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## Report to the Children's Select Committee

<b>Title:</b>	Ofsted Improvement Plan Phase 2
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### Purpose of Agenda Item

*The purpose of this report is to (a) highlight the key activities that were completed as part of the initial high level action plan, and (b) share the Ofsted Improvement Plan – phase 2, following its recent introduction.*

### Background

1. In response to the Ofsted re-inspection in November 2017, and their subsequent report published in January 2018, a high level action plan was developed and a significant amount of immediate remedial action was taken to establish a firm base for improvement within the service.
2. The service has been extremely fortunate to have recruited an experienced, competent Senior Management Team (SMT) with a proven track record. This team has now been together for six months and although it continues to identify some examples of poor practice, it is also working hard to influence the way our staff engage with children and young people to improve their outcomes.
3. In delivering the initial high level plan, SMT has found that in some teams there has been insufficient operational management capability to sustain and embed the improvement activity. This is an important finding as the service is in a stronger position to make the required improvements as it has a much more accurate and well-informed understanding of the barriers to sustaining positive change and the areas that require further attention.

## Key achievement against initial High Level Action Plan

### Development Centre Programme

4. The Development Centre Programme was developed in response to the Ofsted re-inspection report (January 2018) findings which identified significant concerns about the quality of management oversight and decision-making. Strengthening these two elements remains a key driver at the centre of all the on-going improvement activity.
5. Effective and competent first line management tiers of Team and Assistant Team Managers are critical to achieving and maintaining a good standard of social work practice and delivering improved outcomes for children. Collectively, this cohort of managers is central to the assessment, planning, support, intervention and review functions for children, young people and their families known to the service.
6. The Senior Management Team is addressing the outcomes of the development centre.
7. Personal Development Planning sessions are being offered to agree the bespoke training, learning and development offer with this tier of managers.

### Children in Need (CIN) Audit and Review

8. In February 2018, Children's Services began an audit and review of a high proportion of open Children in Need cases. The audit and review have provided an opportunity to evaluate social work practice, through scrutinising electronic case records and consulting with allocated staff, to reach a professional judgement about the overall standard of practice and the child's safety and well-being.
9. Whilst there remains a concerning cohort of cases that have been judged to be 'Inadequate', the majority have been judged to be 'Requires Improvement' with a small cohort of cases judged to be 'Good'.
10. The Senior Management Team is addressing the outcomes of these audits both in supervision with their direct reports and through the quality assurance framework. To assure the quality of future practice standards in implementing audit findings, it is proposed that an unannounced spot checks will take place regularly.

### Beyond Auditing

11. The Ofsted re-inspection report (January 2018) includes recommendation number nine which states that Children's Services should:
12. "Apply an appropriate audit tool to ensure that qualitative analysis, alongside quantitative compliance auditing, measures effectively the improvements, impact and outcomes for children."

13. The 'Beyond Auditing' pilot programme was subsequently launched at the end of April 2018 as part of the post-inspection activity to improve qualitative analysis and measure improvements, impact and outcomes for children. The 'Beyond Auditing' Quality Assurance Framework and programme of activity aims to promote and embed practice evaluation and assure the quality of practice as part of business as usual. The 'Beyond Auditing' Team work in collaboration with the allocated social worker and team/assistant team managers in 'real time' to review a number of different elements, analyse the quality of practice and measure improvements over time. The process includes consultation, audit review and observation activities to connect the outcome and findings with active feedback, learning and change by increasing the level of insight about identified strengths and areas for improvement. The Principal Social Worker and 'Beyond Auditing' Team provide the necessary feedback, learning and development support to individual social workers and team/assistant team managers to address the identified recommendations and support the required learning and development that has been identified.
14. As with the CIN audits, there is a small number of cases judged to be 'Good', the audit evidence shows that the general standard of practice is still not consistently good.
15. It is important to note that there is a number of 'legacy' cases which are being addressed and these cases require robust management oversight to ensure that the audit feedback is acted upon.
16. Having analysed the combined findings to identify the most common themes and issues, a practice guidance tool has been created to assist social workers in their roles.

#### Public Law Outline Review (Court work)

17. As part of the post-inspection improvement programme, a thematic review has been completed in respect of Public Law Outline (PLO) practice. This focuses on several practice concerns highlighted in the Ofsted re-inspection report (January 2018):
  - a. Widespread and serious weaknesses in some safeguarding services.
  - b. Critical weaknesses spanning the children protection and court work teams.
  - c. Risks not being recognised and weak managerial oversight being found at all levels.
18. The review provides a comprehensive analysis of pre-proceedings and court practice. The review includes input from social work managers and practitioners as well as legal service and takes into account available performance data and legal spend.
19. Based on the findings of the thematic review, the report sets out a number of recommended actions, which the service is in the process of implementing. Progress against this action plan will be monitored by the Children's Improvement Board.

## Placement at Home with Parents Arrangements

20. The Ofsted re-inspection report (January 2018) raised concerns in relation to children subject to Care Orders who are placed at home with parents. These arrangements are part of the legal framework set out in Regulations 15 to 20 of the 'Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulation 2010' which govern practice and decision making regarding the return of children, who are the subject of Interim Care Orders or Care Orders, to the care of their families.
21. Since the last update presented to Cabinet, all children currently subject to these arrangements have now been reviewed by the service. The main impact of the intervention to date has been to consider all arrangements, identify weak areas of practice regarding individual children and young people in order to strengthen the management overview and decision making to make these arrangements safe. This has resulted in some children and young people requiring remedial action to address deficits in their care planning. In a small number of instances, evidence of poor practice and non-compliance with agreed plans has resulted in escalation and direct intervention, including a return to court where necessary.
22. To assure the quality of future practice standards regarding children placed at home, there will be six monthly unannounced spot check. This activity will include a review of the child's records and case discussions with the allocated Social Workers, Team Managers and Independent Reviewing Officers, as necessary and appropriate.

### **Ofsted Improvement Plan – Phase 2**

23. A phase 2 improvement plan has been produced and is attached to this report. It expands on the actions included within the initial high level action plan and the findings, as well as what the service has discovered in recent months. The plan concentrates heavily on the impact that first line managers need to have in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. This plan is a live document and will be under regular review to ensure that actions are further expanded where it is necessary.

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## **Background Papers**

Appendix 1: Ofsted Improvement Plan - Phase 2.

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