

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN'S SERVICES
IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PHASE 2)
NOVEMBER 2018**

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Ofsted re-inspection of Children's Services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers took place on 6th November to 30th November 2017. The [re-inspection report](#) was published on 29th January 2018 and judged the overall service to be inadequate, with the Care Leaving Service requiring improvement to be good and the Adoption Services judged to be good.

Progress since the previous Ofsted inspection in 2014 was found to be inconsistent, too slow and failed to achieve the wholesale service improvements required for vulnerable children. The re-inspection found widespread and serious weaknesses in some services to safeguard children as well as some critical weaknesses in services to children looked after.

We accept these findings and are committed to improving services for our children and young people. There is much to do and we anticipate that this is likely to be at least a three year improvement journey. Phase 2 of our improvement plan builds on Phase 1 which was put in place immediately following the Ofsted re-inspection. The Phase 1 improvement plan has been progressed and closed down with outstanding actions rolled over into the Phase 2 improvement plan.

The Phase 2 improvement plan continues to embed performance compliance and further develops practice and quality standards. The improvement plan outlines the actions that we will take to address the identified weaknesses and areas for development identified in the Ofsted inspection report. It incorporates the inspection report recommendations and the feedback from the first [Ofsted monitoring visit](#). It is also informed by the [Commissioner's report](#) and attends to the details contained in the Secretary of State's [statutory direction](#), including the Improvement Adviser role provided by Hampshire County Council.

The action that is taken and the progress that is made to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families will be monitored and reviewed by the Children's Improvement Board which is chaired by the Children's Improvement Adviser.

The anticipated timescales for completion of actions will be reviewed regularly given the outcome of the Development Centre for first line managers. The successful implementation of this plan relies on effective and competent first line managers as this tier is critical to achieving and maintaining good standards of social work practice. It is too early to demonstrate the impact of initial progress against actions on improving outcomes. In addition, the plan will be under regular review to ensure that actions are further expanded where it is necessary.

PART TWO: IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PHASE 2) – PRACTICE, PERFORMANCE, PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS

Number Including Ofsted Recommendation	What we want to achieve	Action	Lead	Timeframe
1. PRACTICE				
First Response Service				
1.1 Ofsted Recommendation Number 3 and Ofsted Recommendation Number 7** (only in relation to asylum seeking children)	To refresh and embed clear protocols for assessing children and young people referred to children’s social care ensuring compliance with the revised Working Together (2018) .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consult with safeguarding partners and revise the Assessment Protocol for assessing children, and young people. 	Amanda Andrews	Jan 2019
1.2 Outlined in DfE Direction ToR	To provide an efficient and effective principal point of contact to receive and consider all contacts and referrals regarding concerns about children, young people and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the impact and resilience of the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) particular by improving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening and decision making tools Domestic abuse triage (including the advisability and feasibility of a domestic abuse Family Group Conference offer) Missing children and young people (ELPIS) SWAN Unit Out of hours Emergency Social Work Team (ESWT). 	Amanda Andrews	Mar 2019
Safeguarding Service including Children in Need of Help and Protection, including Children with Disabilities				
1.3 Ofsted Recommendation number 1	To further develop the recently aligned Safeguarding Teams to provide targeted support and intervention for children in need of help and protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that CIN Audit and Review recommendations and remedial actions have been responded to and addressed and the learning embedded into everyday practice. To review service arrangements for conducting CIN Reviews and ensure that allocated social workers are adequately supported by line managers and business support officers. 	Errol Albert	Jun 2018 – Feb 2019

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review processes and pathways on the stepping down of children who no longer meet the threshold for CIN/CP and who would benefit from support from partner agency involvement including community and voluntary services. 		
1.4 Ofsted recommendation number 2	To deliver targeted outreach services to support children and young people to live with their families and prevent them becoming looked after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Children and Teenager Community Help Team (CATCH) and explore the feasibility for developing an enhanced 'Edge of Care' Service. As part of the above, identify a menu of available resources and establish an agreed service approach to support children, young people and their families. Review opportunities for CATCH to develop their offer on reunification and return from care. 	Errol Albert	Mar 2019
1.5	To ensure that children and young people at risk of significant harm are afforded appropriate legal protection through the Public Law Outline when required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To implement the action plan arising from the Public Law Outline thematic review recommendations. 	Errol Albert	Oct 2018 – Jan 2019
Care Management Service (Children in Care Service and Care Leavers)				
1.6 Ofsted Recommendation number 8	To ensure children in care and care leavers are well informed and receive their full rights and entitlements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review and refresh on line information and hard copy materials to provide children in care and care leavers with full details of their rights and entitlements, including advocacy and complaints. To provide all care leavers with full information about a health passport about their health history. 	Richard Nash / CCG	Jul 2018 – Mar 2019
1.7 Ofsted Recommendation Number 4	To ensure care plans appropriately reflect children's diverse needs and individual identities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete a file review of care plans to ascertain the details of practice as part of the Beyond Auditing Programme. Use the findings of the review to develop practice guidance, training and development opportunities. 	Yvette Thomas / Julie Davies	Mar 2019
1.8 Ofsted Recommendation Number 6	To ensure children placed at home with parents are looked after and protected appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To undertake a further review of children placed at home with parents to assure standards of care and compliance with procedures and guidance. 	Paulette Thompson- Omenka	Mar 2019

Child Protection, Independent Reviewing and LADO Service				
1.9 Ofsted Recommendation Number 1 Outlined in DfE Direction ToR	To ensure that Child Protection Advisers and Independent Reviewing Officers strengthen and assure the quality of child protection and care planning practice through robust oversight, challenge, support and escalation where required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review the child protection and independent reviewing service in order to maximise the role and function of available resources to improve outcomes for children and young people. Further embed and refine the child protection and care planning alert and escalation protocols. 	Julie Davies	Dec 2018
Care Services (Fostering, Adoption, Residential and Placements)				
1.10 Ofsted recommendation number 2	To ensure all children in care and care leavers placements meet their assessed needs and are allocated in an efficient and effective manner that delivers value for money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain and further develop robust management of the weekly Children’s Care Planning and Resources Panel to oversee resource allocation, decision making and financial administration for all new placements and any changes to existing placements. Increase the availability of local placements for looked after children. 	Nathan Whitley	Jul 2018 – Mar 2019
2.0 PERFORMANCE				
Practice standards				
2.1 Outlined in DfE Direction ToR	To provide clear practice guidance and tools to ensure that staff are aware of what good practice looks like and model this in their work with children, young people and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop practice guidance and standards that identify the hallmarks of good practice, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case recording standards Direct work and the voice of the child Strengthening Families assessment and planning tools Supervision standards To ensure that the above practice guidance and standards are launched and are the focus of team and service meetings across the service. 	Julie Davies	Jan 2019 - Mar 2019
‘Beyond Auditing’ Quality Assurance Framework				
2.2	To ensure that the Beyond Auditing Team resources are fit for purpose to work alongside staff and model the critical friend role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review staffing in the Beyond Auditing Team and establish the requisite knowledge, skills, experience and values to fulfil the quality assurance role. 	Julie Davies	Complete

<p>2.3 Ofsted recommendation number 5 and recommendation number 9</p> <p>Outlined in DfE Direction ToR</p>	<p>To deliver the 'Beyond Auditing' Quality Assurance Framework and assure the standard of practice and the impact this has on improving outcomes for children, young people and families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To agree the 'Beyond Auditing' programme from September 2018 to April 2019, including a review of previous findings and recommendations, and a number of additional thematic 'deep dives' focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child protection planning ○ Care planning ○ PLO pre-proceedings and Court proceedings 	<p>Julie Davies</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>2.4 Ofsted recommendation 10</p>	<p>To provide regular audit and review feedback to staff and promote continuous learning, development and support opportunities to improve practice across the whole service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver a comprehensive programme of support led by the Principal Social Worker in conjunction with the Beyond Auditing Team, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practice Forums ○ Team and Assistant Team Manager workshops ○ Reflective supervision ○ Action learning sets ○ Coaching and mentoring ○ Practice Champions. 	<p>David Glover-Wright</p>	<p>Mar 2019</p>
<p>Training, Learning and Development</p>				
<p>2.5</p>	<p>To re-launch the Strengthening Families Framework model of approach to ensure consistent strengths based practice with children, young people and their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To re-issue the SFF Practice Guidance to all staff. • To roll out individual team/ service training as and when appropriate. 	<p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Apr 2018 – Mar 2019</p>
<p>2.6</p>	<p>To target and promote the findings and outcomes from the Development Centre Programme to strengthen and address areas for development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To complete the final Development Centre, review overarching findings and complete individual feedback to all Team and Assistant Team Manager. • To review and consolidate the learning from the outcome of all the Development Centre sessions and consult with Development Centre Assessors and agree the offer and next steps. • To convene a joint session with Assessors and Team/Assistant Team Managers to provide feedback and agree next steps. 	<p>Richard Nash</p>	<p>Nov 2018</p>

Performance Framework				
2.8 Ofsted Recommendation Number 9 Outlined in DfE Direction ToR	To ensure that regular and accessible performance data, including compliance, trend and benchmarking information, is reported consistently in a manner that aligns with the quality assurance priorities and supports the overall management and leadership of the service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review and remodel the existing performance framework to streamline the scope, format and cycle of reporting across the service. 	Richard Nash	Nov 2018
3.0 PEOPLE				
Workforce Development & Planning				
3.1	To lead and coordinate the implementation of a Strategic Workforce Development Board that promotes Buckinghamshire as an employer of choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To convene regular Strategic Workforce Development Board meetings to oversee the progress of the workforce priorities and Sub Group activity for : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment & Change Management Retention & Wellbeing Training, learning & development. 	Rebecca Ellis	Complete
Recruitment and Change Management				
3.2	To launch an external recruitment campaign to attract skilled and permanent social work staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop an social worker recruitment campaign, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh & review the online microsite Update communications and branding Revise job descriptions Devise targeted adverts and recruitment campaigns Attend and increase visibility at external job fayres e.g. COMPASS in London & Birmingham Develop in-house recruitment events. 	Rebecca Ellis	Complete
3.3	To reduce over reliance on agency social work staff and build stability in the workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To authorise and robustly review the continuing use of agency social work staff at a senior level. To undertake 1:1 consultations with existing agency staff to promote conversion onto permanent contracts. 	Richard Nash / Rebecca Ellis	Nov 2018

4.0 PARTNERSHIPS

Internal - Business Support

4.1	To ensure that social work teams and services are well supported and enabled to deliver efficient and effective services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review the role, function and capacity of Business Support Services and address the findings and recommended actions. 	Mark Green / Clare Brown	Apr 2019
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PART THREE: APPENDICES

Appendix A - Ofsted Re-Inspection Report (29th January 2018) Recommendations

The improvement plan incorporates the findings from the Ofsted inspection and includes the ten recommendations outlined below:

1. Take immediate action to improve the quality of management oversight and decision-making at all levels to make sure that children's plans are properly progressed. Ensure that management interventions, including escalations and alerts by child protection chairs and independent reviewing officers, are clearly recorded on children's files and that these actions are followed through.
2. Ensure that appropriate support is in place to meet the needs of children when child protection plans end and also when children return home from care.
3. Improve the quality of assessment and planning to ensure that risk is identified and responded to promptly, especially when risks escalate. Ensure that assessments and plans identify the unique needs and experience of each individual child, particularly when they are part of a large family of brothers and sisters.
4. Ensure that care plans for children reflect their diverse needs and individual identities, and are realistic about achieving change.
5. Ensure that all written records are clear and up to date, and accurately identify the circumstances of children and their families.
6. Take immediate action to ensure that monitoring and visiting arrangements to all children looked after in placements with parents are sufficiently robust to ensure their safety and progress until these arrangements are formally resolved.
7. Review the procedures for accommodating and supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, including those who arrive outside office opening hours, to ensure that their immediate needs and vulnerabilities are appropriately assessed.
8. Ensure that all care leavers have full information about their health histories and what they can expect during their time in care and on leaving care, including information about advocacy and complaints.
9. Apply an appropriate audit tool to ensure that qualitative analysis, alongside quantitative compliance auditing, measures effectively the improvements, impact and outcomes for children.
10. Ensure that all staff receive appropriate training, including mandatory training, in order to improve their key skills and to keep them up to date in their knowledge and practice.

APPENDIX B – SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION STATUTORY DIRECTION 12TH JULY 2018

Improvement Advisers Terms of Reference – July 2018

1. Buckinghamshire County Council (“the Council”) has failed systemically and persistently in its delivery of children’s social care services. The 2018 Ofsted report found the service to be ‘inadequate’ overall and for all key judgements.
2. Hampshire County Council is expected to support the Council’s improvement programme on those areas of practice that Ofsted has judged to be inadequate. It shall in particular:
 - a. Chair Buckinghamshire’s Children’s Services Improvement Board (‘the Improvement Board’);
 - b. Ensure that the Council:
 - Continues the implementation of a robust improvement plan which spans children’s social care services, and includes clear and specific actions that reflect the journey of the child and which address all recommendations made in the Ofsted report so as to improve the quality of services for children;
 - Implements a revised early help offer that links more closely with social care activity and an improved multi-agency safeguarding hub;
 - Invests specifically in leadership and management development for the senior leadership team and team managers;
 - Continues to embed a new organisational culture that supports social work practice;
 - Creates an effective performance and audit framework;
 - Reviews the role and impact of child protection conference chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers; and
 - Develops a fully-realised transformation plan that sets out a vision for how the service will deliver high-quality social work and related services.
 - c. Provide leadership, support and practice advice in line with priorities agreed with the Council and set out in the Commissioner’s report and areas of weakness identified by the Ofsted report;
 - d. Provide where appropriate direction, monitoring, and coaching to the children’s services senior team to secure the necessary improvements and to build on their capabilities; and
 - e. Provide regular reports to the Department for Education that assess improvements in Buckinghamshire by reference to the Ofsted report. These reports may cover but are not exclusive to practice; performance; culture; leadership, management and governance; management oversight; early help; and local multi-agency arrangements.
3. Agree to review support arrangements with DfE 12 months after the date of the Direction.