments and providing family support.	Service Director (Early Help, Partnerships and Performance) and Head of Service (Early Help)	March 2023		

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Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
1.5 Review the work of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) and the local offer for care experienced young people, including access to education, employment and training	Service Director (Early Help, Partnerships and Performance) and Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	March 2023 New date agreed @ Improvement board on the 19 th July 2023 30 th September 2023		
1.6 Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to identify a corporate lead as a council-wide 'champion' for corporate parenting.	Chief Executive	September 2022		
1.7 Ensure multi-agency governance arrangements provide a clear framework for decision making and accountability, specifically in relation to the Improvement Board and the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP), but also in relation to other key partnerships.	Independent Scrutineer (HSCP)	March 2023 New date agreed @ Improvement board on the 19 th July 2023 31 st January 2024		

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Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
1.8 Implement a Communication Strategy so 'Messages that Matter' are disseminated clearly and regularly to all key stakeholders.	Service Director (Improvement)	February 2023		
1.9 Launch a Leadership Pledge to communicate the purpose, values, strategy and goals for improving outcomes for local children and young people.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	January 2023		
1.10 Ensure there are strong and effective arrangements in place to address identified concerns about multi-agency safeguarding practice/arrangements which includes escalation to the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) for swift resolution when required.	Independent Scrutineer (HSCP)	January 2023		

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected Members and the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) will take timely and necessary action, supported by accurate data that makes a difference for children and young people. (Performance data and records of decisions) Multi-agency partners will hold equal responsibility and accountability for children who are identified at risk. This success will be seen in the reduction of children on repeat child protection plans and children requiring court intervention. (Performance data and quality assurance activity) All of those with corporate parenting responsibilities will have sufficient understanding of their role to offer robust challenge to ensure positive outcomes for children in our care and those that we have previously looked after. (Feedback)

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Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
Number and % of care experienced young people aged 19 – 21 in education, employment and training	48/90	46/92	43/91	46/91	49/89
	53%	50%	47%	51%	55%
Number and % of Early Help assessments completed by services other than the Herefordshire Council Early Help Team	62/89	73/107	9/31	37/52	
	70%	68%	29%	71%	

2: The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, including sufficient numbers of foster carers, so children receive a timely response to having their needs identified and met across the service.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
2.1 Reinvigorate our Workforce Strategy, informed by a comprehensive workforce profile, by increasing our recruitment and retention activity so there is an increasingly stable, permanent, skilled and experienced workforce providing continuity of support and intervention with children, young people and families	Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development and Corporate Director for Children and Young People	New date agreed at Improvement Board: No end date		
2.2 Refresh and relaunch induction arrangements for new starters so they receive a comprehensive Herefordshire welcome, orientation and introduction to	Principal Social Worker (PSW)	March 2023		

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Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
our practice priorities and ways of working with local children, young people and families				
2.3 Develop the Academy's continuing professional development (CPD) offer and progression pathway for professionals working directly with children, young people and families to ensure it is aligned with our priorities and their learning needs.	Principal Social Worker (PSW)	June 2023		
2.4 Review the Fostering Service capacity and capability to support Herefordshire's foster carers and launch a new Campaign to recruit more local foster carers.	Head of Service (Fostering, Adoption & Placements)	June 2023		
2.5 Review our Sufficiency Strategy to increase the availability and choice of homes, including foster homes, to meet the needs of children and young people in our care	Service Director (All-Age Commissioning)	July 2023		

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Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce profiling data, average caseload data, and improving performance data will together evidence increased capacity to implement and achieve improvement at pace, supported by strong leadership. (Performance data) • Children and young people will experience minimal changes in allocated worker. (Performance data and feedback) • All new starters will have a meaningful induction on joining children's services to ensure that our workforce understand what is expected of them, what support is available, and key systems and processes. (Performance data, and feedback) • More families will be supported to continue caring for their own children and young people where this is safe and in their best interest to do so (Performance data, and feedback) • More foster carers will be recruited and retained to provide local placements for local children and young people when they are unable to remain living with their own family (Performance data)

Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
% of the established workforce that is permanent		157/256	156/257	159/261	163/261
		61%	61%	61%	62%
Average social worker allocation (excluding Newly Qualified Social Workers)	16.8	15.5	15.5	14.1	14.7
Number of social workers more than 24 children allocated	12	10	6	4	12
Number of in-house foster care households					
Number of in-house foster care placements offered		184/186		184/186	

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Measures that Matter					
% of available in-house fostering capacity utilised		99%		99%	

3: The timely and robust identification and multi-agency response to children and young people who are at risk of harm, including, but not limited to, the response to pre-birth children and babies, 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless, children living in private fostering arrangements and children who go missing from home and care.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
3.1 Confirm Information Sharing Protocols and issues of consent with the partnership to ensure there are no barriers to safeguarding children and young people in a timely and informed way	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	January 2023		
3.2 Accelerate the co-location of agencies in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to improve the multi-agency identification and response to risk	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	August 2022		
3.3 Urgently refresh arrangements for identifying, assessing and responding to the needs, risks and circumstances of unborn babies in collaboration with relevant Health partners	Head of Service (MASH & Assessment)	March 2023		

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Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
3.4 Develop promotional material and collaborate with the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) to promote awareness about Private Fostering across Herefordshire so notifications, assessments and support are timely and responsive to need.	Head of Service (Fostering, Adoption & Placements)	February 2023		
3.5 Revise and relaunch our joint protocols for safeguarding and supporting 16 and 17 year old young people who present as homeless	MASH Head of Service / Head of Service (Strategic Housing Manager)	March 2023		
3.6 Work collaboratively with safeguarding partners to strengthen multi-agency contextual safeguarding arrangements to identify and manage risk outside of the home	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	April 2023		
3.7 Revise and relaunch multi-agency protocols for safeguarding and supporting children and young people who go missing from home and care and improve the quality of return interviews by exploring 'push-pull' factors and using available intelligence to support effective planning.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023		
3.8 Review, relaunch and then evaluate the impact of the multi-agency Neglect Strategy	HSCP Independent Scrutineer	April 2023		

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Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MASH is high performing with capacity and capability to manage the nature and level of demand and complexity so children and young people have their needs identified and responded to efficiently and effectively. (Performance data, and feedback) Partners work well together and in partnership with parents to safeguard children and young people in a timely and effective way so they are safe, well and able to fulfil their potential throughout their childhood and beyond. (Performance data, quality assurance activity, and feedback) The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership has strong and effective arrangements in place to safeguard children and young people at risk of harm from a range of different presenting circumstances (Performance data, quality assurance activity, and feedback)

Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
Number and % of child and family assessments completed within timescales	143/201	126/215	182/216	112/133	118/137
	71%	59%	84%	84%	86%
Number and % of strategy meetings created and completed in timescale	157/177	117/143	90/115	120/128	96/117
	89%	82%	78%	94%	82%
Number and % of Initial Child Protection Conferences convened within 15 days (of the strategy discussion at which the need for child protection enquiries was agreed)	31/36	18/20	23/29	26/29	24/25
	86%	90%	79%	90%	96%
Number and % of return interviews which took place within 72 hours of the missing episode ending (excluding declined)	12/16	10/19	4/10	2/12	3/6
	75%	53%	40%	17%	50%

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4: The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
4.1 Review and refresh our Academy learning and development offer to ensure a clear focus on our practice priorities, principles and standards including practice guidance and tools.	Principal Social Worker (PSW)	April 2023		
4.2 Develop and implement a service wide Engagement and Participation Strategy to ensure children and young people's voices are heard and taken into consideration.	Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	July 2023		
4.3 Champion the voice of the child to take account of their views, wishes and feelings by promoting direct work skills and purposeful visiting so this remains a central feature of our engagement and relationship with them.	Principal Social Worker (PSW)	July 2023		
4.4 Revise, develop and launch our practice model to emphasise the importance of relationships, respect and restorative practice for how we will work <i>with</i> children, young people and parents/carers, especially where this may not have been their experience previously.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	March 2023		

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Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
4.5 Strengthen quality assurance activity in accordance with the re-launch of the Quality Assurance Framework to provide robust assurance that the quality of practice is improving.	Service Director Improvement	December 2022		

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Academy promotes and supports continuous learning and development that is evidence based, research informed and makes a demonstrable impact on improving practice. (Performance data, quality assurance activity) Practitioners and managers know what is expected of them, are supported to practice confidently and capably and are increasingly more restorative in their approach which builds trust and strong relationships. (Quality assurance activity and feedback) The needs of children and young people are of paramount importance, their voices are championed and they report feeling safe, well and able to meet their full potential (Quality assurance activity and feedback) Practice is routinely audited against best practice standards and evidences increasingly good and better practice that improves outcomes for children and young people (quality assurance activity)

Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
Number of Audits completed	20		13	12	

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Measures that Matter					
Number and % of audit grades at inadequate (post moderation)	6		2	4	
	30%		15%	33%	
Number and % of audit grades at requires improvement (post moderation)	4		6	6	
	20%		46%	50%	
Number and % of audit grades at good (post moderation)	9		5	2	
	45%		38%	17%	
Number and % of audit grades at outstanding (post moderation)	1		0	0	

5: Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements to ensure children are protected and enter care when required.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
5.1 Re-launch and embed the partnership thresholds to improve awareness, understanding and application in relation to decision making across the child's pathway from needing to receiving support, protection and care	HSCP Independent Scrutineer	March 2024		
5.2 Review and address MASH social work capacity and management decision making capability to ensure there are consistent responses to concerns that evidence professional curiosity and analysis	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	March 2023		

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
5.3 Review and adjust the interface between Early Help and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to ensure robust screening arrangements with a clear and effective pathway are in place to ensure needs are addressed promptly.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	31 October 2023		
5.4 Work collaboratively with the partners to ensure there are always appropriate resources to convene child protection strategy meetings when required so these are timely, involve all relevant partners and protect children at the point they are referred and when they are already known to the service and subject to existing support, protection or care plans.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support) & Detective Superintendent, West Mercia Police	December 2022		
5.5 Re-establish and strengthen multi-agency arrangements to improve safety planning and risk management arrangements whenever child protection enquiries are being undertaken.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	March 2023		
5.6 Develop a multi-agency/cross sector 'Edge of Care' offer supported by the existing Edge of Care and Home (ECHO) Team and other allied services that build on family strengths and resources so children and young	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	31 December 2023		

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
people are able to remain with their families where it is safe and appropriate to do so				
5.7 Develop and launch a Family Group Conference model of approach to engage, support and promote family based arrangements to address identified needs, risks and circumstances and ensure there is robust decision making for children entering care when all family options have been exhausted.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	31 December 2023		
5.8 Take action to strengthen risk management arrangements with disabled children and young people so their additional needs, risks and circumstances are appropriately addressed.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	November 2022		
5.9 <i>New</i> : Review practice and establish standards to ensure Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (USASC) receive timely assessments and support services that are tailored to meet their individual needs	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	TBC		

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thresholds are well understood and applied consistently across the partnership so children and young people are identified and have their assessed needs, risks and circumstances responded to in a timely manner so they are supported, protected and cared for. (Quality assurance activity, feedback) • Children, young people and families are provided with the right help at the right time. (quality assurance activity, feedback) • Safety planning and risk management arrangements engage all partners to work well together so children and young people are protected from the risk of harm. (quality assurance activity, feedback)

Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
Number of Family Group Conferences (FGC) (when established)	4	8	7	8	6

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

6: Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes the monitoring and tracking of children in the public law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those placed in unregistered children's homes.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
6.1 Review all Public Law Outline (PLO) pre-proceedings and on-going care proceedings with Legal Services to establish a clear position across all teams and services and continue to track and report this on a monthly basis to achieve and maintain compliance with national standards.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	January 2023		
6.2 Establish improved leadership and management oversight of PLO practice to address any drift or delay, ensure families are effectively engaged where there are concerns that may lead to court proceedings and so children receive legal protection when required.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023		
6.3 Information for families with children subject to Public Law pre-proceedings will be added to the Council's website so that they are properly informed about Public Law pre-proceedings meetings and proceedings.	Service Director (Improvement)	January 2023		
6.4 Increase the leadership and management oversight for any child placed in an unregistered setting and publish revised guidance for our staff to ensure there is a clear understanding of	Service Director (All Age Commissioning)	February 2023		

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
what is a placement unregulated by Ofsted and what is an unregistered placement.				
6.5 Revise the Permanence Policy and Procedures to achieve legal, emotional and placement permanence with children and young people as soon as possible.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	March 2023		
6.6 Develop and implement a reunification framework to assess and support children and young people who are able to return home to the care of their parents/families when it is safe and in their best interest to do so.	Service Director (Improvement)	March 2023		

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents with children subject to PLO pre-proceedings are helped to appreciate the concerns about their parenting and supported to make changes in a timely manner so their children remain safe and well g and Family Support for so that care proceedings are not necessary. (quality assurance activity, feedback) Families are encouraged and supported to come together to explore opportunities, problem solve, plan and makes decisions that promote family based solutions to address identified concerns for children and young people. (Performance data, feedback)

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where parenting concerns persist and children continue to be at risk of significant harm they will be safeguarded and legally protected so that alternative permanent care can be achieved in a timely manner. (Performance data, quality assurance activity) Plans are reviewed over time to make sure that if and when circumstances change there are opportunities for children and young people to return to the care of their parents and family, so long as this is safe and is in their best interest (Performance activity, quality assurance data)

Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
Number and % of children for whom PLO pre-proceedings were completed within 16 weeks (Rolling Year)	2	2	4	0	2
	50%	40%	0%	0%	18%
Number of children in unregistered provision (with Corporate Director's oversight and decision is recorded on the child's record)	1	1	2	1	0
Number of children subject to Deprivation of Liberty (DoL), including the % of these children where DoL has been in place for 6 months or more	3	3	2	2	4
	33%	66.60%	100%	100%	50%

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

7: The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
7.1 Work with the Director of Public Health and with the Integrated Care Board to review the availability, accessibility and quality of support in Herefordshire to provide services that make a difference for children and young people in need of support, protection and care	Corporate Director Children and Young People / Director of Public Health	March 2023 New date agreed at Improvement Board: December 2023		
7.2 Complete a partnership mapping exercise to establish the availability of local services and publish this with clear pathways to ensure children and young people in care and preparing to leave care are supported to access timely and appropriate multi-agency support and, where identified, address any gaps.	Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	March 2023 New date agreed at Improvement Board: December 2023		

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
7.3 Ensure there is sufficient support and provision in place to meet the demand for high quality life story work with children and young people	Service Director (Improvement)	July 2023		
7.4 Review, refresh and publish our Sufficiency Strategy to increase the choice and availability of suitable accommodation for children and young people.	Service Director (All Age Commissioning)	July 2024		
7.5 Ensure that care experienced young people are provided with their health histories with all the essential information they need to become an independent young adult.	Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	December 2023		
7.6 <i>New</i> : Ensure that there are robust arrangements in place to work with Housing partners so they are actively engaged and prioritise the needs of vulnerable children and families	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support) and Strategic Housing Manager	TBC	TBC	TBC

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people in need of support, protection and care have a range of suitable therapeutic, emotional and mental health support services and receive priority access so their needs can be assessed and supported without delay. (Performance data, quality assurance activity, feedback)

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partnership is increasingly knowledgeable, skilled and experienced at working together to identify the range of local services and pathways so children and young people receive prompt support that addresses their needs effectively. (Quality assurance activity, feedback) The choice and number of available accommodation is suitable to meet the assessed needs of young people so they are settled and secure. (Performance data, quality assurance activity)

Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
Number and % of children in care with an up-to-date initial health assessment	19/47	17/47	15/48	15/47	15/47
	40%	36%	31%	32%	32%
Number and % of children in care with an up-to-date dental check	267/380	259/375	271/380	273/380	273/380
	70%	69%	71%	72%	72%
Number and % of children in care for 6 months or longer who have a life-story book					
Number and % of care leavers aged 19 -21 who live in suitable accommodation	84/95	84/91	83/90	85/90	84/88
	88%	92%	92%	94%	95%

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

8: Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
8.1 Review the structure of the Directorate Leadership Team and the Heads of Service Group to ensure there is sufficient capacity and capability to lead and manage the service.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	October 2022		
8.2 Review supervision and management oversight to ensure it is regular, reflective and well recorded so those working directly with children, young people and families receive clear direction and support.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023		
8.3 Introduce a reflective case discussion model of group supervision to create emotionally informed thinking and promote respectful uncertainty and healthy scepticism.	Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	July 2023		
8.4 Review and adjust where required the service structure and pathways to ensure these are clear, responsive and support practice and service delivery.	Service Director (Improvement)	March 2023		
8.5 Review and relaunch policies and procedures on tri.x (commissioned company) to ensure these are up to date and fit for purpose.	Head of Service (Safeguarding and Review)	April 2023		

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
8.6 Re-launch the Independent Reviewing Officer Dispute Resolution Protocol (DRP) to address the needs of children where there are concerns	Head of Service (Safeguarding & Review)	December 2022		

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workforce is sufficient, stable, skilled and experienced to lead, manage and respond to the nature and level of service demands so practice and performance improves, is in line with established best practice standards and in accordance with legislation and statutory guidance. (Performance data) Supervision routinely provides high quality management, development, support and mediation to ensure children and young people receive the best support possible and staff have the knowledge, skills and support they need to undertake their role confidently and competently. (Performance data, quality assurance activity, feedback) The service structure and pathways are enablers to achieving good outcomes with children and young people and support staff to undertake their role efficiently and effectively. (Quality assurance activity, feedback) As an employer of choice, the conditions within which staff are undertaking their roles, and the resources that are available to them, in Herefordshire are conducive to supporting and promoting consistently good quality practice and performance. (feedback)

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
Number and % of allocated children who have an up-to-date (within the past month) supervision completed on their record	572/903 63%	523/930 56%	608/966 63%	504/931 54%	384/497 77%
Number and % of concerns raised and were resolved at stage one of the Dispute Resolution Protocol	0/0 0%	3/3 100%	4/6 67%	4/4 100%	4/4 100%
The number of unallocated cases in the service without SW allocation	23	18	4	6	19

9: Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
9.1 Launch and publish a revised Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) that will test practice by analysing all available evidence, including practice performance and improvement activity, and take into account what relevant stakeholders, including children, young people and parents/carers, are telling us.	Service Director (Improvement)	December 2022		
9.2 Decide on a performance reporting framework and deliver a timely and accurate monthly performance and management data report with analysis to support management and drive improvement	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	January 2023		

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
Impact	Activity not started/too early to measure impact yet	Mostly positive and consistent impact which delivers improved outcomes for children and young people	Some positive impact but this is variable and does not consistently improve outcomes for children and young people	Very limited or sporadic impact on improving outcomes for a few children and young people	Achieves consistently good and better impact that delivers improved outcomes for children and young people

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
9.3 Review and address the MOSAIC system changes to ensure it is fit for purpose, user friendly and supports the service’s workflow and reporting requirements	Corporate Director Children and Young People	July 2024		
9.4 Develop and launch refreshed recording standards setting out clear expectations about what good quality children’s records and reports look like and including ‘Language that Cares’ guidance used with and about children and young people is appropriate	Service Director (Improvement)	March 2023		
9.5 Work collaboratively with other agencies across the safeguarding partnership to develop and publish a quarterly multi-agency data set to safeguard children and young people.	Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership / Independent Scrutineer	December 2023		

Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality assurance and performance frameworks and the system that supports them are robust, reliable and routinely provide evidence and analysis to support and drive continuous improvement and assurance. (Performance data, quality assurance activity) The day to day management of operational practice and performance is supported by quantitative data, information and intelligence that is readily available and easy to access so practitioners and managers have a clear view and appreciation of what this shows and

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now ‘business as usual’
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Expected Outcomes (how we will know)					
<p>what it means for them and the children, young people and families they are supporting at an individual, team and service level. (quality assurance activity, feedback)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focus, findings and follow up to quality assurance activity provides a shared narrative based on qualitative evidence of what the service has done, how well it has done it and what is required to address recommendations and remedial action to improve outcomes for children and young people (Performance data, quality assurance activity) The partnership achieves and maintains a shared appreciation of quantitative and qualitative data, information and intelligence to fulfil its statutory functions to assess the effectiveness of help being provided to children and families, whether partners are fulfilling their obligations, assure the quality of joint practice and identify lessons, as well as monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training. 					
Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
Number and % of children's file audits completed by Managers, Child Protection Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers	13/20		13/13	12/12	
	65%		100%	100%	
Number and % of completed children's file audits moderated by senior leaders (DLT members)	7		0	0	
	35%		0%	0%	
Number of outstanding priority actions on the audit tracker following an inadequate audit outcome where concerns were escalated about the likelihood of significant harm	0		0	0	

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
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10: Services to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and / or a Disability (SEND)

Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
10.1 Relaunch the revised Special Education Needs and / or disability (SEND) Strategy across the local area, with co-production at the heart	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	January 2023		
10.2 Establish the SEND Strategic Board with appropriate representation from each sector to provide strategic oversight and direction for improvement.	Corporate Director for Children and Young People	December 2022		
10.3 Strengthen the SEND Partnership Group with current participants from the strategy group.	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	November 2023		
10.4 Review the graduated response with a focus on early identification of support for children and young people with SEND.	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	January 2023		
10.5 Review the Education, Health and Care (EHC) planning process and establish a procedure with a clear pathway that is understood by all so all Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) are within timescale, high quality and include contributions from all partners	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	Spring 2023		

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
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Action	Lead	Deadline	Activity BRAG	Impact BRAG
10.6 Develop a Preparing for Adulthood Strategy for young people with additional needs to receive timely and well-coordinated transitional arrangements and support	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	December 2022		
10.7 Add Review and develop a SEND Sufficiency Plan	Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	July 2023		

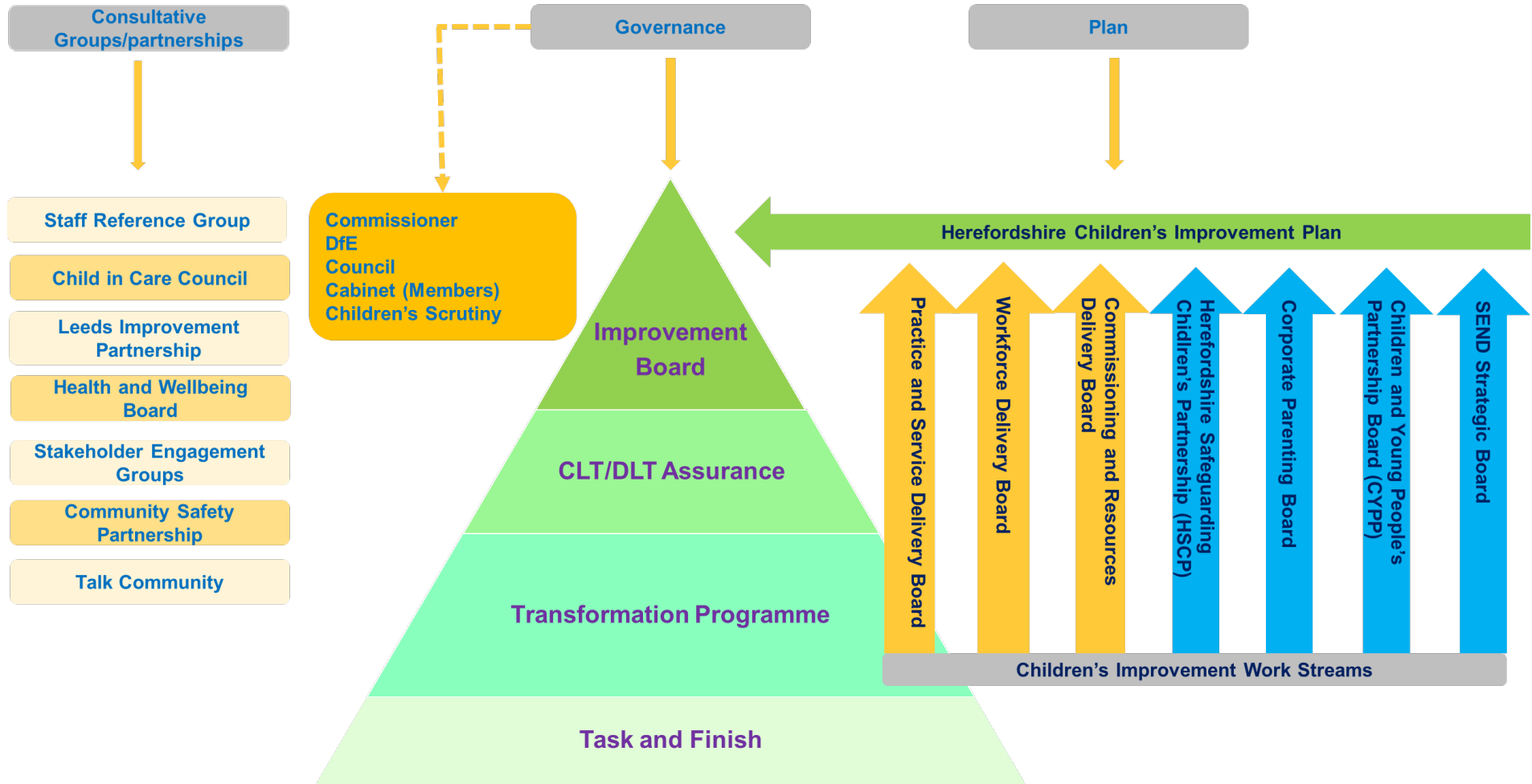
Expected Outcomes (how we will know)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEND Strategy is shared publically and with all stakeholders; Strategy widely supported and used to shape/complement other areas of work supporting children and young people. (feedback) Data dashboard in place and all partners/service providers provide timely and accurate information; Each sector has a clear data matrix which defines the specific measures being used to evaluate individual success of the strategy Pathways identified on the Local Offer and can be easily found and understood by families and young people. (Feedback) Graduated approach co-produced and published Phase transfers are completed within statutory timescales ensuring that children / young people have an updated Education, Health and Care Plans for their next setting and parents are assured where their child / young person will be attending. (Performance data, quality assurance activity, feedback) There is an increase in the proportion of Education, Health and Care Plans published within statutory timescales. (Performance data)

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Measures that Matter					
Measure	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23
Percentage of EHC Plans issued within the period that were deemed to meet the required standard following audit.					
Percentage of Final EHCPs issued by the LA within 20 weeks as a proportion of all EHCP's issued in the year.		95/106	104/122	148/173	
	92%	90%	85%	86%	
Percentage of Draft EHCPs issued by the LA within 16 weeks as a proportion of all EHCP's issued in the year.		92/105	111/132	163/192	
	91%	88%	84%	85%	
Percentage of children with a EHCP in Yr6 who had their annual review completed and EHCP issued in time for primary Admission round allocations					
Percentage of children with a EHCP in Yr11 who had their annual review completed and EHCP issued within timescale for secondary Admission round allocations.					
Percentage of newly issued EHC Plans where Health Care advice was received within deadline.		10/21	6/26	5/6	
	88%	48%	23%	83%	
Percentage of newly issued EHC Plans where Social Care advice was received within deadline		18/21	23/26	24/26	
	88%	86%	88%	92%	

Activity	Not yet due to start	Started and on track	Started with some issues/delay	Not on track and at risk	Completed and now 'business as usual'
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Appendix A – Herefordshire Children’s Improvement Plan Governance



Appendix B - Glossary of Roles with Names:

Role	Name
Chief Executive	Paul Walker
Corporate Director for Children and Young People	Darryl Freeman
Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development	Tracey Sampson
Head of Chief Executive's Office	Joni Hughes
Director of Public Health	Matt Pearce
Detective Superintendent, West Mercia Police	Helen Wain
Head of Service (Corporate Parenting)	Julie Mephram
Head of Service (Early Help)	Nicky Turvey
Head of Service (Fostering, Adoption & Placements)	Robina Khan
Head of Service (MASH & Assessment)	Christine Wellington
Head of Service (Strategic Housing Manager)	Hayley Crane
Head of Service (Safeguarding and Review)	Dylan Harrison
Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Independent Scrutineer	Kevin Crompton
Principal Social Worker	Kerry Oddy
Service Director (All-Age Commissioning)	Hayley Doyle
Service Director (Education, Skills and Learning)	Liz Farr
Service Director (Improvement)	Gail Hancock
Service Director (Early Help, Partnerships and Performance)	Victoria Gibbs
Service Director (Safeguarding and Family Support)	Rachel Gillott