



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 7 November 2024

6.00 pm

Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Democratic Services: Paige Starkey 01952 380110

Media Enquiries: Corporate Communications 01952 382406

Committee Members: Councillors J Jones (Chair), S P Burrell, C Chikandamina, P Davis, A R H England, A S Jhawar, L Parker, K Tonks, J Urey
Co-optees S Fikeis and C Morgan

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To receive an update on the outcome and actions arising from the July 2024 Ofsted inspection of Children's Services.

7.0 School Attendance

Verbal Report

To receive an update on school attendance and absenteeism for the preceding academic year.

8.0 Chair's Update

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CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 6.00 pm in Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

Present: Councillors J Jones (Chair), Z Hannington, A S Jhawar, K Tonks, J Urey and O Vickers.

In Attendance: K Burgess (Fostering, Adoption and Performance Service Delivery Manager), D Knibbs (Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support), P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)) D Thomas-White (Lead Lawyer: Children & Adults) and S Yarnall (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

Apologies: Councillors L Powers and L Parker
Co-Optees: S Fikeis and C Morgan

CYP24 Declarations of Interest

None.

CYP25 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CYP26 Recruitment in Fostering

The Committee received a presentation from the Director: Children's Safeguarding and Family Support and the Service Delivery Manager for Fostering, Adoption and Performance on the Council's approach to Foster Carer recruitment and retention.

The recruitment and retention of Foster Carers was a continued challenge for local authorities across the country and at the time of the meeting an estimated 7,200 foster families would be needed over the next 12 months. Since 2019, the number of mainstream local authority households had fallen by 11% and the number of kinship foster care households had increased by 21%.

Local authorities had recently experienced a reduction in approved Foster Carers, however the Council's Fostering Service had performed above most statistical neighbours in the number of fostering household applications completed and approved for 2022/23. At the time of the meeting, there were 173 approved foster care households and 183 children placed with carers. In the last year, the Council



had received 25 applications for prospective fostering households compared to neighbouring authorities such as Dudley and Walsall who had received a lower number of applications. Since April 2023, a total of 37 teenagers had come into care with 21 placed in internal fostering, 9 placed in external fostering and 7 in residential placements.

Members were informed that the key priorities for the Council in relation to its fostering service was to increase foster carer capacity by focusing on recruitment and retention to enable more Telford and Wrekin children who are looked after to stay local. The Council would also be working to maximise utilisation of capacity to prevent external and residential placements where possible and support its carers through development of skills and resilience.

As part of its recruitment and retention aims, Members were advised that the Council would continue its efforts to recruit the right carers, at the right time, in the right place to meet its sufficiency needs. The Council was also keen to deliver the right support for its foster carers through continuous coproduction and ensure that those foster carers who are recruited reflect the culture and diversity of cared for children. The Council had commenced its Foster Carer Sufficiency Strategy last year to exceed targets but also to manage current foster carers to avoid placement breakdowns and to continue to support children who have significant or additional needs.

The Service Delivery Manager for Fostering, Adoption and Performance informed Members that between April 2023 – March 2024 as part of its ongoing recruitment activity the Council had delivered 6 recruitment campaigns delivered via diverse mediums including paid search engine marketing, social media led generation and retargeting. The Council had also hosted 5 recruitment events alongside regular drop-in events and facilitated numerous advertising initiatives including a fostering flyer distributed to all borough households. The Foster Carer Fortnight and Annual Conference was also held to thank carers for their efforts and to enable the Fostering Team to consult the current cohort on how the service can further improve their experience as a foster carer.

In April 2024, the Council would be launching a new marketing campaign to increase awareness and available opportunities to become a foster carer with Telford Fostering, aiming to increase the annual number of applications and approved carers. Some of the key activities as part of the new marketing campaign will include advertising on Council assets such as electronic boards, radio advertisement and social media.

Members were advised that part of the Council's approach to retaining its foster carers was focused on providing continued support and development. The Foster Carer Fortnight is a forum that provides activities for children, celebrates carers and delivers regular learning and development sessions. A new provider had been commissioned to deliver specific training based on current needs of children that



carers required further support on such as complex childhood trauma and self-harm. The Fostering Service also delivered numerous support groups for carers including the fostering circle, walk and talks and men who foster.

The Service Delivery Manager for Fostering, Adoption and Performance advised that the Fostering Service had co-produced a new foster carer support model with carers to create informal networks with peers which will be distributed across 13 localities with support from fostering social workers. In September 2023, a No Detriment Policy was introduced to support delivery of kinship strategy recommendations which has seen an increase in carers wanting to take our special guardianship orders (SGOs) with a total of 33 SGOs in the last year.

Members were also informed that an upgraded learning and development offer would be launched for 2024/25 which would include topical courses such as online safety and occupational therapy. The Fostering Service would also be undertaking Dyadic Development Psychotherapy training to enable them to support carers with providing care for children with developmental trauma.

Looking ahead for 2024/25, the Fostering Service would be aiming to exceed recruitment targets and increase placement choice for children and young people to enable them to enter homes that are best aligned to their needs. The service would also be working to increase the number of children in placed care with family and friends and boost its support offer for SGO carers to increase the number of children and young people under existing SGOs.

Following the presentation, Members posed a number of questions:

It has been clear to see that a lot of work had been done to increase awareness of the Fostering Service, however not everyone listens to the radio, uses social media or reads the news, therefore the use of billboards would be beneficial to attract interest. Did the Council consider using marketing to advertise key facts i.e. the number of children or young people who need to be fostered?

The Director: Children's Safeguarding and Family Support thanked Members for their feedback and advised that the service had been working with the Council's internal Communications Team on the new marketing scheme which included looking at other local authorities to see what marketing methods they currently use. The Director: Children's Safeguarding and Family Support advised that feedback provided by Members would be taken into consideration to help shape the marketing scheme and ensure all methods were targeted not just social media.

The Service Delivery Manager for Fostering, Adoption and Performance also advised Members that the Council were also working with a candid platform tool to support with research into the best marketing platforms.



What made Telford Fostering competitive compared to private fostering companies?

The Director: Children's Safeguarding and Family Support confirmed that part of the Council's approach is to use feedback and experiences of Foster Carers to continue to improve the current offer and ensure it remains competitive.

Did the Council look at referral schemes with regards to monetary referrals?

The Service Delivery Manager for Fostering, Adoption and Performance advised Members that for a number of years the Council had offered financial reward to foster carers referred and approved through various schemes.

What were the main issues with retention of Foster Carers?

The Service Delivery Manager for Fostering, Adoption and Performance confirmed that the Fostering Team regularly monitor carers exiting the programme through exit interviews to assist in obtaining feedback from carers to further improve and enhance the current offer. Members were advised that main carers who leave the service is a result of approved SGOs or retirement due to age.

Town and Parish Councils run regular events for residents. Could the Fostering Service have a stall at future events to publicise the foster carer offer?

The Service Delivery Manager for Fostering, Adoption and Performance advised that the Team recently attended an event at Newport Town Council and currently hold pop-up stall events across the borough, however would consider contacting other Town and Parish Councils to showcase at additional events.

CYP27 Work Programme

The Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny) presented the updated work programme to the Committee. As this was the last meeting of the municipal year, Members were informed that the work programme was currently being reviewed and Members had been invited to submit suggestions for the 2024/25 municipal year as part of this process.

CYP28 Chair's Update

None.

The meeting ended at 6.41 pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday 7 November 2024



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Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 7 November 2024

Terms of Reference 2024 / 2025

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Zona Hannington - Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services
Lead Director:	Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
Report Author:	Paige Starkey - Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 380110 Email: Paige.Starkey@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 7 November 2024

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee:

- 1.1 Review and agree the Terms of Reference set out at Appendix A.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To set out the Terms of Reference for the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee outlined at Appendix A.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Constitution requires that Full Council should agree at its Annual Meeting the Terms of Reference for each of its Committees to enable the Council to efficiently conduct its business.

3.2 At the Annual Meeting of the Council on 23 May 2024, Full Council delegated authority to each Committee to review its own Terms of Reference.

3.3 The Terms of Reference forms part of the Constitution and was approved by Full Council in that context on 3 March 2022.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 For the Committee to review its Terms of Reference.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 There are no alternative options arising from this report.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 There are no key risks arising from this report.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 A community-focused, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 There are no Financial Implications arising from this report.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Constitution requires that the Terms of Reference be reviewed on an annual basis. The Council is required to comply with the Constitution. This report demonstrates compliance with this requirement.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 There are no ward implications arising from this report.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 There are no Health, Social and Economic Implications arising from this report.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no Climate Change or Environmental implications arising from this report.

14.0 Background Papers

- 1 Council Constitution

15.0 Appendices

- A Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – Terms of Reference

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal Services	02/08/24	06/08/24	DTW
Finance	02/08/24	02/08/24	TD

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CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

1. The Committee will be made up of elected members from the Scrutiny Assembly, as appointed at Annual Council in line with the political balance of the Council, and co-opted scrutiny members.
2. The Committee may appoint co-opted scrutiny members but they must not exceed the number of elected members.
3. The Parent Governors and the Catholic and Anglican diocesan representatives will have statutory voting rights on education matters as set out in the Local Government Act 2000. Other co-optees will not have voting rights.
4. In addition to the standing co-optees, the Committee may appoint additional co-optees for one-off reviews to supplement the skills, knowledge and experience of the Committee on that particular issue. (Subject to the number of co-opted scrutiny members not exceeding the number of elected members.)
5. The Chair is appointed at the Annual General Meeting of full Council. A Vice-Chair may be appointed by majority decision of the Committee
6. The quorum required for a meeting is 3 elected members.
7. All Committee members should undergo the Corporate Parenting and Child Sexual Exploitation training offered by the Council (including any refresher training).
8. Members of Committee should act as champions for children and young people in the care of the authority and raise awareness of the issues facing children and young people in care with other elected members and members of the public.

Functions

9. The Committee will be the main mechanism by which Scrutiny members will scrutinise and monitor the planning and performance of the Council's services to children and young people and the Council's Corporate Parenting role, including but not limited to the following key areas
 - Early years and child care
 - All aspects of education including schools and academies, school improvement, school/college transport, training and apprenticeships, behaviour and attendance, further education
 - Children's Centres
 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
 - Positive activities for young people
 - Safeguarding and child protection (including exploitation)
 - Corporate Parenting

Appendix A

- Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Fostering and adoption
- Teenage pregnancy
- Supported accommodation and lodgings
- Supported employment for young people
- Youth Services
- Youth Offending Service
- Youth unemployment, NEETs
- Family Support

10. The Committee will set its own work programme. The following points may be taken into consideration when considering the work programme each year:

- areas where significant change is proposed and the potential impacts
- performance in areas where significant change has been implemented;
- areas of financial overspend;
- areas receiving a high level of budgetary commitment;
- areas where there is a high level of user dissatisfaction;
- reports and action plans produced/agreed with external inspectors;
- areas that are key issues for the public or have become a public interest issue covered in the media.

11. The Committee will consider matters referred by the Scrutiny Management Board, and will exercise discretion as to whether a suggestion falls within the remit of the Committee to scrutinise.

Meeting Administration and Proceedings

12. The Committee procedure rules as set out in the Council's Constitution apply to this Committee.

13. The meetings will follow the principles of scrutiny ie no party whip will be applied and a constructive, evidence based approach will be used.

14. If the Chair and Vice Chair (if appointed) are unable to attend a meeting the Members present will elect a Chair for the meeting.

15. All Scrutiny Committee meetings will be held in public, unless exempt information is being considered or discussed. Scrutiny Committees may appoint sub-groups to carry out investigative work as part of a review and these sub-groups may hold informal meetings but will report back their findings to the Scrutiny Committee.

16. The meetings will be administered by Scrutiny Services and Democratic Services. Frequency of meetings will be agreed by the Committee as necessary to carry out the work programme.

17. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Executive Directors, Directors and Service Delivery Managers will attend the Committee at the request of the Chair. Representatives from other organisations may be invited to attend.

Sensitive and Confidential Information

18. From time to time members may become privy to information of a confidential nature. If this happens, members must maintain this confidence. Members are unable to request personal/confidential information from Officers about an individual or family.
19. Information obtained as a result of membership of the Committee is sensitive and should be treated as being confidential by members.

Reporting Arrangements

20. The Chair will provide regular updates to meetings of the Scrutiny Management Board to inform the other Scrutiny Chairs of performance and budget issues relating to the remit of their Committees.
21. The Chair of the Committee, or his/her representative, will provide and present reports and recommendations of the Committee to the Council's Cabinet, Full Council or other relevant organisations when necessary.

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 7 November 2024

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Zona Hannington - Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services
Lead Director:	Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
Report Author:	Paige Starkey - Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 380110 Email: Paige.Starkey@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 7 November 2024

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee:-

- 1.1 Review and agree the work programme as shown at Appendix A.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To set the work programme for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee as outlined in Appendix A.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Work programmes for scrutiny committees are reviewed annually, with a period of consultation taking place in the months running up to a new municipal year. The

Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

public, key stakeholders, and Council officers are asked to put forward scrutiny suggestions for inclusion on the coming year's work programme.

3.2 Following the consultation period, a draft work programme is taken to Scrutiny Management Board and the Scrutiny Assembly for comment before being sent on to individual committees for final approval.

3.3 The Constitution states that scrutiny committees are to set and undertake their own programme of work, meeting as required to deliver the work programme.

3.4 Work programmes can be amended throughout the year if the committee or Scrutiny Assembly deem it necessary.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 For the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee to review and approve the attached draft work programme as shown at Appendix A.

5.0 Alternative Options

5.1 There are no alternative options arising from this report.

6.0 Key Risks

6.1 There are no key risks arising from this report.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 In accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference, the Committee will set its own work programme for the municipal year, will consider matters referred to it by the Scrutiny Management Board, and may make recommendations to Cabinet and Full Council following scrutiny.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 There are no ward implications arising from this report.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 There are no health, social and economic implications arising from this report.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no climate change and environmental implications arising from this report.

14.0 Background Papers

1 Council Constitution

15.0 Appendices

A Work Programme – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal Services	27/08/2024	18/09/2024	DTW
Finance	27/08/2024	10/09/2024	TD

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
7 November 2024 – Committee Meeting					
Terms of Reference	For the Committee to agree the Terms of Reference for 2024/25.	Policy & Governance	A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Committee Agenda Item	Constitutional Function.
	Outcomes:				
Work Programme Page 19	For the Committee to agree the proposed work programme for 2024/25.	Policy & Governance	A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.	Committee Agenda Item	Draft work programme delegated to each scrutiny committee by SMB on 3 September 2024.
	Outcomes:				
Children’s Services Ofsted Inspection Outcome Report and Action Plan	For the Committee to receive an update on the outcome and actions arising from the July 2024 Ofsted inspection of Children’s Services.	Children’s Services	Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.	Committee Agenda Item	New suggestion for 2024/25 work programme.
	Outcomes:				



Children & Young People Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25

School Attendance	For the Committee to receive an update on school attendance and absenteeism for the preceding academic year.	Education & Skills	Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.	Committee Agenda Item	New suggestion for 2024/25 work programme.
Outcomes:					



Children & Young People Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
30 January 2025 – Committee Meeting					
Annual Safeguarding Partnership Report	For the Committee to review the Annual Safeguarding Partnership Report from 2022/23.	Policy & Governance Safeguarding	Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.	Committee Agenda Item	Standing Item.
Outcomes:					
Education Attainment and Outcomes	For the Committee to review the education attainment for the Borough for 2023/24.	Education & Skills	Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.	Committee Agenda Item	Constitutional Function.
Outcomes:					

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25

Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
27 March 2025 – Committee Meeting					
School Admissions and Placements	For the Committee to review the Council’s process for allocating school places across Telford and Wrekin.	Education & Skills	Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.	Committee Agenda Item	New suggestion for 2024/25 work programme.
Outcomes:					



Issue / Topic	Brief Description	Directorate	Council Values/Priorities	Format	Meeting Comments
1 May 2025 – Committee Meeting					
SEND	For the Committee to receive an update on the Council's provision for SEND including identification, placements and funding.	Education & Skills	Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.	Committee Agenda Item	New suggestion received for 2024/25 work programme.
	Outcomes:				

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 7 November 2024

Ofsted Action Plan

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Shirley Reynolds - Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education, Employment & Skills
Lead Director:	Darren Knibbs - Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support, Jo Britton - Executive Director: Children's & Family Services
Service Area:	Children's Safeguarding & Family Support
Report Author:	Mark Tustin – Service Delivery Manager: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support
Officer Contact Details:	Tel: 01952 383813 Email: mark.tustin@telford.gov.uk
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	SMT – 24 th September 2024 Cabinet – 7 th November 2024 Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 7 th November

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee:-

- 1.1 Notes the content of this report.
- 1.2 Notes the final action plan shown at Appendix 2.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To present the findings from the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), which took place between 29th April and 3rd May 2024. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 1.

3.0 Background

3.1 Ofsted in the inspection of children services use the ILACS- (Inspection of Local Authority Children Services) framework across England to inspect children services. An ILACS inspection of children services will usually be undertaken every three years. The ILACS inspection framework was introduced in 2017.

3.2 Prior to the most recent inspection, children services last received an ILACS inspection in January 2020. The outcome of that inspection in 2020 was children's services were judged to be '**Outstanding**'. Telford and Wrekin Council were the only local authority in the region to be judged as outstanding at the time. Prior to the inspection in 2020, children's services were judged by Ofsted in 2016 as '**Requires Improvement to be Good**'.

3.3 **The recent Ofsted inspection between April 29th and 3rd May 2024 concluded that the council's children services had maintained its Outstanding judgment and we continue to be the only outstanding authority in the region.** Additionally, Ofsted have also introduced a new addition to the inspection framework, which includes an additional focus the experience of care leavers and the services they receive.

3.4 At the time of writing, Ofsted's official statistics note that **as of 31st March 2024 of the 151 local authorities inspected only 30 (20%) were judged as outstanding at their most recent inspection.**

3.5 Moreover, Ofsted go on to note that **the number of local authorities who were successful in maintaining their subsequent outstanding judgement was 5.** Their pertinent figures emphasise the success of achieving and maintaining outstanding, but also the scarcity of local authorities achieving such a positive judgement.

3.6 Out of the four judgement areas (The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, The experiences and progress of children in care and The experiences and progress of care leavers) were all judged to be Outstanding. The experiences and progress of care leavers judgement area is a new addition to the inspection framework with the council not previously having a standalone judgement in this area. Ofsted noted that "**Care leavers benefit from an extremely comprehensive and generous local offer... The exceptional local offer includes an enhanced setting-up allowance...These are improvements since**

the last inspection. This is having a significant impact in ensuring that care leavers have priority across a range of services.” The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection were judged to be good. The full report from Ofsted can be found at Appendix 1

- 3.7 There are only two areas under the heading ‘what needs to improve?’: *The management of contacts within Family Connect* and *The consistency of making children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless aware of their rights and entitlements.*
- 3.8 With regards to the management of contacts with Family Connect Ofsted found numerous strengths with the service including, how thresholds are understood and applied correctly, where there are concerns involving risk of exploitation they are screened promptly and support and advice from CATE team is used to inform analysis, consistent approaches to information sharing mean prompt responses to children exposed to domestic abuse are proportionate and ensure their well-being and safety.
- 3.9 Ofsted identified some contacts are closed and then reopened to be reviewed, when the necessary information is received to allow for informed decisions to be made. The service is exploring options around how contacts can be managed moving forward, with further detail provided in the action plan at Appendix 2.
- 3.10 In relation to the consistency of making children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless aware of their rights and entitlements, work is underway. A senior lead within the service has been appointed to lead on this aspect of work. Children when presenting in such situations are made aware of the option to be accommodated but the process will be refined so they understand this immediately at the point of this being an option and there is age-appropriate literature to help inform them. Further detail of this can be found in the action plan in Appendix 2.
- 3.11 As an authority we are required to submit an action plan to Ofsted, responding to the findings in the inspection report within 70 working days of receiving the said report.
- 3.12 The overarching themes of the report are wholly positive and are reflected in the totality of the Ofsted report and final grading of outstanding. This is testament to the continued hard work and support that has taken place. The report recognises numerous strengths including **“children benefit from an experienced team of specialist exploitation workers in the CATE team who provide an exceptional service for children when they are exploited or at risk of exploitation.”**
- 3.13 Ofsted noted that children and families continue to experience exceptional social work practice, noting **“Children’s care plans are aspirational. They are thorough**

and address children’s specific needs. They are independently reviewed, with the relevant people in children’s lives contributing to the meeting.” It was recognised that innovative social work practice means that more children benefit from early help with family hubs. Participation of children and families was acknowledged as a real strength of the service, helping to develop services. The report also made reference to the fact that senior leaders at Telford and Wrekin Council continue to implement ambitious plans for children and young people. The report also references the political and financial support that has been provided, which has been critical to the successes achieved. Ofsted noted the **“strong commitment of the corporate leadership is evident in the political and financial support for children’s services in Telford and Wrekin.”** Also recognising that **“Senior leaders work tirelessly with partners to improve children’s experiences.”** The full report from Ofsted can be found at Appendix 1.

- 3.14 It is reflected in the report that children services within Telford and Wrekin Council have been a priority, and this is evident in the leadership, financial investment and political support of members. Children’s services continue to be a priority area and appropriate financial investment, planning and support has continued to be made available to help support and deliver outcomes for the children and young people of Telford and Wrekin. Ofsted specifically note **“The strong commitment of the corporate leadership is evident in the political and financial support of children’s services in Telford and Wrekin. The impact of the stability of the strategic quartet in the leader of the council, the lead member for children, the chief executive and the director of children’s services is impressive as they work together to make sure that children are the priority across the whole council.”**

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 Following the ILACS inspection the Council must submit an action plan to Ofsted outlining how it will address the areas it has identified that the council can improve on. The overall findings of the report judged the Council’s children services to be outstanding.
- 4.2 The final report, attached at Appendix 1 highlights that children services can improve on the management of contacts within Family Connect. The report also documented that children services should be more consistent in making children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless aware of their rights and entitlements.
- 4.3 The action plan attached at Appendix 2 provides further detail of actions to be taken to address the areas of improvement highlighted above by Ofsted.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 There are no alternative options, local authorities are mandated by the ILACS inspection to provide an action plan in response to the formal recommendations made by Ofsted.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 The Ofsted report judges Telford and Wrekin children's services to be outstanding, which provides assurances that the Council follows best practice within its children services teams. The development and implementation of an action plan will further strengthen the delivery of children services. Were an action plan not to be developed this would hinder the ability of the council to continue to improve and refine the services it delivers to children and young people and also would not be compliant with requirements of Ofsted.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 The Ofsted report and subsequent action plan aligns with the council's priorities. Particularly when considering 'Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community', All neighbourhoods are a great place to live.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications identified from the recommendations in this report at this time. Actions arising from the Ofsted inspection will be met within existing resources/budgets. There has been ongoing and significant financial investment from the council, demonstrating the priority and value of the service in helping to deliver positive outcomes for the children and young people. The latest investment into children's Safeguarding was a net ongoing investment of £7.6m in 2024/25 as part of the 2024/25- 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The Council has a number of Statutory duties to ensure it protects and supports the children and young people residing within the Borough. The ILACS framework of inspection is a method of benchmarking the quality of care provided to children and young people in England; the overall assessment of Outstanding provides assurance that the Council follows best practice within its children services teams. There is a requirement, following an ILACS inspection, to evidence that steps are being taken to address any recommendations and the proposed action plan will enable the authority to do this.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The action plan will have a borough-wide impact for all children and young people living within Telford and Wrekin.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 There are no negative health, social or economic implications arising from the action plan. The Ofsted report judges the council's children's services to be outstanding. Children's services will continue to support children's health, educational and holistic needs through its statutory services, which include supporting the delivery of health assessments for children who are cared for by the local authority. Personal education plans for those children who are cared for by the local authority will continue to be delivered on a termly basis.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 Children's services will continue to work in partnership with children, young people and their parents, carers and wider family in a respectful, sensitive and transparent way. Recognising that individuals each have their own needs and by working with people in a collaborative way is more likely to lead to improved outcomes for children and families. There are no negative implications for equality and diversity because of the action plan.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no climate change or environmental implications because of the action plan.

14.0 Background Papers

None

15.0 Appendices

- 1 Ofsted – Inspection of Telford and Wrekin local authority children's services
- 2 Ofsted Action Plan

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	19/09/2024	24/09/2024	DTW
Director	19/09/2024	25/10/2024	DK
Finance	25/10/2024	25/10/2024	TD

Inspection of Telford and Wrekin local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 29 April to 3 May 2024

Lead inspector: Rebecca Quested, His Majesty's Inspector

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

Children and families in Telford and Wrekin continue to experience exceptional social work practice when they are in care and as care leavers. Innovative social work practice means that many more children are now benefiting from early help within Family Hubs. More children who experience social work intervention are now being supported to live permanently within their family networks without children's services involvement when appropriate. Participation is a real strength and children's and families' involvement is threaded throughout service developments.

Senior leaders at Telford and Wrekin Council have continued to implement ambitious plans which prioritise the needs of children and young people. Political and financial support is crucial to this success. Since the last inspection in 2020, there has been a focus on improving the effectiveness of plans, the recording of management decisions and significant improvement in the use of pre-proceedings to enable more children to remain living safely within kinship care. Senior leaders know there is more to do to improve the management of contacts within Family Connect, the multi-agency safeguarding hub, and to ensure that 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless are consistently made aware of their rights and entitlements to become accommodated by the local authority.

What needs to improve?

- The management of contacts within Family Connect.
- The consistency of making children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless aware of their rights and entitlements.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good

1. The Strengthening Families service makes a positive difference to children's lives. The development of Family Hubs has increased the capacity of the early help service to support children's needs when they are first identified. Partners support detailed and outcome-focused interventions that are proportionate to children's and families' needs. Effective management oversight supports the progression of plans as well as the appropriate escalation of concerns into Family Connect. Strengthening Families workers continue to have a role when required, providing continuity of relationships for children and their families.
2. For the majority of children, the correct thresholds are applied in Family Connect. Initial contacts are mostly processed swiftly. Professional advice provided by senior social workers and decision-making by team managers to Family Connect advisers is not consistently recorded. Contacts are closed and reopened to extend the time period for screening. This means that there is not a timely response to concerns for a small number of children. This also impacts on senior leaders' understanding of the responsiveness of the service in managing contacts.
3. There is inconsistency in the understanding and application of parental consent when professionals call Family Connect for advice. The information is sometimes recorded as a contact before parental consent is sought.
4. A consistent approach to information-sharing within Family Connect means that responses to children who have been exposed to risks of domestic abuse are prompt and proportionate to ensure their well-being and safety. Agreement for the police to triage domestic abuse concerns makes sure that children's services are now able to focus their responses where they are most needed.
5. When concerns about children involve risk of exploitation, they are screened promptly. Consultation offered by the Children Abused Through Exploitation (CATE) team provides additional advice to inform analysis.
6. Social workers in Family Connect make effective use of family histories to understand current concerns and risks to children. This is further enhanced by the information gathered from the right partners to understand children's circumstances. Social workers' analysis of risks and needs leads to well-timed recommendations and actions that reduce risks to children.

7. Strategy meetings are timely, with consistently strong engagement from partners. Meetings are effective in using all the information from partners and family history to reflect the risks to children, including those within the wider family. Actions are clear and focus on immediate protection, with children being seen on the same day as the strategy meeting. Child protection investigations ensure that sufficient information is gathered to understand the concerns and to make appropriate decisions for next steps. Most enquiries consider interim safety planning for children, with clear management oversight for next steps.
8. Children and families benefit from comprehensive assessments. Managers provide strong oversight, with clear direction about assessment expectations and timescales. Social workers are skilled in building relationships quickly with children and families, focusing on their strengths, and are sensitive to the cultural and religious needs of children. Assessments include an understanding of family history and the current concerns and risks. They are appropriately focused on children's needs and how the family network can provide support.
9. A dedicated Parenting Assessment team ensures that parents benefit from prompt and detailed assessment which thoroughly analyses their parenting ability and capacity to change. This means that early permanence can be secured for children within their family network when assessments take place pre-birth, within the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline and proceedings.
10. Children's plans, whether they need help or protection, consider children's needs and are effective and clear as to the actions required to address concerns or risk. Social workers use targeted services that help to support parents in reducing risks to children. Plans are regularly reviewed in well-attended multi-agency meetings. Actions are child-focused, which helps to ensure that positive change is achieved within a meaningful timescale.
11. Multidisciplinary working improves children's experiences. Adult practitioners provide targeted work with parents to support them to meet their children's needs. Social workers benefit from consultation about their children with psychologists, which enables them to consider wider issues when working with families.
12. Children and families involved in pre-proceedings benefit from strong multi-agency support. This area of practice has improved since the last visit in 2022. Children benefit from the creative use of financial support accessible through the Family Networks pilot. Leaders routinely track and review pre-proceedings so that social workers and managers understand what needs to happen and when. This work is highly effective in maintaining children within their families and ensures timely completion of care proceedings when they are issued.
13. Children benefit from an experienced team of specialist exploitation workers in the CATE team who provide an exceptional service for children when they are exploited or at risk of exploitation. They skilfully build relationships with children

and their families, which supports the reduction of risk and improvement in children's experiences. This includes disruption activity and referral to the National Referral Mechanism. An innovative and effective multi-agency transition panel plans services and interventions for children into adulthood.

14. The Family Solutions team continues to provide a comprehensive range of interventions which skilfully support children to remain safely at home and to leave care to return to their family. This includes the effective use of family group conferences. Workers are tenacious, creative and highly successful in diverting children from entering care or supporting them to return to kinship care.
15. Social workers understand the impact neglect has on children's lives. There is an improved focus on exploring parental capacity for sustainable change. The use of a new social work practice model is providing a framework for timelier and tailored coordinated interventions in response to neglect.
16. Children benefit from an effective response from the out-of-hours team. Information-sharing with partners enables social workers to make appropriate decisions about whether children need to be immediately safeguarded.
17. Social workers know their children well and have developed effective relationships with parents, which enables them to understand concerns and what needs to change. Children are visited regularly and social workers use games, play and conversation to build trusting relationships.
18. Social workers understand disabled children's needs well. They are creative in how they seek children's views, using a variety of tools to support children's communication needs. Comprehensive assessments consider the family's wide-ranging needs, and packages of support ensure that the needs of both disabled children and their brothers and sisters are met.
19. Children who live in private fostering arrangements receive excellent support. They benefit from appropriate oversight and regular visits, which makes sure that they feel safe and that their wishes are heard.
20. The identification and support for children who are young carers is underdeveloped. Consequently, leaders cannot be assured that young carers are consistently identified, their needs are assessed, and appropriate help is provided.
21. Children who are aged 16 and 17 benefit from a joint assessment by children's social care and housing when they present as homeless. This means that children's wide-ranging needs are considered. Children are provided with emergency accommodation by housing while assessments are undertaken. However, children are not consistently made aware of their rights and entitlements, including to be accommodated. As a result, vulnerable children are not always clear on the options available to them when they are homeless. This was identified as a shortfall during the last inspection in 2020.

22. Children who are missing from education or are electively home educated are identified promptly and appropriate steps are taken to ensure their safety through well-established multi-agency cooperation. This is mostly effective in pinpointing underlying causes that become the focus for support to mitigate risk.

The experiences and progress of children in care: outstanding

23. Children come into care at a time that is right for them. When possible, children remain living within kinship care, which supports children to maintain their identity. When this is not possible, alternative permanence options are fully considered. There is clear management oversight at the point of decision-making which enables children, should they access their records, to understand how such an important decision in their life has been made.

24. Children's care plans are aspirational. They are thorough and address children's specific needs. They are independently reviewed, with the relevant people in children's lives contributing to the meeting.

25. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) carry out visits to children before meetings. Children attend their own reviews to contribute their wishes and feelings when they wish to. Reviews are thoughtfully written to the child. IROs provide oversight of plans between reviews to make sure that children's plans continue to progress.

26. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive exceptionally high-quality care. This includes a rapid response at the earliest point of identification, with a well-coordinated offer of immediate support and decisions to accommodate made promptly. Positive relationships with the right partnerships mean that children's wide-ranging needs are well met, including access to legal advice. As a result, children are settled and supported and do not go missing.

27. Disabled children in care benefit from living in homes that meet their needs. Social workers are highly skilled in creative direct work that is individual to the child. This work ensures that children are supported to have a voice about their care experience and progress.

28. When children live away from Telford and Wrekin, this is based on their assessed needs and they continue to receive the same level of service had they been closer to home.

29. Children in care benefit from dedicated social workers who know them well and understand their needs, wishes and feelings. Children are visited according to their needs. Records are skilfully written to them and reflect the positive relationships children have with workers and carers. Children are encouraged to engage in positive hobbies and activities which support their interests and development.

30. Family time is promoted and there are clear arrangements for children to spend time with those who matter to them. Social workers and IROs establish children's views, wishes and anxieties about how well family time is progressing and adapt it to meet their needs.
31. Children in care who met inspectors were extremely positive about participation opportunities. They enjoy the help they receive from the virtual school, which provides them with a wide range of participation activities and numerous social events. Children said they feel cared about and that the adults in their lives are genuinely proud of them and their achievements.
32. When children go missing from home or from care, they are offered timely return home interviews. There is effective engagement of children by the specialist CATE team in this process, which enables them to explore the push-and-pull factors for children. Through detailed direct work, social workers explore children's feelings about where they want to live. For some children, this has resulted in them moving and incidents of going missing have stopped.
33. Children's emotional and physical health needs are well considered. Children's health assessments and dental appointments are up to date. Telford and Wrekin children's services has a specialist therapeutic team which provides consultation for social workers to identify and provide the appropriate emotional support for children. For some children, their health needs are fulfilled through bespoke independent therapeutic and psychological support.
34. The virtual school is a significant strength in Telford and Wrekin. Highly effective systems and processes are used well to ensure that children in care access quality education. An extensive range of social, educational and cultural opportunities help them to develop their talents and interests and prepare them for later life. Children's views are considered at every stage.
35. Children who return to live with their parents benefit from comprehensive assessments that consider parents' ability to sustain change and meet children's needs in the long term. Consultations take place with the specialist therapeutic team to make sure that the right services are in place to support families. Social workers and IROs maintain strong oversight of children's progress to ensure that they can continue to live safely at home with their parents. Senior leaders have oversight and provide a rationale to support decision-making.
36. When children are living in kinship care through special guardianship orders (SGOs), the assessments are equally thorough. This enables social workers to make sure that the right support is in place for special guardians to be able to meet children's needs.
37. Children in care benefit from living in supportive permanent foster care homes which enable them to thrive both at home and at school or college. Where

children have a plan of long-term fostering, social workers focus on securing permanence for them through matching with foster carers. When children need to move, they and their families are involved in decisions about where they will move to. This supports children's investment in their new home.

38. Children are cared for by foster carers who are appropriately skilled and fully supported to meet their individual needs. The quality of assessments is strong. Foster carers are supported well by consistent supervising social workers and a comprehensive training offer. Fostering panels provide high-level scrutiny and effective decision-making to safeguard children.
39. Young children who live in children's homes benefit from the level of specialist support they need to feel secure and make progress. The planning for these children includes the option for support to help them to live with foster families when it is safe and appropriate to do so.
40. The local authority is part of a regional adoption agency (RAA) - Together 4 Children. The recruitment of prospective adopters is appropriately informed and targeted by the specific needs of children. Adoption panel provides an effective quality assurance process that ensures that children are placed with adopters who are able to meet their lifelong needs. Most children with a plan of adoption benefit from detailed and effective transition plans when they move to live with their adopters.
41. A small number of children with a plan of adoption experience delay due to the time taken to complete prospective adopter assessments and in the decision being taken to search for adopters outside of the RAA. IROs have escalated the latter issue but with limited effect. This means that these children do not move to their permanent families soon enough. The recording and ratification of decision-making to change children's plans away from adoption have been strengthened.
42. Social workers carry out excellent creative, respectful and sensitively compiled life-story work for children with a plan of adoption. This includes later-life letters. These will be valuable for children in the future should they wish to explore their early childhood experiences and will support them to understand how key decisions were made about their lives.
43. The vast majority of children in care in Telford and Wrekin receive safe care which meets their needs. A small number of children live in unregistered supported accommodation. Senior leaders complete risk assessments with a rationale for the placement continuing. Social workers increase the frequency of their visits to ensure children's safety while the registration process is carried out.

The experiences and progress of care leavers: outstanding

44. Care leavers in Telford and Wrekin benefit from timely allocation to their personal advisers (PAs). This enables PAs the opportunity to understand children's stories

and build a relationship with them before they transition into adulthood and leave care services. As a result, many care leavers make positive decisions to maintain their links with the service.

45. A stable workforce in the care leaver service means that many PAs have known care leavers since they were children in care. PAs care about the care leavers they work with and take time to understand them through visits and regularly keeping in touch according to individual needs.
46. PAs are resolute in their efforts to engage vulnerable care leavers. Those care leavers who are parents are supported through regular contact. PAs are persistent in ensuring care leavers' well-being and safety, particularly at times of crisis. Consequently, care leavers who are young parents benefit from strong and trusting relationships.
47. Pathway plans are completed in collaboration with care leavers. Planning for care leavers places a strong emphasis on supporting the ambitions of young people. The pathway plans are comprehensive, written to the care leaver and have a clear thread demonstrating the care leaver offer throughout. Care leavers' views and aspirations are well captured in their plans.
48. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking care leavers are extremely well supported across the range of their needs and circumstances. They live in settings where their cultural and religious needs are met. This means that unaccompanied care leavers are settled, secure and well prepared for adulthood.
49. Disabled care leavers are well supported by their PAs when they transition to adult services at the age of 18. Effective relationships are built with adult services and providers to support the development of their adult support plan. This means that their needs and rights and entitlements as care leavers are promoted.
50. Care leavers are living in suitable accommodation and receive the right level of support that enables them to live independently. PAs work collaboratively with housing and are proactive in supporting care leavers to secure permanent accommodation. Care leavers are matched effectively to accommodation which meets their cultural needs and interests and they are able to make progress with their independence skills. Care leavers said they felt safe in their homes. PAs maintain regular contact with the very small number of care leavers who are in custody.
51. For those care leavers who live in foster care, there are opportunities to remain in 'staying put' arrangements with their foster carers. This provides them with ongoing security and stability.
52. The care leaving service places a positive emphasis on employment, education and training. The Leavers Lounge is at the centre of care leaver provision, supporting their education beyond statutory school age. PAs are ambitious and

support care leavers in trying to achieve their academic or personal aspirations. As a result, care leavers are able to pursue their goals, for example to go to university, to work in specialist areas and to gain apprenticeships. The financial support offer when care leavers go to university is strong, which means that they can focus on their studies.

53. PAs support care leavers effectively to access mental health services when required. Care leavers are encouraged to seek support for their emotional well-being, with PAs supporting them to attend their appointments when appropriate.
54. Care leavers benefit from an extremely comprehensive and generous local offer. The support offer is open to all care leavers up to the age of 25 and the council has made care leaver a protected characteristic. The offer is published online and is available at the touch of a button in any language required as well as a facility for the offer to be read aloud. The exceptional local offer includes an enhanced setting-up allowance which enables them to stay put with their foster carer until the age of 25; council tax exemption extends to 25 years no matter where care leavers live. These are improvements since the last inspection. This is having a significant impact in ensuring that care leavers have priority across a range of services.
55. Care leavers are celebrated individually through the work of their PAs, the HotShots awards and at the annual celebration events. The representatives of the care leavers council have made a real difference to the delivery of services for children in care and care leavers. Care leavers have impressively initiated the development of the care leaver takeover of the service, been involved in co-production of the local offer and have undertaken mental health training to support them in the new role as peer mentors.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: outstanding

56. The strong commitment of the corporate leadership is evident in the political and financial support for children's services in Telford and Wrekin. The impact of the stability of the strategic quartet in the leader of the council, the lead member for children, the chief executive and the director of children's services is impressive as they work together to make sure that children are the priority across the whole council. This has led to considerable investment in children's services, in particular the development of a new social work practice model and the further development of the Strengthening Families teams, who now provide a more comprehensive range of early help services to children and families, resulting in improved experiences for children. This commitment is also reflected in approval by the council of care leaver being a protected characteristic, which is improving opportunities for care leavers.
57. Senior leaders work tirelessly with partners to improve children's experiences. Partnership work with the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support

Service (Cafcass) is a strength and the local authority's involvement in the Family Network Pilot is testament to this. Where there are challenges, senior leaders are actively engaged with partners to ensure that there is progress towards developing a coherent and responsive service. This is especially evident in the ongoing strategic work to support health to improve the quality of child and adolescent mental health services and in the effective work with the police that has reduced the demands of police contacts coming into Family Connect. The impressive response to the child exploitation enquiry has made sure that services for children at risk of exploitation in Telford and Wrekin are now coherent and effective.

58. Corporate parenting is a strength in Telford and Wrekin. Senior leaders take their responsibilities for children seriously and have made considerable progress to make sure that children, care leavers and families influence the development of children's services. Children and care leavers are involved at board and project level in developing the local offer and in shaping services. The engagement with children and families who are subject to child in need and child protection planning has been exceptional and had significant impact on service development, including the work of the Dandelion group in improving families' experiences of child protection conferences.

59. Senior leaders are aware of and are implementing recent changes expected of them following newly published government guidance. Some of these, such as the renewed focus on kinship care, already form part of Telford and Wrekin's sufficiency plans. This is already having a positive impact, with more children remaining in kinship care through special guardianship orders.

60. Leaders in Telford and Wrekin are responsive to increasing and new demands and are innovative and ambitious in their responses. This has included the response to increased numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children coming into care who are now receiving excellent support, both as children in care and as care leavers. The introduction of a new social work model in response to the increasing numbers of children on child protection plans has been exceptionally effective. Consequently, the rate of children on child protection plans has safely halved over the last six months.

61. Senior leaders ensure that children's services continually improve as research-based practice is embedded across the service. The nurturing and development of participatory approaches is a real strength in Telford and Wrekin. This contributes to a culture of effective relational practice for children and families, establishing trusting relationships which support and foster change at an organisational level and in individual practice.

62. Quality assurance systems are well embedded in Telford and Wrekin. Audit activity takes place regularly and social workers value the opportunity to reflect on their practice. Leaders are further developing the richness of audit activity through gaining feedback from families.

63. Staff benefit from a strong learning culture. Social workers have a range of training opportunities available to them, including bite-sized learning, which makes it more accessible. Training opportunities enable social workers to develop new skills which provide them with additional tools to support their work with families as well as supporting their professional development.
64. Social workers are well supported both formally and informally by managers. Supervision takes place regularly and makes sure that children's plans are progressed effectively. Management oversight of work is now consistently evident, with a rationale of decision-making recorded across the services outside of Family Connect.
65. The stability of the experienced workforce creates the perfect environment to benefit children and care leavers. As a result, social workers maintain relationships with children who know them over many years, which contributes to children's feeling of belonging. Staff enjoy working in an environment where senior leaders are visible, and they feel valued.

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Ofsted Action Plan -

Ofsted ILACS May 2024: What needs to improve?

- “The management of contacts within Family Connect”
- “The consistency of making children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless aware of their rights and entitlements”

Ref	Action	Success Measure	Date Due	Status: what is the progress on the action?	Performance: is the action making a difference?
1	Undertake a review of contacts, exploring the current process to identify key themes, patterns and issues to include quality assurance of decisions made.	<p>Contacts are currently expected to be managed and completed within prescribed timescales based on presenting need:</p> <p>Presenting need: - Acute - 1 day - Complex - 2 days - Vulnerable - 3 days</p> <p>QA activity will focus on those going over these timescales and those closed and re-opened for review once further information is gained.</p>	30.08.2024	<p>An audit has been completed. Findings conclude that where the presenting threshold of need is vulnerable, and the family does not respond to Family Connect telephone calls or text messages a letter is sent, and the contact is closed and set for review once contact is made by the family.</p> <p>The same applies if information is requested from another Local Authority regarding family history or where there is an active police investigation and the person of concern has not yet been spoken to the police, so Family Connect do not want to jeopardize a police investigation.</p> <p>Audit found that all case reviews are signed off by a manager or senior social worker and management</p>	Management oversight is evident on case reviews and reasons for contacts closed and re-opened for review are evident.

				oversight recorded on these case reviews.	
2	New process to be introduced in Family Connect, contacts are not to be closed, they are set for review pending receipt of information from the family, or other professionals so that all contacts remain open until the point of a final decision being made.	All contacts to be closed once final decision has been made. Performance data will reflect contacts managed within 1,2,3 days and then those that have remained open pending receipt of additional information. These will be reported on in specific data sets.	04.11.2024	Following audit activity, new process has been scoped. SOP and escalation protocols reviewed to reflect system and process change KPI's and performance reporting update to reflect change of process. Change to go live 04.11.24 with a formal review after 3 months to consider the changes and impact.	Impact will be that contact data will reflect all new contacts and not include those that had previously been set for review, closed and then re-opened.
3	Continued engagement with other Local Authorities, sub-regionally and regionally to focusing on MASH and Front Door activity and service developments.	Practice and processes in Family Connect can be continually reviewed and developed in-line with best practice sub-regionally and regionally	15.12.2024		Continued engagement with best practice and sector lead learning and development.
4	Contact and visit other Local Authorities where inspection has identified strong Front Doors to see if there are further changes that might be beneficial to introduce in Family Connect.	Service will gain understanding of how other LA's manage their contacts and can use this to enhance Family Connect practice.	31.01.2025		Continued engagement with best practice and sector lead learning and development.

5	Re-fresh Partnership Threshold and Consent Training and continue to deliver across the partnership across 2024 and into 2025.	<p>Clarity around application of threshold across the partnership and greater understanding for and evidence that consent has been sought when contacting Family Connect.</p> <p>Success will be measured through numbers of practitioners attending training workshops and through Family Connect Performance Data.</p>	30.06.2025	Workshops have continued across 2024 and will continue to be delivered in 2025.	Continued engagement and attendance and workshops suggest the partnership is benefitting from the training. Attendance data will be monitored and shared with partnerships, so they are able to target cohorts of staff.
6	Appointment of a senior lead to oversee further pathway development for children who are aged 16 and 17 and present as homeless.	All 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless have a clear understanding of the options that are available to them.	30.08.2024	Senior lead is now in post and commenced work with key stakeholders.	Yes – we now have a single overview of activity which is being coordinated by the Senior Lead.
7	Develop of a range of information platforms such as leaflets and QR code that young people can access so they have information about their rights and entitlements and the support that is available to them.	Young people will be supported to make informed decisions based on the range of information available to them in line with their rights and entitlements.	31.10.2024	<p>Leaflet in draft based on current best practice. Plans in place to consult and coproduce the draft with homeless experienced young people.</p> <p>Consulted with Web Services – once content agreed, they will build the young person outward facing webpage as part of second phase development.</p>	

8	Develop an information leaflet for young people outlining their rights and entitlements, co-produced with input from the Dandelions and homelessness experienced young people.	Information will be accessible to young people enabling them to understand their rights and entitlements and where to get help and support.	31.10.2024	Meeting has taken place with the Dandelion Group around language and the how best to present this information to young people. Contact made with homeless experienced young people to arrange to meet w/c 14 October and discuss their experiences and to co-produce the final leaflet.	
9	Refresher Training to be developed and provided in relation to 16 and 17 year old children who present as homeless.	Training to be delivered to practitioners who work with this cohort of children, so they have an understanding of their rights and entitlements and the relevant pathway and responsibilities of services. Service areas will dip sample on a quarterly basis to provide assurances that the pathway is functioning as intended.	31.1.2025		
10	An IRO will be appointed to lead independent and impartial discussions with young people regarding their rights and entitlements regarding their homelessness situation	Further opportunity for young people to access information regards their rights and entitlements from an independent individual.	11.10.2024	Interviews have taken place to recruit to IRO vacancy and appointment has been made. This will support capacity within the team to provide this service to young people. Two IRO's within the service (CC & JP) have been identified to lead this	

	and the options available to them.				
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