

Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan

Phase 3

“

We hope this plan assures our children, young people and our families that Herefordshire Council, its Children's Services and the associated partnership remain fully committed to making the improvements required to ensure our children, young people and family get the help, support and protection they need.

”

I want to thank them for their past and future engagement with us, our staff and our services.

Welcome to Herefordshire's Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan.

This plan is in response to the inadequate judgment arising from the Ofsted *Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services* (ILACS)

framework in July 2022. It builds on the developments and progress of the Children's Services Improvement Plan Phase 2 July 24 – April 25.

Our Shared Vision

We believe that children and young people thrive best in their **family care**, within **highly effective schools** and in **flourishing communities**. Our plans have focused on putting into place the conditions for good practice to thrive. This Phase 3 plan reflects our collective drive and commitment to continue the pace of improvement seen during 24/25 with a focus on delivery against our Quality Assurance Programme to ensure;

- **we know ourselves well**, our strengths and our areas for improvement so we can take timely action to improve
- **we understand the experience and impact our services make to the children and their families**, so we can be sure we are “**making a difference**” and are supporting them at the earliest opportunity
- **we understand how it feels to be part of the children workforce, so we are an employer of choice** giving our children and young people stability and consistency in good quality help, support and protection

We understand the pressures of parenting and life that many of our families face as they strive to care for their children well. Through our restorative approach we will recognise their strengths and support them in the challenges they face. We hope this plan assures them of our united commitment to deliver timely and high quality Children's Services.

We want to help children, young people and their families achieve the best in life.

Our Improvement plan recognises the importance of Partnership Working required to deliver good quality help, support and protection. Each of our partner agencies will have their own priorities, strengths, changes and challenges. We will recognise, support and coordinate these as we work together to achieve good services for children and their families across Herefordshire. We thank our partners for their continued prioritisation and commitment to this plan.

Herefordshire a National Context

Our plan also recognises that “good quality” services are those that reflect the latest legalisation, statutory guidance and policy as defined by DfE. During 24/25 we have completed the work to comply with Working Together 2023 and we have taken the developing work from the Children’s Services Care Review and the government published ‘Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive’ policy into consideration.

As a result, we are in a strong place to develop and implement the Families First programme designed to achieve the following Outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need
- **Outcome 2:** children and young people are supported by their family network
- **Outcome 3:** children and young people are safe in and outside of their home
- **Outcome 4:** children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

We have a lead officer for this implementation programme, supported by a multi agency steering group, who will ensure Herefordshire have the following “enablers” in place which will provide foundations required for the Families First programme to be effective :

- Multi-agency working is prioritised and effective
- Leaders drive conditions for effective practice
- The workforce is equipped and effective

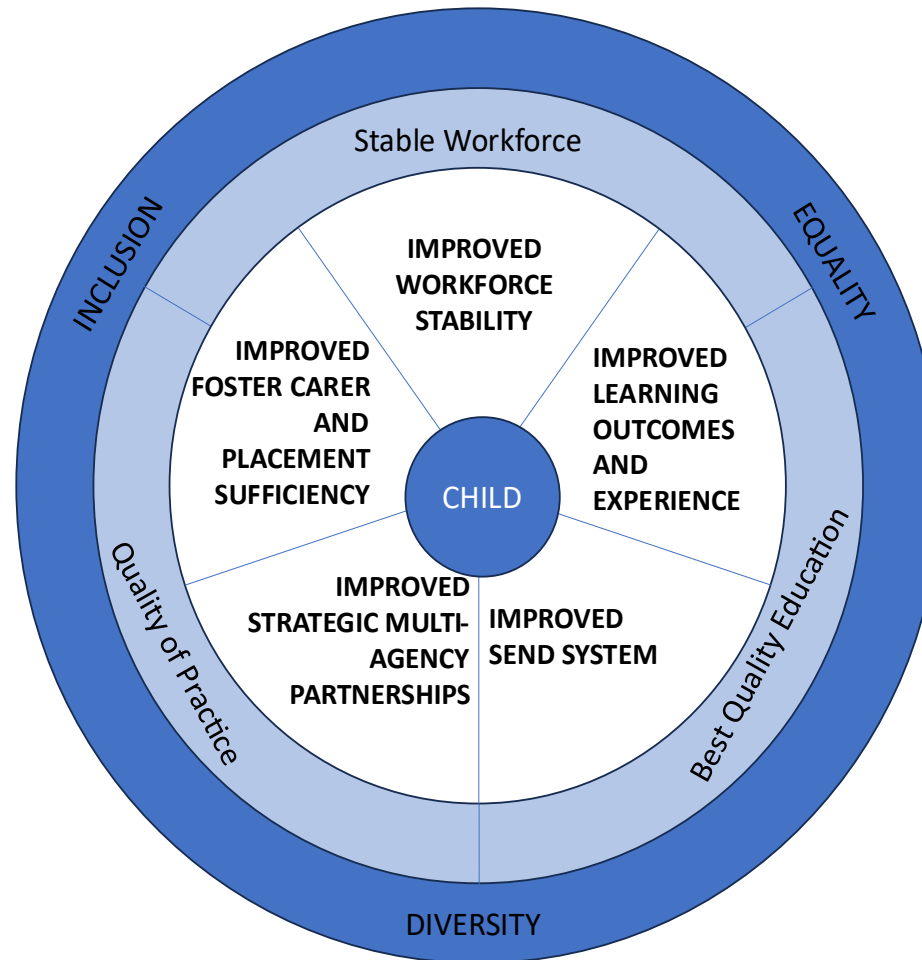
Herefordshire a Regional Context

As a member of the West Midlands Regional Local Authority group, we also work in partnership with the other West Midlands Local Authorities and Trusts and as part of the national programme of Regional Improvement Investment Alliance (RIIA).

The 25/26 regional priorities have been agreed as below. **We have strong representation and engagement in the delivery against those priorities to ensure Herefordshire voice is heard and taken into account and that we maximise on all regional learning and investment opportunities.** These include the regional Frameworks for commissioning Residential Care placements and Fostering placements, Leadership and Management training, Agency workforce management and Peer Reviews.

To develop a sustainable strategy that delivers
IMPROVED FOSTER CARER AND PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY,
 and ensures children are placed in settings that meet all of their needs.
 Which provides sector leading support for the regions in-house carers and that delivers best value for the region's taxpayers.

To use the collective strength of the region's DCS Network to ensure
IMPROVED STRATEGIC MULTI-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS,
 including health, police and probation to deliver the best outcomes for children and young people.



IMPROVED WORKFORCE STABILITY
 across disciplines of the sector and that continues to promote the West Midlands as the “go to” region for children’s services professionals.

IMPROVED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXPERIENCE
 for all children and young people across an inclusive and high-performing schools system, promoted through positive partnerships with all schools and sector partners

To collectively influence the national conversation regarding an
IMPROVED SEND SYSTEM,
 so as to be able develop effective services that meet the realistic needs of children, young people and their families.

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Key documents



The Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-2028



hfdscouncil

[herefordshire.gov.uk](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk)



Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022 - 2024



hfdscouncil

[herefordshire.gov.uk](https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk)

Ofsted Recommendations – ILACS July 2022

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

- Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements to ensure children are protected and enter care when required.
- 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.
- 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.
- Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision.
- Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.



Staff at Fun Day for care-experienced children and young people



Social care staff celebrating world social work week

Governance and monitoring of the Improvement plan

Improvement Board The Improvement board is the key partnership body with ownership of the improvement plan and responsibility for oversight of its delivery	The Partnerships The improvement plan has identified key partnership forums to carry out and oversee aspects of the plan relevant to their forums. These forums are set out below:	The Monitoring Partnership forums that will oversee, monitor and support progress reflecting Children's Services as a priority.
<p>The Improvement Board is made up of strategic representation from partner agencies, working together to agreed terms of reference.</p> <p>The Improvement Board is chaired by the DfE appointed Children's Commissioner.</p> <p>Progress against the Improvement plan will be reported to the improvement board on a six weekly basis.</p> <p>Reporting will include reports on the three dimension of our quality assurance programme that tell us, what we are doing, how well we are doing it and what difference it is making.</p> <p>Reports will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A performance DASH board of key indicators linked to the Improvement Plan. • Audit activity reports including multi-agency audits. Service User feedback reports 	<p>Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Co-ordinates safeguarding across the partnership through the statutory partners as set out in Working Together 2023.</p> <p>Partnership Executive Group Created with Senior Leaders membership of the three safeguarding partners, LA, Police and Health for the purpose of ensuring any barriers identified in partnership work are removed to ensure delivery of the improvement plan at pace.</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board Statutory responsibility to ensure looked after children and young people grow up having the same opportunities as their peers and to support children leaving care to live successful independent lives.</p> <p>Children & Young people Strategic Partnership (CYPP) This multi-agency strategic partnership will oversee the delivery of the Herefordshire CYPP supporting, challenging and resolving partnership barriers to delivering good quality services.</p> <p>SEND Partnership – working specifically to ensure children with additional needs are recognised and engaged in service improvement and development.</p>	<p>Herefordshire Council Directorate and Political Leadership Teams undertakes shared ownership for the coordination and delivery of the council's plan. The Children's Improvement Plan is a HCC priority.</p> <p>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Undertakes the scrutiny of all Children and Young People services in Herefordshire including monitoring and challenging the progress and implementation of the improvement Plan.</p> <p>Health and Well Being Board and Children and Young People Partnership provides leadership across the partnership to people, communities, cultures and organisations that are delivering Herefordshire's vision of <i>keeping children and young people safe and giving them a great start in life</i>.</p> <p>Children's Corporate Leadership Board will review the progress against the plan quarterly alongside wider children's performance and finance monitoring.</p>



We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and to be part of great communities that support each other. We want all children to have the best start in life.

Children and Young Person's Version Improvement Plan Phase 3: May 2025

Quality Assurance - Hearing the Voice of the Children Young People and Parent/ Carers Understanding the impact of what we do

The Head of Service for Quality Assurance and the Participation Worker met with 2 groups of Care Leavers in August 2024 to share the new Improvement Plan and to get feedback on what they thought needed doing to improve Herefordshire Children's Services. Their priorities are reflected in our improvement plan. We will report back on progress against their priorities through their groups

Our Children and Young People Priorities

1. Staff stability and consistency of approach.
2. Children and Young People should contribute to their Plans.
3. Improved management and supervision of workers.
4. Better housing options for care leavers.
5. Workers need better training to be trauma informed.

How it feels

Biggest issue is the changes in worker
Having to tell my story over and over
Handover between workers is poor
Seems like a tick box exercise, you don't really care
Never seen my Pathway Plan

What we need

Listen to us
Follow through with what you say you will do
Show us respect
Tell us the truth

Direct quote #1

'Get to know me? Read my file, don't make me repeat my story over and over.'

Progress is built on partnerships: partnership activities will be delivered through:

Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership: Herefordshire Council Corporate Parenting Board: SEND Partnership

Oversight and coordination of this plan is through the Improvement Board Evidencing our progress and outcomes will be shared through regular Ofsted monitoring visits

Quality Assurance - Audit Activity
Understanding quality of practice

Quality Assurance - KPIs
Timelines of workload and workflow Carers Understanding the impact of what we do

Phase 2 Outcomes Achieved

Ofsted Recommendation

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

- Ofsted found that there was a “***stronger understanding and commitment across the council to children who need the support of children's social care and that this was reflected in its corporate plans, priorities and the commitment to developing “Child Friendly Herefordshire”*** and the workforce reported feeling well supported by line managers, colleagues and leaders
- **Your Voice Matters: We Say They Do”** group re-launched for children in care and care experienced young people. YP undertook a ‘take over’ of the Corporate Parenting Board April.25.
- **Complaints have reduced from 102 (23/24) down to 75 (24/25) and we have received 126 external compliments (now recorded)**
- **Assessment locality teams received 51 families feedback** to evaluate service standards. Feedback indicates that children and families appreciate the support received and understand the reasons for our involvement. As a service we are benefitting from ongoing encouragement the social workers are receiving in this process.
- **Safeguarding locality received 20 families** feedback - All the families said their plan was right one for them, child in need or child protection
- **Support, Benefits and Opportunities for our Foster Carers** - Herefordshire foster carers receive a wide range of support, benefits, include a financial incentive for successful referrals of new foster carers, council tax relief, and new funded Specialist Foster Carer programme launched

Ofsted Recommendation

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

- **Permanency for Social Work Managers** Managers 85% (from 70%) **Social Workers** 42% from 29%
- **Associated reduction in the number of agency staff** 81 (January 2024) down to 41 (February 2025)
- **Allocation stability for children in care** 43% from 31% through 24/25
- **Allocation stability index Child Protection** 36% from 29% through 24/25
- **8 new approved mainstream carers.** 12 in assessment. This growth is in contrast to national trends.
- **478 fostering training courses completed through our new provider in three months** compared to 229 in the prior eight months. Feedback new provider course more accessible
- **Children in FC placements 73.2% above SN**
- **Recommissioned Short Breaks.** Evaluation Panel, including young people, considered 24 applications received (for over £250k worth of funds). 7 successful applications awarded funds.
- **In 2024-25, 121 fostering enquiries** compared to 50 enquiries the year before. We have improved advertising and better use of digital platforms radio, cinema, social media, Google, YouTube, and electronic billboards.
- **9 young people gave feedback regarding placement moves** and to gain their views on their experiences. Themes that emerged were that they shared 6/9 felt safe in their placement, with 3 expressing they felt unsure at the time of the feedback. All shared they felt supported in their moves and that professionals were working well together

Ofsted Recommendation

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.

- Timeliness in management of Contacts 97%, Referrals 95% Strategy Discussions 91% – sustained through 24/25
- Ofsted found that “a range of professionals and agencies are involved and make an important contribution to assessments as well as provide the support which families need” and Child protection “strategy meetings are well attended by multi agency partners”.
- We have increased the number of children we see for welfare return interviews after missing episodes from home to 196 from 139 the previous year and missing from Care to 176 from 130. Timeliness in completing these also improved to 80% (home) and 74% (care)
- Repeat referrals have reduced from 23.5% (EoY 23/24) to 22.4% (EoY 24/25)
- Strategy discussion and timeliness has been sustained above 93% year average an improvement on 90% year average in 23/24
- There are stronger working relationships at Pre-Birth Panel which involves timely sharing of information and strengthening support plans for unborn children to care experienced parents
- Repeat Child Protection has reduced in year from 27% down to 21%
- Child Protection Conferences Feedback: 22x parents said they knew what to expect; had received and understood the Social Worker report; spoken to the Chair; felt listened to and were treated with respect. Participants had a good understanding of the Child Protection Plan and how the Plan could end.

Ofsted Recommendation

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

- In year audit evidences improvement in case audit judgements: Good rising to 43% from 27%, Requires Improvement dropping from 65% to 45% and Inadequate dropping from 9% to 6%
- Ofsted found that “*many social workers developed relationships with parents and children in a skilled way*”
- Ofsted found good quality and timeliness in our social work assessments. *Feb 25*
- Timeliness of visits to children subject of Child protection sustained above 95% through 24/25
- Timeliness of ICPC a concern mid year and improved under new management Q3/4.
- Timeliness of RCPC sustained average through year at 94%
- 99.5% children on Child Protection with an up to date plan in place through 24/2

Ofsted Recommendation

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

- Feb 25 Ofsted found: “*Children received into care appropriately to protect from further harm*”
- Timeliness of visits to Children in Care sustained 80%
- Timeliness of Child in Care Reviews at 98.9%
- 100% of children in care with an up to date care plan
- C&YP participated in some way within their Child Looked After Review meeting 100% time.
- Repeat social work Assessments have reduced from 28% to 23% which evidences the quality of support is improving and children and families are receiving the right plan of support upon closure.
- Child Looked After Review meetings, C&YP Feedback 14x children and young people said they knew what to expect; had spoken to the IRO and knew how to contact their IRO. Shared that they were able to share their views; felt respected, listened to and understood their care plan. All respondents shared positive comments about having choice about their review meeting with regard to venue, time, attendees
- Tracking of multi-agency escalations shows that the multi-agency professional differences policy is being followed, and more escalations are being resolved at earlier stages, and within expected timescales.
- Of 99 families asked 44.5 % said professionals worked “very well” together and 37.5% said “fairly well” Only 18% said not well

Ofsted Recommendation

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

- Care Proceedings timeliness is in top quartile - Improved timeliness of Care proceedings in 26 weeks : Herefordshire averages 24 weeks against national average of 36 weeks
- Restorative Practice has reduced our PLO/ Care Proceedings: 21 new cases issued 24/25 compared to 41 the previous year.
- Six young people placed during the year in an unregistered setting through 24/25 – all short term

**Ofsted
Recommendation
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.**

- SEND inspectors found 'children and young people with SEND known to early help services access swift support from education, health and social care teams where appropriate'.
- SEND inspectors described effective and appropriate support for disabled young people who are leaving care. 'Appropriate support to develop their independence skills for when they reach adulthood, and they are involved in preparing their pathway plan. and 'Disabled children and young people who receive a service from social care are well supported into adulthood.'
- For kinship carers, most placement losses were due to Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) being granted. While this reduces the number of fostering households, it represents a positive outcome for our children and young people, offering greater permanency within their family networks.
- Our overall number of children placed in a family-based setting is 73% above national average 71%.
- The percentage of dental checks has remained stable at 56% on review we have gathered child/young person feedback and understand many as having a reluctance or phobia which prevents them accessing checks. Support to address this is being provided via a joined-up approach by carers, looked nurses and social workers.

Ofsted Recommendation

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

- Staff told Ofsted they benefitted from regular and reflective supervision that provides helpful reflection and direction
- KPI timeliness of supervision up from 52% - 82% across the Safeguarding services
- Service Manager Leadership and Management programme delivered to all our Service Managers
- The partnership has established a new multi-agency dataset and auditing schedule with findings regularly reviewed with a focus on action and impact// local and national lens.
- The National Panel has agreed with the recommendations from all Herefordshire Rapid Reviews completed in 2024/25.

Ofsted Recommendation

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

- Feb 25 Ofsted found: A wider breadth of quality assurance activity gives leaders a stronger line of sight on the quality of practice. This includes a broader range of targeted audits on areas of service or cohorts of children who are more vulnerable. Feedback from children and parents is much more embedded into audits, which provides more meaningful insight into the experience and impact of practice for those who receive support from children's services. Audits identify issues to improve the service as well as more practice improvement
- 109 families have given us direct feedback since we introduced service user feedback Sept 24. Overall this is consistently positive feedback with 87% reporting able to share their views, 80% understanding why they had a social worker and 80% feeling the intervention met all or most of their needs and 80% reporting professionals worked well or "really well" together
- We have revised our audit processes and tools: Grade descriptors, moderation and case audit forms.
- We have developed our overarching QA Framework and embedded into practice an overarching programme and our Service Area QA programmes.
- We can see that we have increased the number of cases overall graded as in Good Q1- Q3 and for the first time this year seen Outstanding practice in Q4.
- Review of our complaint management completed with now all stage 1 complaints being investigated by a QA officer who is independent of the case and each investigation starts with a mtg with the complainant.
- In Early Help we collect regular SU feedback to understand impact; In 2024/25 174 evaluations from parents and 234 evaluations from children. The average increase in score comparing the beginning and end scores was 2.3.

Quality Assurance – Hearing the Voice of the Children Young People and Parent / Carers

Understanding the impact of what we do

Quality Assurance – Audit Activity <i>Understanding quality of practice</i>	<p>Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care / care leavers, so this is prioritised and embedded across the council and partnerships</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>The timely and robust identification of a multi-agency response to children & young people 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</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, sufficient numbers of Foster Carers, so children receive a timely response to having the service</p>
	<p>Our corporate responsibility to children will be evident in our council priorities, policies and development plans</p> <p>Children and Families will tell us that they believe Herefordshire is a good place to live</p>	<p>Our care proceedings will be completed in 26 weeks or we will know why not achieved</p> <p>We will visit children in care in timescales to meet need and see how they live. They will tell us they feel happy and safe with carers</p> <p>We will have timely and robust managerial oversight and clear best interest decision making for children subject to DoLS and those in unregistered placements.</p> <p>Children subject to SGO will have good support to promote long term permanence</p>	<p>Our contacts, referrals, strategy and assessments will be completed in timescales with full partnership contributions</p> <p>Visits and assessments to 16/17yr will be completed within timelines and they have made informed decisions about their welfare & accommodation</p>	<p>Our children in care will have up-to-date Health Assessments and Dental Checks</p> <p>They will tell us they have support with their emotional well being</p> <p>Audit will show we have good quality life story work and letters in place</p> <p>CYP will tell us they know why they are in care and that they have contributed and understand their plans</p>	<p>Our workforce data will show an improving picture on permanency and stability in agency staff</p> <p>Children will have fewer changes in social workers</p> <p>More children will be in family care and their placements stable</p> <p>Children will tell us they feel happy and safe in care and that they know how to raise their worries and make complaints</p>
	<p>Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision</p> <p>Audits will show an improving picture on the quality and timeliness of managerial decisions</p> <p>Staff will tell us they benefit from regular and reflective supervision</p> <p>Practice standards will be in place to guide best practice within and across the services</p>	<p>Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements ensuring children are protected receive care if required</p> <p>Repeat Social Work Assessments, children on requiring repeat CP plans will be lower than national</p> <p>Our protection and care planning meetings and reviews will show timeliness and good multi-agency attendance</p> <p>Partnership concerns will be addressed through a timely escalation process to resolution</p>	<p>The partnership will ensure early sharing of information on unborns in need/at risk and assessments and appropriate plans will be in place by birth. Those in care proceedings will have timely progression to permanency, including foster to adopt placements</p> <p>CYP will have told us why they went missing and we will address this in their plans</p>	<p>The quality of practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need</p> <p>Visits & Assessments will be timely and our QA audits will show an increasing positive trend on the quality of visits and plans and evidence appropriate step up and down as plans progress</p> <p>CYP and parents will tell us they can access their workers, have contributed to and understand the plans in place for them or their children</p>	<p>Performance and quality assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements.</p> <p>QA activity embedded across all services areas</p> <p>A range of opportunities for Children & Young People and Parents to tell us how they have experienced and benefited from our services will be in place</p> <p>Learning from both shared and developed practices identified</p>
	<p>Progress is built on partnerships: partnership activities will be delivered through: Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership: Herefordshire Council Corporate Parenting Board: SEND Partnership</p>				

Quality Assurance – KPIs
Timeliness of workload and workflow

Quality Assurance Measure of Success

The above plan on a page is designed as a visual to remind us of what Ofsted recommendations were and how we will know when we have achieved against them.

Our Quality Assurance Framework is made up of three complementary components:

- **Case Audit** – including regular case audits and targeted audits giving us evidence on the quality of work and compliance with our practice standards
- **Feedback from children and families** to understand how they are receiving our services and the impact they make
- **Analysis of key performance indicators** that enable us to monitor workload, workflow, demand and timeliness

Our Quality Assurance Programme enables us to

- **know ourselves well**, our strengths and our areas for improvement so we can take timely action to improve
- **understand the experience and impact our services make to the children and families** so we can be sure we are “**making a difference**”
- understand how it feels to be part of the children workforce, so we are an **employer of choice** giving our children and young people stability and consistency in good quality help, support and protection

There is an overarching Quality Assurance programme for Children’s Social Care and each service area has a focused QA programme that reports quarterly into the senior managers forum.

In addition, there are Children’s Service Performance Indicators reporting to Chief Executive and the council plan and a set of Key Performance Indicators to the Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance (RIIA), so we have some comparator data within regional, national and statistical neighbours.

For our Phase 3 plan we have further developed the range of QA measures for each Ofsted recommendation incorporating a range of; Key Performance Indicators, Audit activity and Service User feedback

Ofsted Recommendations	Key Performance Indicators	Audit/ Documentation	Service User Feedback
Recommendation 1 Corporate responsibility for the help and protection of children and those in care/care leavers, so this is embedded across the council and partnerships	Permanency in the overall Children's Services workforce Learning and Development data on multi agency training	Corporate Delivery plan Corporate Parent Strategy and delivery plan Participation plan 25/26 Co-production documents and CYP engagement activities	Workforce will tell us they feel valued as employees of Herefordshire Children and Young People will tell us they know where to access safe spaces and support within Herefordshire The partnership will tell us they understand and apply a Restorative Practice approach
Recommendation 2 Monitoring and tracking to prevent drift and delay. This includes monitoring and tracking of children in the Public Law Outline (PLO), permanence planning, children subject to deprivation of liberty orders and those place in unregistered children's homes	Care Proceedings completed with 26 weeks Timeliness of statutory visits to children in care Children u16yrs in unregistered settings Timeliness of children achieving permanency in 12-	LFJB sub group review of cases not meeting 26 weeks DCS/SD decision making on placements in Unregistered and timely visit to children Managerial Oversight on care proceedings cases meet practice standards Legal proceedings training for social work	Children subject to DOLS will tell us they feel safe and supported in their care placements Children in unregistered setting will tell us they feel safe and supported in their care placement

Ofsted Recommendations	Key Performance Indicators	Audit/ Documentation	Service User Feedback
	24 months after reception into care	staff Public and Private proceedings	
Recommendation 3 The timely and robust identification of a multiagency response to children and young people 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	Contacts managed in 24hrs Referral managed in 24hrs Strategy Discussion in 24hrs Social Work Assessment in 45 days with proportionate mix Timeliness in care proceedings for babies under 3months Take up of Welfare Return interview for children missing from Home and Care Timeliness of welfare Return interviews for CYP missing	Contact / Referral and Strategy decisions will reflect consistency in HCSP thresholds Assessment of CYP presenting as homeless will be timely and evidence the offer of care and choice decision making of the young person Missing from Home and Care analysis reports will identify the push / pull factors affecting our Children and Young People Looked After Reviews will address “missing” push /pull factors identified	Welfare Return Interviews will capture the voice of the child/young person informing our understanding of county risks and informing individual care planning Children and young people will tell us they have contributed their views to their assessments and understand the purpose of their Child Protection plans 16/17yrs olds presenting as homeless will tell us they have contributed to their assessment, understand the offer of care and are happy with their accommodation
Recommendation 4 The availability of support and services to meet children and young people’s needs including	Children in Care Health Checks meet timeliness standards	Children in care will have life letters and life story work in place Children leaving care and transitioning to	Care experienced children and young people will tell us their carers support them with their Emotional Wellbeing and they have a Trusted Adult to talk to.

Ofsted Recommendations	Key Performance Indicators	Audit/ Documentation	Service User Feedback
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	<p>Children in Care Dental Checks meet timeliness standards</p> <p>The majority of Care Leavers will be in "suitable accommodation"</p>	<p>independent accommodation will have the financial assistance to set up home and an up to date Pathway Plan</p> <p>Training for staff on life story work completed</p>	<p>Care experienced children and young people living in supported and independent living will tell us they feel safe and supported.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>The sufficiency and stability of staff across the workforce, sufficient number of Foster Carers, so children receive a timely response to having the service.</p>	<p>Permanency of qualified Social Workers in children's workforce</p> <p>Permanency of Children's wider Social Care workforce</p> <p>Stability of SW for children open to Children's Social Care for 12 months</p> <p>Children in care placed in a family based placement - in line or better than Eng/SN averages</p> <p>Children subject to Child Protection and Care plans will have</p>	<p>Foster Care assessment and Approvals will be completed in a timely way meeting best practice standards</p> <p>Our Foster Carers will have an allocated fostering worker and monthly supervision from approval</p> <p>Our Foster carers will have timely annual reviews</p> <p>Fostering ADM decision making will be timely to ensure no child is left in an unregistered foster care arrangement</p>	<p>Children and Young people will tell us they feel safe and supported in their care placements</p> <p>Foster Carer annual reviews will seek feedback from children previously placed within the year</p>

Ofsted Recommendations	Key Performance Indicators	Audit/ Documentation	Service User Feedback
	an allocated qualified social worker at all times		
Recommendation 6 Management oversight and grip across the service to include clear structures and service pathways, and regular and effective supervision	Monthly supervision for case holding social workers and social care staff	Case file audits will evidence that the majority of cases have timely and good quality managerial oversight Specific Training programme for first and second line managers will have been delivered	Our workforce surveys will tell us staff feel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valued at work • Understand the Vision and Improvement plans • Have manageable case loads • Good access to front line managerial advise and support • Regular and reflective supervision • Good working environments • Understand and apply Restorative Practice
Recommendation 7 Timely and effective multi-agency arrangements ensuring children are protected and receive care if required	Repeat Social Work assessment within 12 months Repeat Child Protection Plans Repeat reception into care following a care exit. Timeliness of Child Protection Case	Audit and data on use and outcome of the Safeguarding partnership escalation process Audit on children in care decision making will evidence all new receptions into care considered by a Service Director	Families will tell us the right agencies were invited to contribute to their child protection assessment and plans At the end of a Child Protection intervention families will tell us their strengths were recognised through our Restorative Practice approach

Ofsted Recommendations	Key Performance Indicators	Audit/ Documentation	Service User Feedback
	<p>Conferences ICPC/RCPC</p> <p>Participation in Child Protection case conferences – including attendance for those over 12years</p>	<p>Children and Young People will tell us they contributed their views and feelings to the children protection S47 assessments</p>	
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>The quality and practice including assessments, plans, planning and purposeful visits that are responsive to risk and need</p>	<p>Improvement Board Phase 3 dashboard</p> <p>Regional RIIA dashboard</p> <p>National CHAT dashboard</p>	<p>Our monthly Case file auditing programme will evidence links to our Learning and Development work and impact on improvement in practice in the following seven domains.</p> <p>Our Learning and Development programmes will reach the workforce providing regular learning and development</p>	<p>Through our case file audit we seek feedback from parents/carers and young people so we will understand their experience</p> <p>Staff will tell us they have up to date accessible practice standards to guide them in front line practice</p>
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>Performance and Quality Assurance arrangements to support and test service improvements</p>		<p>Through our Quality Assurance Programs we will undertake a regular and targeted programme of audit including service user feedback and KPI's data to inform the programme</p>	<p>During our case file audits and at the end of Assessments and Interventions we will seek feedback from the services users on how they have experienced our intervention – From Family Help to Care .</p>

Ofsted Recommendations	Key Performance Indicators	Audit/ Documentation	Service User Feedback
		We will develop our council wide co-production and child participation programme	

Delivery - Actions and Measures of Progress and Success

Ofsted Recommendation 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.

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale – progress reporting quarterly
Develop Child Friendly Herefordshire – learning from the Leeds initiative develop Herefordshire council plan priorities: People/Place/Growth/Transformation for children and young people.	Council Leader & Lead Member for Children's / CEO / DCS - Leeds Partner	25/26
Confirm appropriate funding to support children services improvement against a four year plan	Herefordshire Council	25 - 27
Complete the apprenticeship programme for Care Leavers within Herefordshire Council – starting within children's services and extending apprenticeships opportunities in all areas and major contracts. Target 12 apprenticeship	Tori Lynch Children's Directorate Leadership Team	25/26
Capture the voices of Children and Young people across Herefordshire and use this to inform partnership priorities and strategic development.	Safeguarding Partnership Scrutiny Officer	
Implement and report on the council wide Voice of the Child Engagement and Participation programme	Rosie Thomas-Easton	25/26
Secure new funding and appoint a Service Manager with responsibility for Children and Young People participation to lead and develop our participation strategy	DCS / HoS QA	April/May 25
Complete the Herefordshire Children and Young People Plan	CYPSP – Cllr Powell	25/26
Support local providers including foster carers to meet the cultural, religious and social needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) • Review placement of UASC by type and location	Stacie Edwards Zoe Richards	25/26

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale – progress reporting quarterly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a communication and engagement plan with UASC in relation to commissioned services. • Develop options to improve the offer of Herefordshire support and inclusivity to UASC locally 	Participation Manager	
Develop child and parent friendly information on complaints, child protection and care proceeding processes accessible via media links	Suzie Simms	Q2/3

Ofsted Recommendation 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

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Undertake a voice of the Children's workforce survey – measure progress against 2024/25 council workforce and SW Health check feedback	Dylan Harrison (PSW)	June/July 25
Launch a new Welcome and Retention offer for qualified social workers	Rachel Gillott	April 25
Further develop performance reporting from Mosaic / PBi to provide both self-service and provided performance reports to individual and managers to enable effective workload management	Claire Peet	2025/56 Reporting qrtly
Engage with the regional bid for Regional Fostering Hub	Tori Lynch	Q1/2
Implement a targeted recruitment programme for foster carers and promotion of the specialist foster carer scheme	Natasha Newton	25/26
Ensure sufficiency of local care placements • Mobilise 4 new Residential Children Home (RCH) beds • Undertake market engagement events locally/regionally with Independent Fostering Agencies to promote working relationships and their acceptance of our referrals	Tori Lynch Lisa Dufield Zoe Richards	25/26

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Develop a continuous programme for Restorative Practice multi agency briefings and regular workshop for CSC to bring for case reflection lead by RP champions	Dylan Harrison and Leeds	25/26
Complete refurbishment of locality work spaces	Anthony Oliver (E&E)	Q1/2
Complete SGO support and finance offer review and business case to increase number of SGO carers and children receiving permanency via this route	Natasha Newton	Q1
Undertake annual programme of Fostering recruitment and pay review	Natasha Newton / Finance	Q2
Complete and Launch Fostering Hand book and Website	Natasha Newton	Q1
Develop a training, development and career pathway programme for Family Support workers	Katy Straughan	Q1/3

Ofsted Recommendation 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.

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Develop a joint Herefordshire / Worcestershire levels of need bring consistency of language to our shared partners	HSCP / WSCP	Sept 25
Develop an annual programme for Private Fostering awareness raising across the partnership and compliance audit programme	Natasha Newton	June 25
Complete a further audit to review impact on practice and compliance against 16/17yrs homelessness standards	Christine Wellington	Q1 25/26
Produce a quarterly report on "Push/Pull" factors, patterns, and trends identified from Welfare Return Interviews for children and young people missing from home and care.	Christine Wellington / Ruby Card	Q1/2/3/4
Develop the Missing from Home and Care Welfare Return Interviews reporting mechanisms and information / data sharing within services to ensure SW and IRO /CP chairs understand	Christine Wellington	Q1

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
and can take into account within a child plan and ensure as a partnership we understand the push pull factors		
Undertake an annual community launch of Get Safe across Herefordshire to raise awareness amongst children, young people and the community of signs of concern and support services available	Holly Powell CSE Partnership	Annual – 2025
Provide a consultation, support and training package to the voluntary and community sector to enable them to build skills and confidence in managing presenting needs and risks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training materials and programmes tailored to the needs of the VCSE sector. • Deliver the training across VSCE and universal Early Help workforce. • Evaluate the impact of the training and identify next steps for ongoing support. 	Dawn Knight Talk Community	Q1/2/3
Embed partnership working within the Joint Commissioning HCC and ICB to jointly address health and care needs of children and young people with an initial focus on children and young people with Special Educational Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refresh S75 arrangements for joint funding across Health, Education and Social Care • Review arrangements for commissioned services across therapy and promote commissioned solutions for enhanced capacity, quality and value where possible 	Rachel Gillott Tori Lynch Jade Brooks ICB Zoe Richards	25/26

Ofsted Recommendation 4

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

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Deliver against the Leeds sector led improvement programme – embedding relational practice	Dylan Harrison / Leeds	2025/26
Implement the service specific QA programme on a quarterly basis – incorporating Audit, KPI review and Service User feedback to inform each quarterly programme	Service Managers	25/26
Develop a range of opportunities to hear the voice of the child in our work using Surveys, Audit, feedback/learning through compliments and complaints and create a regular Voice of the Child report as a measure of success against the improvement plan	Service Manager QA and Participation	25/26

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Implement Families First Programme – Family Help	Lead Dawn Knight	25/26 Q1/2/3
Merge the strengths of targeted early help and section 17 (Child in Need) work, to enable families to experience one assessment and to have flexibility on who leads the work to support relationship building.	Steering Group Ruby Card - MASH	
Utilize multi-disciplinary teams, delivering support out of local community-based settings so children and families can more easily access support	Dylan Harrison PSW Andrea Busk - CP	
Establish the Family Help Lead Practitioner role across the partnership giving families some choice as to who leads their plan of intervention	Nicola Stroud - Talk C Angela Wilson HSCP	
Through our Think Family approach create new Family Help plans to identify what and who is impacting on good parenting – who can help and who needs help?	Leanne Lowe WMP Wye Valley HC Trust Lyndsey McCardy PH	
Develop our work with the wider family network of children to maximise the support and safety planning wider family can offer as we support parents to care for their own children.		

Ofsted Recommendation 5

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

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Auditing decision making on contact and referrals to identify patterns and trends that lead to repeat referral/assessment/plans for children and sharing targeted learning to effect change	Ruby Card	Q1
Develop further the Multi Agency audit activity across the partnership and within children social care to ensure we have maximum opportunity to understand the multi agency delivery ultimately and impact and to coordinate and share learning as a partnership	Ruth Coles Christine Wellington	April – Dec 25

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Develop reporting mechanism on Multi Agency contributions to child protection processes and children Strategy discussions through to Child Protection conferences	Claire Peet Amanda Sherrard	Q2/3
Monitor use of the new multi-agency Professional Differences Escalation processes for effective and timely outcomes for children	Safeguarding Partnership	25/26
Implement the Families First Programme with development and piloting of the specialist social worker role to ensure our experienced social workers are providing consistent advice and direction to our child protection interventions	Dawn Knight Dylan Harrison	Q4
Implement the quality of practice sector lead improvement plan with Leeds Relational Practice in Practice' Develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local champions group as facilitators and trainers • Joint workshop programme in summer • Incorporating formulation approach in key decision-making points, e.g. core groups, care planning meetings and professionals meetings 	Dylan Harrison John Maynard	Q1-3

Ofsted Recommendation 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.

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
Identify and audit cases where PLO timeliness is at risk or not achieved to identify actions to retrieve timeliness or identify patterns and trends for learning and practice improvement. Reporting to LFJB and CSC Exec	LFJB sub Tess Burgess / Rachel Gillott	Quarterly
Confirm the Special Guardianship offer to promote permanency through SGO in a timely way with an offer that provides a strong practical, emotional and financial support in permanency	Natasha Newton	Q1/2

Actions we will take	Person/Forums	Timescale
<p>A quarterly court data report using the Legal Tracker will provide us with outcome and timeliness date for PLO and Care proceedings. This will enable us to identify patterns and trends of concern in practice and or teams</p> <p>Develop ways to engage great young persons aged 12+ in participation in children protection conferences to ensure they understand the purpose of them and feel safer as a result</p>	<p>Tess Burgess / Rachel Gillott</p> <p>Andrea Busk IRO and CP chairs</p>	Q1/2/3/4
<p>Deliver training programme to staff on Private and Public Law proceedings including statement and giving evidence over three modules – Public Law, Court Skills and Private Law</p>	<p>Tess Burgess / Cahomie Richards</p>	Q1/2/3 – by Dec 25

Ofsted Recommendation 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

Actions we will take	Person/Forums responsible	Timescales
<p>Deliver and evaluate the 25/26 Community Safety funded projects that deliver Early Help and Support to identify those for future long term funding - informing 25/26 commissioning</p>	<p>Rachel Gillott Zoe Richardson Anthony Price PCC</p>	25/26
<p>Provide training in Life Story work and be skilled to deliver this for children in care.</p>	<p>Dorine Rai Katy Straughan</p>	Q1/2
<p>Audit the quality of "Later life letters" to inform practice development Undertake a practice workshop and develop tools for practice</p>	<p>Dorine Rai</p>	Q1 Q2
<p>We will confirm data on our children registered with dental practice and Dental checks and raise findings with ICB and in service to ensure all children have these in place and up to date.</p>	<p>Tori Lynch CSC Jade Brooks ICB</p>	
<p>Engage in the regional Care Leavers forums to ensure HCC Care Leavers have best practice in suitable accommodation, access to education/employment, finances and wellbeing support to independence</p>	<p>Tori Lynch & Corporate Parenting Board</p>	25/26

Actions we will take	Person/Forums responsible	Timescales
Undertake an emotional well being / trusted adult survey with care experienced children and young people	Stacie Edwards Dorine Rai	Q1
Further develop short break sufficiency with increased capacity and choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communication strategy with Parent Carer Voice (PCV) and the Children with Disability (CWD) team to ensure wider take up of the existing short break offer • Develop options to deliver a commissioned framework for daytime community based short breaks in the County • Undertake feasibility scoping of potential to deliver in County residential overnight short breaks alongside Strategic Housing • Review the targeted allowance scheme for short breaks to inform future planning 	Jess Davies Zoe Richards	

Ofsted Recommendation 8

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

Actions we will take	Person/Forums responsible	Timescales
Complete development of our practice standards for managers on recording decisions in the interests of children with rationale and reference to threshold and outcomes so these decisions are auditable, provide guidance to staff and accountability for practice decisions.	Tori Lynch Christine Wellington	24/25
Complete an evaluation of the new Complaints policy, process and culture to ensure we are getting the best learning from complaints, have processes that provide assurance on quality and timeliness and in which our service users have confidence and assurance	Tilly Page Suzie Simms	Q2
Provide a consultation, support and training package to the voluntary and community sector to enable them to build skills and confidence in managing presenting needs and risks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training materials and programmes tailored to the needs of the VCSE sector. • Deliver the training across VSCE and universal Early Help workforce. 	Dawn Knight Emily Lowe Talk Community Children's	Q1/2/3

Actions we will take	Person/Forums responsible	Timescales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the impact of the training and identify next steps for ongoing support. 		
Deliver a bespoke Management and Leadership programme to Team Managers supported by our own Service Managers	Dylan Harrison / Leeds SLIP	Q1/Q2
Increase student social workers in training “grow our own” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend regional skills show and recruitment events Create links and a programme of sessions with Sixth Form and FE colleges to promote career options with children social care, early years and SEND Collaborate with local University providers to promote Herefordshire student and AYSE offer 	Learning & Development	25/26
Access the regional training, development and career pathway programme for Personal Advisors	Stacie Edwards Regional Network	Q2/3

Ofsted Recommendation 9

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

Actions we will take	Person/Forums responsible	Timescale
Continue the review and development of the use of Mosaic and Power Bi to ensure permanence data is both self-service and pushed out to managers to enable them to have timely performance information on which to manage workflow and timeliness of practice – providing a headline for deep dive	Clare Peet Rachel Gillott / Tori Lynch	Summer 24
Embed the implementation of the quality assurance programme in each service area ensuring there is a mix of KPI, Audit and Children and Young People Service user feedback informing our understanding of quality, timeliness and impact of work	Susie Simms And Service Managers	Q1/2/3/4
Practice standards will be in place to promote consistency and good practice across the services	Dylan Harrison Rachel Gillott Tori Lynch	25/26

Actions we will take	Person/Forums responsible	Timescale
Undertake Regional Peer Review Challenge	Rachel Gillott / Tori Lynch	Q3

Signed

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Paul Walker - Herefordshire Council Chief Executive
(Interim)

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Simon Trickett – Chief Executive ICB

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Tina Russell – Director of Children’s Services

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Rachel Jones – Deputy Chief Constable –
West Mercia Constabulary