

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Ofsted Improvement Plan

**REPORT OF:** Deputy Strategic Director, Children, Adults and Families

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## SUMMARY

This report and action plan provides Members with an overview and progress update in relation areas identified for improvement from inspection activity by Ofsted, which are supporting our objective to become an outstanding children services provider.

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## Purpose of Report

1. This report and attached improvement plan (appendix 1) provide Members with an overview and progress update in relation to the areas identified for development from inspection activity by Ofsted, specifically our focussed visit which took place in September 2021, and Short Inspection which took place in April 2019.

## Background

2. Children's Services, as part of Ofsted's framework for inspecting local authority children services (ILACS), now receive almost annual inspection activity from Ofsted. The findings of our last two inspections have been overwhelmingly positive in relation to the service we are providing to children and families.
3. In our short inspection in 2019 the service was judged an overall Good, with inspectors concluding:

*"Children and families in Gateshead receive a good-quality service. There is good practice within most areas of the service, which has a demonstrably positive impact on improving children and family's circumstances"*

(<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50083971> - page 1)
4. In our latest visit in September 2021, Ofsted found we continue to provide a good service, and that had in fact improved since their previous contact, with the report stating:

*"Continuously strong, ambitious and effective senior leadership has resulted in sustained improvements. The well respected and experienced director of children's services (DCS), together with her senior team, has created a culture where doing the right thing to help children and their families is embedded across teams"*

(<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50171105> - p2)

5. While both inspections were positive about the services we are providing, as a Council we want to be an outstanding Children's Services provider. Both inspections identified a small number of areas where we needed to improve, in order to be judged outstanding next time.
6. We have taken the learning from both inspections and developed the attached action plan (Appendix 1 of this report) which identifies 6 key areas of improvement which the service is currently working on, these are:
  - i. **Improve the quality and focus of written plans to ensure they are specific and targeted to meet the needs of individual children**
  - ii. **Secure access to services for those children in care who live out of the borough**
  - iii. **Improve the quality and impact of supervision and contingency planning for children in need (and ensure consistency for all children)**
  - iv. **Ensure routine inclusion of children and their families' views in audits**
  - v. **Development of contextual safeguarding arrangements**
  - vi. **Further development of domestic abuse provision**
7. For each of the 6 areas of improvement in the action plan, broad improvement themed actions are identified which are supported by detailed operational activities designed to achieve the themed actions. A lead has been identified for each themed action.
8. The Service has already started to implement actions from the plan, and the plan highlights some examples of progress to date. The Services is seeking to complete the actions over the next 12 months.

## **Recommendations**

9. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
  - Receive the report for information
  - Identify any activities they would like more information about
  - Agree to receive a progress update in 6 months

**Contact:** Jon Gaines, Service Manager QA

**Ext 3484**

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## Appendix 1 ILACs – Ofsted Improvement Plan – Feb 2022

Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Other operational Lead	Operational Detailed Actions	Progress update / evidence of impact
<b>REC 1 - Improve the quality and focus of written plans to ensure they are specific and targeted to meet the needs of individual children (to include pathway plans that are co-produced with young people to address all risks, and life-story work to help all children in care understand their histories.)</b>	<b>Establish a social-work led Practice Innovation Group (utilising an action research model) for the theme of ‘Collaborative and Strengths-based planning with children and families. Report to Practice Review Group.</b>	<b>Paige Thomason</b> (Principal Social Worker)	Team Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with consultant social workers and team managers bi-monthly to establish the group and co-op others into the group as required.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Reform templates, guidance, and implementation materials in response to above.</b>	<b>Paige Thomason</b> (Principal Social Worker)	Catherine Hardman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify examples of good practice and develop a practitioner-led group to devise practice guidance which is shared across the service.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Deliver a series of practice shorts based on the above.</b>	<b>Paige Thomason</b> (Principal Social Worker)	Catherine Hardman Chris Hulme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with young people (care leavers/ young ambassadors) to enable co-production and input into any proposed good practice and learning.</li> <li>Devise practice guidance and deliver practice shorts which is informed and co-produced.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Introduce co-production of plans focussing on ambition and risks sessions, so social workers are able to support young people to lead and be inclusive in their plans.</b>	<b>Ben Van Wagtendonk</b> (Practice Leader Looked After and Permanence, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities)  <b>Suzanne Storey</b> (Practice Leader Assessment and Intervention, IRT and Complex CIN)	Catherine Hardman/Clare Cavanagh/Paige Thomason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training presentation to be delivered to all social workers.</li> <li>All plans to be written to children and young people by August-October 2022.</li> </ul>	An abridged version of the training has been delivered to Children Social Care Senior Management Team (SMT).  Training of staff to commence on the 7 <sup>th</sup> of March 2022 and run until July 2022.  Feedback from young people and children is that they understand these plans, feel included in the process and have a greater knowledge of the concerns shared by their families and professionals.
	<b>Develop life story work tools and processes with children in foster care. Including the introduction of a standard that all CYP in long-term foster care have life story work including later life letters so workers are consistently demonstrating young people understand their life journey and situation.</b>	<b>Ben Van Wagtendonk</b> (Practice Leader Looked After and Permanence, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities)	Suzy O’Reilly/Paul Kelly/Joshua Barr/Catherine Hardman/Clare Cavanagh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roll out of our internal model to start from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.</li> <li>Life Story Work (LSW) policy, procedures and quality assurance models to be drafted.</li> <li>Internal model to be agreed at SMT</li> <li>Funding for the model needs to be agreed and secured</li> </ul>	18 month funded project ends 31st of March 2022, and internal model will commence from the 1 <sup>st</sup> April. Life Story Work policy, procedures and quality assurance models have been drafted to support the internal rollout.
	<b>Undertake themed audit on quality of the social work practice in collaborative planning</b>	<b>Paige Thomason</b> (Principal Social Worker)	Ben Van Wagtendonk Suzanne Storey Clare Morris Vikky McKay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop audit schedule /tools that support themed audits.</li> <li>Work with Work Force Development and SMT to ensure that there is a triangulation from the findings from audits which evidence a learning culture. This is shared across the workforce through a range of learning including practice shorts, podcasts, practice guidance.</li> </ul>	

Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Other Operational Lead	Operational Detailed Action	Progress update / evidence of impact
<b>REC 2 - Secure access to services for those children in care who live out of the borough</b>	<b>Strengthen out of borough placement review panels with partner agencies to support access to services for young people out of borough, ensuring young people have consistent and timely access to all necessary services.</b>	<b>Ben Van Wagtendonk</b> (Practice Leader Looked After and Permanence, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities)	Joshua Barr/Paul Kelly/Team manager from SCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that when a child or young person moves out of borough that the right referrals are made to transfer their care/interventions</li> <li>• Work with health, police, and education colleagues in our borough to make sure they understand their responsibilities for ensuring continuity of interventions and support when a child moves out of borough</li> <li>• As part of placement planning meetings, ask independent providers what their arrangements are for return home interviews when children go missing etc. This needs to be added to current documentation.</li> </ul>	To be in place with partners and internally by the start of May 2022
	<b>Develop initiatives to bring young people back into borough and enhance internal resources and commissioning strategy to mitigate the need for young people to be placed out of borough, and ensure young people have consistent and timely access to all necessary services.</b>	<b>Jill Little / Claire Morris</b> (Practice leader – Fostering, Placements and Residential Resources)	Andi Parker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal residential resources are being increased by a further 2 children’s homes. Properties are currently being sourced and regular meetings are being held to look at potential options.</li> <li>• Fostering recruitment and retention is a priority and a new marketing and recruitment strategy will be developed with an aim to recruit 30 new sets of foster carers every 12 months.</li> <li>• Review foster carer payments and payment for skills to ensure we are competitive within the marketplace</li> <li>• Mockingbird to be implemented (Mockingbird is one of a number of innovative programmes that The Fostering Network runs to improve foster care and outcomes for fostered young people)</li> <li>• Looked After Children Sufficiency strategy to be updated jointly with commissioning Team.</li> </ul>	<p>One property has been identified and internal build costs are currently being drawn up.</p> <p>A Market and recruitment officer working on the marketing and recruitment strategy</p> <p>For Mockingbird Stakeholder analysis has been completed with a 1<sup>st</sup> implementation working group planned March 2022. A Liaison worker to be appointed.</p> <p>Enquires to become a foster carer have increased, and there has been an increase in allocations of form F assessments and approvals at the fostering panel.</p>

Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Operational Lead	Operational Detailed Action	Progress update / evidence of impact
<b>REC 3 – Improve the quality and impact of supervision and contingency planning for children in need</b> (and ensure consistency for all children)	<b>Use of supervisions and management oversight</b>	<b>Ben Van Wagtendonk</b> (Practice Leader Looked After and Permanence, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities) and  <b>Suzanne Storey</b> (Practice Leader Assessment and Intervention, IRT and Complex CIN)	Team Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paper to be taken to Children Social Care Senior Management Team (SMT) at the end of April to outline proposed amendments to Supervision processes and models</li> <li>Agreement to implement the proposals to be agreed by SMT</li> </ul>	<p>A Task and finish group is currently working on the paper to develop the proposals.</p> <p>This work is very closely aligned to how we enhance and strengthen our supervisory practice. Moving from a perfunctory reporting of cases to analysis and planning.</p>
	<b>Use of Unit Meetings – recording and structure</b>	<b>Ben Van Wagtendonk</b> (Practice Leader Looked After and Permanence, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities)	Kate Aspray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the use of Unit meetings which are already taking place within the ASYE academy.</li> <li>Training short to be developed and delivered to all ASYE mentors and CSW's.</li> <li>Timetable for unit meetings will be drawn up with a list of attendees for each service area.</li> <li>Audit of unit meeting records on children's files to take place to understand the impact of their use.</li> </ul>	<p>Questions for staff around unit meetings to be included in the staff survey and the ASYE academy evaluation.</p>
	<b>Practice around visits when children are not seen</b>	<b>Victoria McKay -</b> (Practice Leader – Safeguarding and Care Planning)	Team managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers to review data at regular intervals, including Practice performance clinics, to ensure that visits have taken place and children seen</li> <li>Audits of files will ensure recording of visits completed and visits timely to meet child's needs</li> <li>Visits discussed in supervision.</li> </ul>	<p>Performance data has been developed and in place to support this. Supervision will note visit and quality of visit.</p>
	<b>Practice around Child in Need (CIN) assessment – timeliness of updated assessments</b>	<b>Suzanne Storey</b> (Practice Leader Assessment and Intervention, IRT and Complex CIN)	A and I team managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers to give clear timescales to social workers for assessments to be completed, based on an evaluation of need.</li> <li>Management decision to be recorded on Mosaic for all assessments that are longer than 25 days with clear rationale for extension.</li> </ul>	<p>Data will show that assessments are being completed in a timelier way. Audits will look at quality of assessments and if they are meeting the needs of the family.</p>
	<b>Practice around Child in Need (CiN) long term work, senior leadership oversight – Early Permanence Panels</b>	<b>Andrea Houlahan</b> (Deputy Strategic Director)	Rachel Hough / Danny McCormick / Jon Gaines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The families receiving support via a Child in Need plan will be reviewed within Early Permanence Panel.</li> <li>Develop data measures which will be reviewed in the monthly Early Permanence Panels by managers, service managers and the deputy strategic director, including CIN open for 3/6/12months CIN checkpoints, CIN reviews, Care team meetings and closures.</li> </ul>	<p>This development will Aiming to have this process in place within 2 months. The change in process is intended to ensure Families receive intervention responsive to their needs within a timely way.</p>
	<b>Enhance our supervision with approaches that strengthen practice improvement thorough critical reflection and peer review, embracing principles of 'radical candour'. Support peer development and challenge for Managers through action learning sets</b>	<b>Paige Thomason</b> (Principal Social Worker)	Ben Wagtendonk Suzanne Storey Clare Morris Victoria McKay Catherine Hardman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal Social Worker and practice supervisors to meet on a bi-monthly basis to identify areas of good practice to share and develop training / practice shorts that gives supervisors the confidence and the skills to enable a more reflective and purposeful approach to supervision.</li> <li>Develop supervision policy, practice guidance and form which supports peer development.</li> </ul>	

Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Other lead officer (if any)	Operational Detailed Action	Progress update / evidence of impact
<b>REC 4 – Ensure routine inclusion of children and their families’ views in audits</b>	<b>Audit programme – moderations, inclusion of parents, carers, young people, training for staff who complete auditing</b>	<b>Paige Thomason</b> (Principal Social Worker)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the current Quality Assurance Framework /schedule and ensure that there is a work plan of activity for the next 12 months which includes direct observations of practice and feedback from families.</li> <li>Review current audits, practice week to ensure that they align with the work plan from the framework.</li> <li>Work with Work Force Development and SMT to ensure that there is a triangulation from the findings from audits which evidence a learning culture. This is shared across the workforce through a range of learning including practice shorts, podcasts, practice guidance and evidence that family feedback is inclusive in learning.</li> </ul>	

Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Other lead officer (if any)	Operational Detailed Action	Progress update / evidence of impact
<b>AFD 1 - Development of contextual safeguarding arrangements</b>	<b>Redesign the contextual safeguarding role/remit</b>	<b>Ben Van Wagtendonk</b> (Practice Leader Looked After and Permanence, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities)  <b>Linda Whitehead</b> (Service Manager – Specialist Support Services, Family Group Conference Service, Domestic Abuse Team)	Suzanne Storey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) worker post will be incorporated into the contextual safeguarding team</li> <li>The current CSE worker will spend 2-3 weeks handing over resources and process to the team.</li> <li>Dedicated Return Home Support Worker (RHSW) in place to engage with and undertake return home interviews with all young people reported missing.</li> <li>Development of specialist Young People’s DA Worker (YPVA) to support young people experiencing abuse in their own relationships.</li> <li>RHSW &amp; YPVA to develop close working relationships with Contextual Safeguarding Team</li> <li>Mapping of CSE – disruption planning, evidence on children’s files</li> </ul>	<p>RHSW in place from September 21. Implementation planned for other actions from April 2022.</p> <p>Meeting planned to agree clear working practices between Specialist Support Team and Contextual Safeguarding Team.</p> <p>From the 28<sup>th</sup> of February Improvement in RHI engagement rates (65% Jan 2022) and quality of interventions. Intelligence shared with police and Gateshead Safeguarding Partnership.</p>
	<b>Redesign the CCIN/Edge of Care/Contextual Safeguarding team</b>	<b>Suzanne Storey</b> (Practice Leader Assessment and Intervention, IRT and Complex CIN)	Deb Lorraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers to become exploitation champions and offer consultations across the service.</li> <li>Edge of Care (EOC) Intervention offer reviewed to ensure it supports families in crisis and young people at risk of requiring care. 12 week intervention programme devised to support young people at the edge of care.</li> </ul>	Feedback from families will demonstrate that they have been supported in a time of crisis and change has occurred.

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Development (AFD)					
<b>AFD 2 – Further development of domestic abuse provision</b>	<b>Develop the offer for referrals to DAT for children living with domestic abuse</b>	<b>Linda Whitehead</b> (Service Manager – Specialist Support Services, Family Group Conference Service, Domestic Abuse Team)	Bev Coombes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated children’s Domestic Abuse (DA) Worker to provide specialist support to children affected by DA in their home and/or family environment.</li> <li>• Development of specialist Young People’s DA Worker (YPVA) to support young people experiencing abuse in their own relationships.</li> <li>• YPVA role to offer training and support to foster carers and Children’s Home Staff.</li> <li>• YPVA role to provide training vis practice shorts for wider workforce.</li> </ul>	<p>Expansion of the dedicated children’s DA resource dependant on DA Grant</p> <p>Planning underway, implementation planned April 2022.</p>