

Children first and at the heart of all we do

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

January 2021 to January 2022

Improving services for children and families



Children first and at the heart of all we do

FOREWORD



As Lead Member for Children's Services I know that the Leader of the Council and my fellow members are committed to ensuring that the services we deliver will have children at the forefront of their thinking.

This Improvement plan works together with all our partners to deliver strong, safe and preventative services to children of Dudley to enable them to fulfil their full potential.

Cllr Ruth Buttery, Cabinet Member for Children's Services



Dudley Council has the highest ambitions for our children and young people.

Revitalized council leadership arrangements, a cross political and partner improvement programme have accelerated our efforts to support and strengthen the services that we deliver to children and families.

Alongside this there is momentum and a strong commitment to building and strengthening our alliances with partners to improve our collective offer to children and young people. Where strengths are discovered, they will be built upon and where weaknesses are found, they will be challenged and overcome.

Kevin O'Keefe, Chief Executive Dudley Council



Working as One Council in
the historic capital of the Black Country





As Director of Children's Services, I am passionate and care about the rights and needs of all children and young people.

Enabling and supporting children and young people to aspire, achieve and believe in themselves, regardless of the adversity they may have faced is the ultimate ambition and outcome I want for them.

To achieve this outcome, I am equally passionate on improving services for Dudley Children and Young people. It is clear there is a real commitment from politicians, partners and staff to making a real difference to ensure that children are at the heart of everything we do. Dudley Council is committed to protecting vulnerable children and families in need of support and protection.

This Children's Services Improvement Plan document brings together all the activity which is underway and / or is planned by Dudley Council, through the Children's Services Directorate and our partners to help safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people across Dudley.

The Improvement Plan supports the transformational changes taking place including several short term and long-term projects that are planned, which will be delivered over the next 18 months.

I am confident that we are now working at pace to drive the improvements forward and have a committed workforce who want to make a difference to children and young people. We remain committed to delivering high quality, safe services and working with our partners, and we will continue to ensure that services improve for children and their families across the Borough.

Catherine Driscoll, Director of Children's Services



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1.0 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The governance of the improvement is overseen by the newly revised Improvement Board, which meets every six weeks. The Improvement Plan will report to the Council's Cabinet and ultimately the full Council.

Scrutiny of the Improvement Boards activities will be provided by the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Improvement Board will be informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It will report to the Health and Wellbeing Board as to how its activities fulfil this and are delivering better outcomes for children.

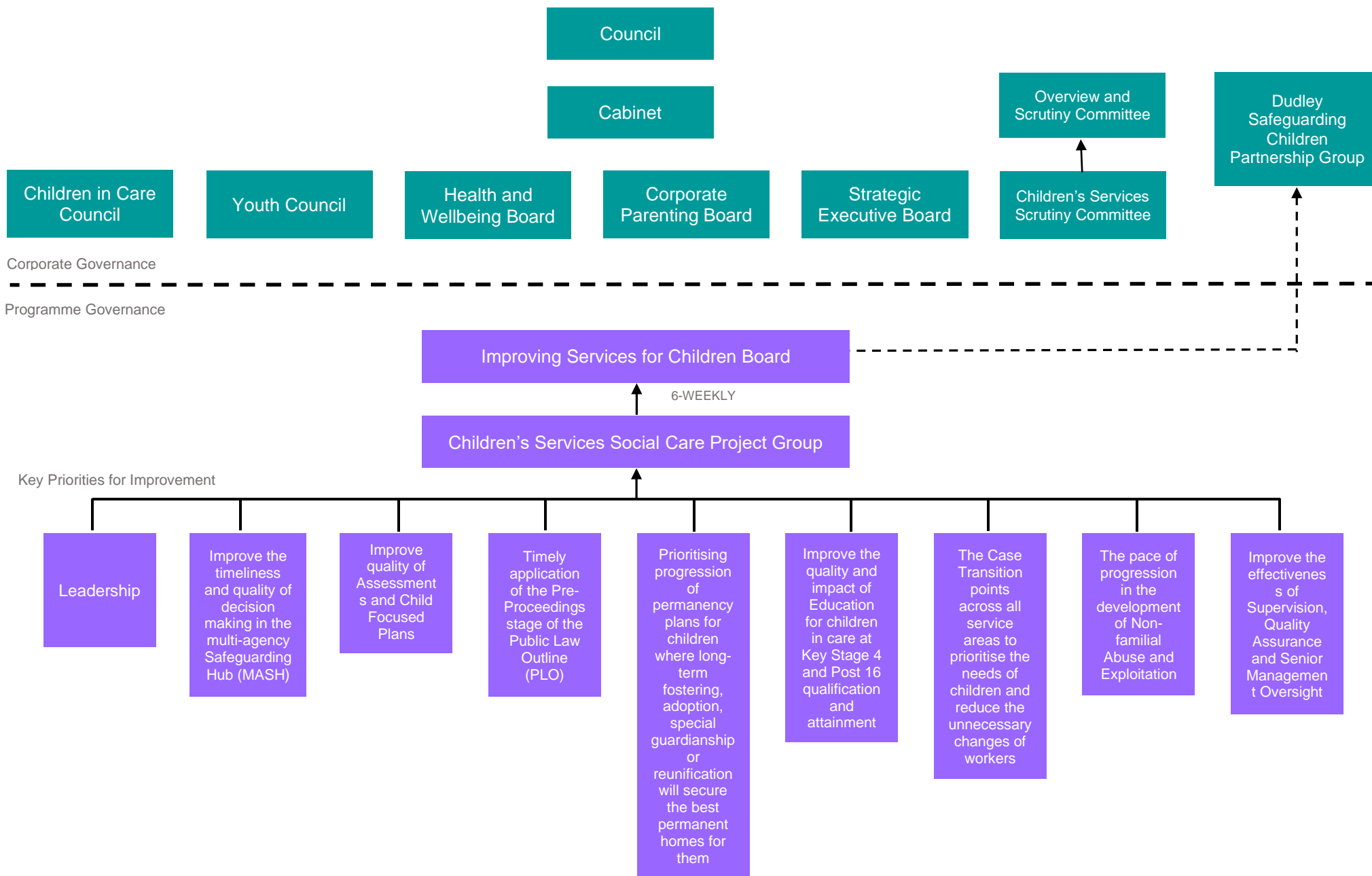
The Improvement Board will report to the Dudley Safeguarding Partnership to provide assurance that its activities are ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

The Director of Children's Services will provide progress updates to all bodies through a single consistent reporting framework based upon an agreed data set and appropriate actions identified by the Improvement Board. These actions may include items to be undertaken by the key stakeholders as well as Dudley Council.

It is the responsibility of all the key stakeholders to ensure the improvement plan is part of the agenda, discussion, and scrutiny in the named committees, boards, and working groups; and within their respective organisations as part of the assurance for the DfE that improvement and sustainability is owned and the responsibility is shared across the partnership for continuous progress.

The overarching responsibility of the improvement plan remains with the Council in respect of corporate resources, systems, and policy changes.





2.0 HOW WILL WE CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT TO ACHIEVE THE PRIORITIES AND WHAT WILL THIS LOOK LIKE?

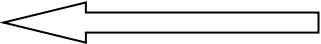
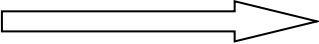
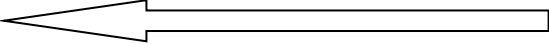
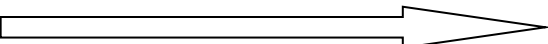
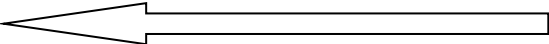
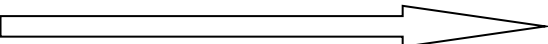
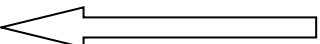
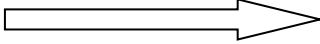
We are working towards 'good', so, how will we know when we get there? We are developing services to provide good experiences for children and young people. We are measuring our success and impact on children's experiences through the following evaluation categories, and the detailed descriptors that sit beneath.

Experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Experience of children in care and care leavers	Impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
Early Help	Making good decisions for children	Strategic partnership
Identifying and responding to children's needs and appropriate thresholds	Participation and direct work with children and care leavers	Learning culture
Making good decisions and providing effective help	Helping and protecting	Performance management
Management oversight of frontline practice	Health	Workforce
Participation and direct work with families	Learning and enjoyment	
Identifying and responding to all types of abuse recognizing the vulnerability of specific groups of children	Stability and permanence	
	Care leavers and transitions	



3.0 FIRSTLY, WE NEED TO FOCUS ON OUR TOP PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Our recent Ofsted visit provided us with priority areas, which coupled with our own analysis will form our immediate priorities.

Experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Experience of children in care and care leavers	Impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
Timely application of the pre- proceedings stage of Public Law Outline (PLO)	Prioritising the swifter progression of plans for children where long-term fostering, adoption, special guardianship or reunification will secure the best permanent homes for them	Senior leadership roles, including the Director of Children's Services (DCS) need to be filled substantively
The timeliness and quality of decisions in MASH	Improve the quality and impact of education for children in care at key stage 4 and post 16 qualification and attainment	
 The pace of progress in the development of responses to non-familial abuse and child exploitation 		
 The case transition points across all service areas 		
 The quality of assessments and child focused plans 		
 The effectiveness of supervision, quality assurance arrangements and senior management oversight 		



OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 1

Leadership

(Responsible officer – Helen Ellis, Acting Director of Children’s Services)

What do we need to improve?

Instability in the senior leadership team and staff changes throughout the service, have contributed to the drift in the local authority’s improvement journey.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have appointed a permanent DCS We have a full permanent establishment in the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new DCS will start on the 22 Feb 2021 Each Head of Service has lead responsibility for our 9 priority areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are reviewing our Social Work recruitment strategy with a target of 85% permanency by the Quarter 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Staff permanent 73%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Time to Talk” sessions with all staff commence from January 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37 staff 17% Staff attended “Time to Talk” sessions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The improvement plan was shared with staff in a series of workshops Staff programme update workshops to be held once a quarter with at least 75% attendance/engagement We have established practitioner forums held every 6 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 290 staff attended the improvement plan briefings Staff have a greater visibility, understanding and involvement in the improvement journey Improved staff ownership through being involved in improvements work. Evidence of feeling more involved through staff survey Quarter 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully auditable Quality Assurance & Learning Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Head of Services out of 5 attended Quality Assurance & Learning Framework training in January 2021

Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight and challenge provided by the CEO, Cabinet Member and DCS to improve scrutiny and capacity monitoring • Robust delivery focused governance in place to drive the improvement plan through to operational level by February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All SLT have input, buy in and commitment to the CSIP • Robust approach to delivery focused activity across SLT • Strong scrutiny to assure delivery
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2020 Practice week theme “Hear my story, Hear my voice” to focus training on the voice of the child, to drive quality improvements around the voice of the child all through assessments and plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Hear my story, Hear my voice” training through practice week attended by 255 staff (in 544 sessions). • Feedback has been positive. Evidence of impact will be reviewed through thematic audits. • Assessment audits showing stronger voice of the child
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 6th January 2021, Dudley’s Centre for Professional Practice launched its training programme for 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners and managers shared that they found the briefing informative and that they felt included in the improvement journey.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are currently reviewing all the Panels in order to streamline them and increase their effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome focused streamlined panels will be in place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Improvement Plan will be shared with practitioners and managers across Children’s Services. Heads of Services led the interactive sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 290 practitioners, managers and IROs attended the briefing on 26th January 2021 and 4th February 2021. The sessions were well received. Practitioners and managers shared that they found the briefing informative and that they felt included in the improvement journey. • Our workforce will understand and be able to articulate the Improvement Plan and reflect it in their practice.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioner and management training launched by Dudley’s Centre for Professional Practice and is now underway with a focus on improving outcomes for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 managers ranging from Service Managers to Heads of Service across Children’s Services will commence training.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every manager across Children's Services will attend a cohort of 5-day core skills manager's training to start by February 2021 and be completed by May 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent approach to management across the teams evaluated through feedback and staff survey in quarter 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust performance management framework will be implemented across Children's Services by 28th February 2021 • Team dashboards which provide practitioners and managers with real time performance will be available to staff from February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners and managers start using reports to better understand the business performance. • Practitioners and managers start using the reports to drive improved outcomes for children. • Performance reporting focused on giving all staff the right information monitoring the quality of services.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in Partners in Practice with South Tyneside on Fostering by February 2021 with Permanence & Quality Assurance work to commence by 22nd February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specification on outcomes expected has been agreed with South Tyneside.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Abuse Bill Stakeholder's event – 29/01/2021. • Stakeholder evaluation of the impact of domestic abuse on the outcomes for children and plan of action to be presented by March 2021 • Define metrics for ongoing monitoring impact of domestic abuse on outcomes for children by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better visibility and understanding of the impact across partners, supporting joined up approaches to tackling domestic abuse.

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 2

Improve the timeliness and quality of decision making in the multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Contacts with children's services are not responded to quickly enough. Decision-making is too slow and not always appropriate in how best to respond to children's needs. The RAG (Red Amber Green) rating system to prioritise children is not effective, meaning that an appropriate, timely response to needs and risks is not routinely achieved.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have recruited a permanent Service Manager for MASH, Emergency Duty Team and Exploitation Hub and a Team Manager. Both will join the MASH on 18th January 2021. Service Manager for Family Solutions has been permanent since December 2020. 2 permanent social workers have been recruited into MASH. Define and implement approach to monitoring % of permanent staff and staff attrition by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust management oversight for children's contacts, improving decision making Next Working Day for timeliness. 71.4% Local Authority permanent staff in MASH Social Workers and Team Managers combined Managers have shared information about the MASH Project with staff.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of Contacts progressed within one working day was 69% in November 2020. Improve timeliness of decisions and accuracy of recording in MASH, including the recording of evidence gathered from the partnership. Additional resources in place to support improved performance of timeliness of contact decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance in November was lower than the target of 95%. January 2021 performance – 77.1% Target to achieve 80% in February 2021 Target to achieve 90% in March 2021 Target 95 % by end of April 2021 Stat Neighbour performance – [%]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a structured improvement system approach to tackle the MASH Contact Decision performance. • Implement continuous improvement meetings into business as usual with the management team utilizing the improvement approach • First phase has identified numerous issues with systems and processes with detailed action plan underway for resolution by end of February 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved contact time performance, supporting delivery of the targets for February, March and April • Improved visibility of business process performance through analysis as part of weekly meetings in place by February 2021 • Simplified business processes and better understanding of systems, evidenced through a staff survey in Quarter 2 once improvements bedded in.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline audit of approximately 400 September contacts to be undertaken to identify areas of improvement across all partners by December 2020 • Presentation of findings to the MASH Strategic Board in February 2021. • MASH Improvement plan initiated by February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined up partner approach to improving services through MASH, improving working together • Improvement to support achieving the contact performance targets above • Improved timeliness of response to concerns raised about children and young people
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi- agency training for MASH staff, linked to the learning audit, is being developed jointly by the Service Manager for Children's MASH, the Service Manager for Adult MASH, DSPP and CPP by 31st January 2021 – this will be rolled out from February 2021. • Audit tools approved January 2021 • The theme/focus of February audit is quality Ambulance Service contacts. • Audit training has been delivered to MASH Operations Group in January 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners understand Dudley's thresholds and make good referrals (with consent where appropriate) to enable timely response to risks and support needs of children and young people.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened the MASH Operations Group with improved membership and will include regular multi-agency audits. 	<p>All improvement supporting that the right children will be referred appropriately to MASH. The volume of inappropriate referrals will reduce, thus allowing more time to progress appropriate contacts at level 4.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Multi-Agency Threshold document has been updated in draft and is currently under consultation during the month of January 2021 • Develop full referrals business intelligence by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Rate of appropriate Contacts into MASH [%] by Quarter 2 • Current rate of appropriate Contacts into MASH: [%] and [Volume]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners in Adults and Children MASH will be attending shared learning workshops with the initial workshop taking place on 24th February 2021. Thereafter the workshops will be held monthly, and learning will be disseminated via multi- agency update briefings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined learning between Adults and Children MASH as well as DSPP partners.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Children's and Adults MASH Strategic Board has been agreed at the Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership held on 17th December 2020. TOR by end of January 2021. • Clear operational demarcation and practice between Adults MASH and Childrens MASH • Childrens Services specific monitoring in place by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will support a more seamless approach between Children's and Adults Services in our strategic planning around risks across whole family. • This will support transition planning and think family approaches.

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 3

Improve Quality of Assessments and Child Focused Plans

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Assessments of children are overly descriptive and do not fully analyse the impact of children's situations on their health and development and longer-term outcomes. The child's voice and lived experiences are captured in assessments but do not always sufficiently influence planning. Child in need and child protection plans are not effective due to the lack of specific, child-focused and time-bound actions. This means that it is difficult for families to understand what changes are required to improve children's circumstances, and what will happen should the changes not be made.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two groups of young people, 5-12 and 13 plus have developed their plan on a page IRO have developed child friendly CLA review report in consultation with children and the Children in Care Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children feeling involved in developing their plans Plans focused around what the children have highlighted in the plan on a page More child focused plans
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70.3% of new assessments were completed within 45 days in November. We have reconfigured the way we measure assessment performance by separating out those resulting from new referrals and those from regular updated assessments. Implement measure for monitoring of re-referrals as part of Directorate Dashboard Scorecard by March 2021 Developed full referrals business intelligence by April 2021 	<p>This change will ensure a clearer picture of how we are doing in relation to timely assessment of new and/or unknown families.</p> <p>Assessments authorized in 45 days target</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2020 = 50.3% (76) of 151 assessments January 2021 = 47% (109) of 232 assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35% increase in volume of assessments 30% increase of assessments achieving 45 days Target Assessments completed in 45days: 85% in line with stat neighbours <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target 75% April 2021 Target 80% June 2021 Target 85% August 2021

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of impact on children's experiences to be identified through 'plans' and 'assessments' audits as part of the monthly audit cycle and during Practice Week in March 2021 • 'Developing SMART Plans' training commenced on 14th December 2020. More sessions are available throughout 2021. The right workers will be targeted. • Assessment and Analysis training has been rolled out, being held on 8th & 14th January, 9th February 22nd April and 9th June 2021. The training cycle will consider the learning from audits. • Full audit programme implemented covering all 9 priority areas of the Childrens Services Improvement Plan by January 2021 • Audits of 'all plan types' has been undertaken as part of the Quality Assurance and Learning Framework (QAF) program in January 2021 • Audits of assessments have been undertaken in December 2020 by the Centre for Professional Practice (CPP) team; the learning has been incorporated into the Assessment & SMART Plans Training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan audits have identified the need to improve the core group meetings as part of the child protection planning • 36 social workers, 17% of workforce, have attended 3 workshops on 'SMART Plans' training from 14th December 2020 to 31st January 2021.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start SMART planning dip audits from March 2021 – Target of 25% of new plans audited every month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [%] and [NUMBER] of plans audited that are SMART
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will increase the functionality to evidence partner agency involvement in all processes/reviews through our new Liquid Logic system. Partnership involvement will be reported into the Dudley Safeguarding Partnership Children's Group. • Define and implement monitoring mechanisms for input across all partners by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of assessments with partner engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ [%] assessments with Education ○ [%] assessments with Police ○ [%] assessments with Health ○ [%] assessments with Other partner agencies

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 4

Timely application of the Pre-Proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline (PLO)

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Where the circumstances of children on child protection plans do not improve, they are not considered at legal gateway panels soon enough and the pre-proceedings stage of the PLO process is therefore delayed. This means that children are left in situations for significant periods of time where risks are not reducing.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Service Director has chaired Legal Gateway Panel (LGP) on several occasions in November as part of a review of LGP and to identify learning. The Court Progression Manager (permanent) is now back in post - as of 1st December 2020. The Interim Head of Children and Families/ Chair of LGP has now incorporated the Family Group Conferencing Coordinator into LGP, as well as having FGC involvement in Child Protection Progress Panel. Improvement activity to be incorporated into the local improvement plan by February 2021 	The review will identify areas for development in the LGP process, paperwork and practice.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liquid Logic is now able to track partner agency involvement in child protection core groups. In November 82% of core groups took place within timescales. This was an improvement on the October figure of 75%. Core group meetings on schedule 95% of the time by April 2021 Implement robust business reporting March 2021 	<p>Timely core groups which include partners with the right experience and skills will drive progression of child protection plans and identify where families should be progressed to pre-proceedings.</p> <p>Number of meetings held on time 86.6% January 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ [%] attended by Education ○ [%] attended by Police ○ [%] attended by Health ○ [%] attended by Other partner agencies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection Progress Panel begins on 12th January 2021. • Panel will provide structure around child protection cases at 9+ months, with earlier recognition where pre-proceedings would be appropriate. • Out of the 365 children subject to child protection plans, 94 have been on CP Plans for 9+ months. • Aim for average duration of 365days for plans >9months 	<p>Service Manager oversight of child protection planning will result in a reduction in the length of child protection plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of plans >9months old – 116 (8/12/21) • >9months CP Plans average duration – 386 days
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target current age of CP Plan – To be defined by April 2021 • Target plans >9months old – To be defined by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target current age of CP Plan – [WEEKS/MONTHS] • Target plans >9months old – [NUMBER] by [DATE]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have now implemented the pre-proceedings and care proceedings workspace (Public Law Outline) into the Liquid Logic System. • Pre-proceedings tracking in LCS by March 2021 • Childrens pre-proceedings progress to be monitored using new pre-proceedings report currently being developed and due by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More robust approach to the visibility and management of pre-proceedings • Number of CYP in pre-proceedings process 7 sibling groups as of February 2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit of 69 pre-birth cases was completed • Findings used to inform the developing PLO pre-birth pathway • CPP and operational social work staff will link this to the main PLO pathway. • Training and guidance are being developed from this audit work. • Pathway, guidance and training to be completed by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding and clarity of the pathway, how it works and where to get information from • Evidenced through Staff Survey Quarter 2

Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have developed new multi-agency core group guidance – including expectations of all partners. • Guidance was completed on 23rd December 2020 and signed off on 7th December in the Dudley Safeguarding Partnership Children's Group. • Centre for Professionals Practice are developing good practice guidance Pre-Proceedings (Public Law Outline). • Consultation with Midwifery, voluntary partnerships networks e.g. Black Country Women's Aid and Family Nurse Partnerships. To be completed by February 2021 with draft guidance for approval and publication by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent multi-agency contribution to core groups, leading to more effective child protection plans. • Improved understanding, awareness and working together across partners evidenced through partner survey and engagement quarter 2
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OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 5

Prioritising progression of Permanency plans for children where long-term fostering, adoption, special guardianship or reunification will secure the best permanent homes for them.

(Responsible Officer – Heidi Henderson, Head of Children in Care & Placement Resources)

What do we need to improve?

There is insufficient understanding, oversight and grip of permanence planning. Tracking systems are underdeveloped and do not help to effectively support timely decision-making for children on their journey to achieve permanence. This means that many children with a plan for long-term fostering are not being formally matched soon enough. This has delayed family finding and matching timeliness for a small number of children whose plan has been for adoption. The delay in introducing a special guardianship policy and support offer means that too many children remain subject to care orders.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court Progression/Permanency Officer has been re-instated in post. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective tracking and progression of permanency plans for children in and out of court processes. As of February 2021, 74 sibling groups in court proceedings and 31% on target with 69% anticipated to breach the 26week target (currently being reviewed with Family Justice Board)
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A draft Permanency Strategy has been completed and is now out for consultation with Heads of Service. The Strategy will be shared with staff as part of the Improvement Plan Workshops during February and March. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We now have a structure around the area of permanence for practitioners and their managers to adhere to. Evaluated through staff feedback and staff questionnaire quarter 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new Special Guardianship Order 'No Detriment' decision has been signed off by the Lead Cabinet Member for Children. Children are now being identified where an SGO may be appropriate. The Policy will be produced by 20th January 2021. An SGO Panel is now taking place on a fortnightly basis, reviewing and tracking SGO plans for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers and staff are aware of the decision and are now progressing SGO plans for children where carers have already agreed to the Order. Further work has been undertaken by Service Managers to identify other children for whom an SGO might be an appropriate permanence option.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference for Achieving Early Permanence (AE) Panel, which ensures operational leadership for all children in care will be produced by 15th January 2021. • Terms of Reference agreed and AE Panel initiated by February 2021 • There are robust arrangements to achieve permanency for existing cohort and any new children to be well embedded by Quarter 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and robust approach to the monitoring and management of the permanence processes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving Permanency 3-day training offered to practitioners from February to July 2021 - 120 places. • Within Practice Week in December 2020, training was delivered to staff on Life Story work for practitioners and foster carers; Adoption at Heart provided training on partnership-working, roles and responsibilities. • IROs have a Development Day on 28th January 2021 where the Improvement Plan will be shared with an emphasis on their role in permanence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted staff receive regular training and management support to ensure that they have the skills and understanding to progress children's permanency in a timely manner.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new TOR sets out the partnership working between Social Care, Adoption@Heart and Dudley Lighthouse Links. • New arrangements evidence early permanency planning of children from within 6 weeks of becoming looked after. • 90% target permanency planning at the 2nd LAC review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened process around early permanence planning through strengthened relationships with Adoption@Heart. • 90% target permanency planning at the 2nd LAC review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ December 2020 – 71.4% ○ January 2021 – [%] ○ February 2021 – [%] ○ March 2021 – [%] ○ April 2021 – [%]

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 6

Improve the Quality and Impact of Education for children in care at key stage 4 and post 16 qualification and attainment.

(Responsible Officer – Andrew Wright, Head of Virtual School)

What do we need to improve?

There is a lack of a strategy to improve pupils' outcomes in key stage 4. As such, there are still too many pupils leaving secondary education without formal qualifications. Consequently, their ambitions for post-16 education are limited by their prior attainment. Not enough children and young people are successful in securing apprenticeships or moving on to university.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Since December, we now have a Connexions Personal Advisor linked to the Leaving Care Team.• We have delivered training to social workers to ensure that they provide aspirational support to children in care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young people benefit from improved partnership working within the council to increase chances of acquiring apprenticeships.• On 7th January 2021, 6 social workers attended introduction to 'e-PEP' training.• 11 Practitioners attended 'Education, Health Care Plans and Aspirations' training on 8th December 2021.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Education Attainment Strategy has been developed and implemented to improve all the outcomes of children in care; with a focus on pupils' outcomes in Key Stage 4 and post 16 qualifications.• Target to increase the number of 19-25 care leavers in education, employment and training to 49.5% by Quarter 2• Within this strategy, we have developed a pathway programme that has targeted young people who have left school with no qualifications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 young people have been supported with targeted tuition in functional skills. 2 of these have secured a level 2 qualification in numeracy. The remaining 4 are continuing with their training.• 41.7% as of care leavers are in education, training or employment as of February 2021.• % of 16 & 18-year-old who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) is 2.7% (5 children in total).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship and Tertiary education strategy implemented by March 2021 • The Virtual School (DVS) and YOS have been working together to ensure that young people who are in care and in custody and those at risk of offending, to ensure that they are supported in their education outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High number of children entering apprenticeships and tertiary education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Virtual School piloted a programme of children chairing their own PEP in September 2020. This was successful and the DVS is now planning to roll this out. • The Virtual School has also established connectivity with the Youth Offending Service (YOS), the Care Leavers Team and their networks to ensure all young people, including those in secure units and others over the age of 18, are offered the opportunity for a PEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have been able to have more influence on their PEPs. • Children at risk of offending are supported in their education to reduce involvement in criminality and create more opportunities.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the Dudley Education Strategy specifically referencing CiC and CLA developed by Education Services • Preparation for Adulthood Strategy, developed by SEND Improvement Programme launched by March 2021 and aligned with Childrens Social Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System wide approach to Education • System wide approach to Preparation for Adulthood including education/training, housing, health and community inclusion

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 7

The Case Transition points across all service areas to prioritise the needs of children and reduce unnecessary changes of workers

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Ensure that transfers between teams are conducted according to best practice and in a timely manner so that this does not contribute to drift and delay in plans.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with children, young people, parents and carers to better understand their experiences through the system Set up feedback channels and mechanisms for ad hoc and regular feedback. First review of feedback to be undertaken and learning leading to improvement actions by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understanding of the experiences of the children Ability to target improvement for transition points Children feeling part of improving the Dudley system
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The revised Transfer Protocol will be signed off on 15th January 2021 with a plan to share with staff during the Improvement Plan workshops with practitioners in January/February. Café drop in updates on the Transfer Protocol will be offered by the Centre for Professional Practice. Heads of Service are using Liquid Logic to track timely transfer of children's cases by identifying those cases that remain in services for longer than they should do. Cases are moving more easily across the service areas. The Management Information Team are currently developing a performance report to track and evidence timely transfer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children will experience more timely and effective intervention because their plans are not being stalled by transfer delays.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and implement improved protocols for communication to partner agencies involved with children by March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better cross partner communication at transfer points and case transition

OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 8

The pace of progression in the development of Non-familial Abuse and Exploitation

(Responsible Officer – Karen Graham, Interim Head of Children and Families)

What do we need to improve?

Children at risk from non-familial abuse or exploitation are not always supported well enough in order to reduce risk. The development of a hub model to improve children's experiences is beginning to help the local authority gain a better understanding of its local problem profile. However, services across the partnership are still disjointed. There is a lack of effective integration between children's services and the police in the response to children who go missing.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A phase 2 scope (Jan – April 2021) of the Exploitation Hub, has been completed. This sets out the staffing/structural changes in this period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people at risk of exploitation are receiving a more dedicated service, from appropriate staffing expertise.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-day CSE training is now in place for practitioners and managers. This is a rolling course. Staff have been booked onto the DSPP Prevent training courses in January, with further courses to be identified by March 2021 National Referral Mechanism (NRM) training is being offered to practitioners in January. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children at risk of non-familial abuse and exploitation will receive coordinated support from consistent members of the Hub - this will have a positive impact on their safety and wellbeing. Staff will have a well-developed understanding of the complexities of exploitation, feel confident and well trained. Evidenced through staff questionnaire quarter 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have developed an Exploitation Dashboard and heatmap (mapping geographical areas). Return interviews implemented as standard routine for all missing to better understand the support needs by March 2021 Evaluate the Exploitation Hub to identify areas of pressure and improvements by March 2021 	<p>January 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 new cases through Exploitation Hub 38 children reported missing 38 children offered return interview 30 Return interviews undertaken

Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A draft Exploitation Strategy has been completed. The draft is out for consultation week commencing 4th January with the aim of having the Strategy signed off by the DSPP at the end of January. • A draft TOR for a new multi-agency high risk exploitation (CSE/CCE) panel has been written in draft by DCI Dez Lambert, Chair of the Exploitation Sub-Group. New Exploitation Meeting by February 2021. • Our partnership bid for support under the TCE Tackling Child Exploitation programme has been successful, which will provide 7 days of expert consultation into transition to adulthood for young people in January/February. • Between 1st and 14th February, the Police will lead a County Lines Intensification Week. During this week a pilot on one aspect of Police and Social Care joint working will be undertaken. The evaluation of this small pilot will be used to develop the service further. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people at risk of all forms of exploitation will receive a coordinated multi-agency response that reduces risk.
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OFSTED PRIORITY AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT 9

Improve the effectiveness of Supervision, Quality Assurance and Senior Management Oversight

(Responsible Officer – Nicola Hale, Head of Safeguarding, Practice & Quality Assurance)

What do we need to improve?

Social work supervision is variable in quality and impact. It is too frequently descriptive, task-focused, not reflective, lacking in depth and not directive enough to help social workers to prioritise their work.

The quality assurance and advocacy element that the independent reviewing officer service should bring to the oversight of children's care and progress of plans is largely ineffective in resolving delays.

Our areas of focus	What we have done and plan to do	Our impact and evidence
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to Resource Panel has been chaired by the Acting DCS or Service Director for Social Care since 1st December 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is beginning to provide more rigor around children's placements and develop some consistency/understanding across the SLT.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Head of Safeguarding is leading on a piece of work to strengthen the senior leadership response to serious incidents, process into the DSPP for serious safeguarding cases and referral to the National Safeguarding Panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All senior leaders are beginning to have a better understanding of processes around serious safeguarding incidences. Evidence will be through better, more timely responses and embedding the learning across Children's Services.
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The performance for case supervision within the current measure of one month was 45% in November. Undertake review of approach and measure of supervision by February 2021 Case Supervision to achieve 95% by April 2021 Case Supervision target profile: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70% February 2021 85% March 2021 95% April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where children are at the highest levels of risk and need, practitioners will have more frequent case supervision. This will improve the timeliness of supervision.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Supervision Policy has been revised following consultation with managers and Practitioners Forum. This will be shared during the Improvement Plan workshops with practitioners and managers in January and February 2021. • We have revised the way we record and measure case supervision using the newly implemented Supervision form, meaning that we have more accurate performance data. • Supervision training for managers will form part of the Core Skills for Managers 5-day Program, which will run from February to May 2021. • Second practice week focusing on thematic audits scheduled for March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management oversight and supervision will be evidenced through scheduled supervision auditing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ February [%] ○ March [%] ○ April [%] ○ May [%]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Quality Assurance and Learning Framework completed and shared with managers and IROs February 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to Quality Assurance activities, particularly audits / Independent Reviewing Officer Dispute Resolutions are timely and evidence improvement in the support and protection that children receive.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An audit of complaints was undertaken in November 2020. • Lessons from audit incorporated into staff training • Programme of training/complaints workshops to be completed by April 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in responding to complaints in a timely manner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quarter 2 – 71% ○ Quarter 3 – 75% ○ Quarter 4 – [%]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Liquid Logic, we will be able to evidence more clearly management responses to Dispute Resolution and closing the loop activity on audits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better tracking and reporting of management responses to children's plans where the dispute resolution protocol has been initiated. This includes rigorous tracking of the audit closing the loop activities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of training needs/achieved for Restorative Practice • Partners commit to Restorative Practice from March 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority staff trained – [%] • Partners Trained – [%]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads evaluated based on area of services with target caseloads being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Average per social worker - 18 	<p>December 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stat Neighbours – 18, • West Midlands – 17.9 • National – 17.4 • Average Caseload per Social worker – 24.1

Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define and agree approach for multi-agency audits, Multi Agency Case File Audits (MACFA), to share learning and challenge across partners by March 2021 • MACFA Days planned quarterly, minimum 5 cases • Learning and sharing events/engagement across partners scheduled each quarter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared learning leading to improvements in practice
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