

8 September 2022

TITLE OF REPORT: Ofsted Journey to Outstanding Plan

REPORT OF: Andrea Houlahan, Deputy Strategic Director,
Children's Social Care and Lifelong Learning

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.

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 6 months, with good progress already being made over the last 6 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: Gary Lewis, Service Manager QA

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Appendix 1 ILACs – Ofsted Journey to Outstanding Plan – Sep 2022

Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Theme	Service Lead	Other operational Lead	Operational Detailed Actions	Progress update / evidence of impact
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.)	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.	Paige Thomason (Principal Social Worker)	Team Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with consultant social workers and team managers bi-monthly to establish the group and co-op others into the group as required. 	Practice group consists of Consultant Social Workers and Principal Social Worker who meet monthly, and a work plan is developed which includes raising the profile of the Consultant Social Workers, sharing good practice, and developing quality assurance.
	Reform templates, guidance, and implementation materials in response to above.	Paige Thomason (Principal Social Worker)	Catherine Hardman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify examples of good practice and develop a practitioner-led group to devise practice guidance which is shared across the service. 	Currently revising Supervision Policy, Appraisal and routes into social work which will be shared across the service when completed.
	Deliver a series of practice shorts based on the above.	Paige Thomason (Principal Social Worker)	Catherine Hardman Chris Hulme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with young people (care leavers/ young ambassadors) to enable co-production and input into any proposed good practice and learning. Devise practice guidance and deliver practice shorts which is informed and co-produced. 	Workforce Development & Principal Social Worker have developed a series of practice shorts in collaboration with the ‘Young Dad’s Project to help understand and how to better engage with young father’s in Gateshead. Three sessions have been planned for November, January, and March.
	Introduce co-production of plans focussing on ambition and risks sessions, so social workers can support young people to lead and be inclusive in their plans.	Ben Van Wagtendonk (Practice Leader Looked After and Permanence, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities) Suzanne Storey (Practice Leader Assessment and Intervention, IRT and Complex CIN)	Catherine Hardman/Clare Cavanagh/Paige Thomason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training presentation to be delivered to all social workers. All plans to be written to children and young people by August-October 2022. 	An abridged version of the training has been delivered to Children Social Care Senior Management Team (SMT). Training of staff to commenced on the 7th of March 2022 and ran 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. This work is ongoing and is part of the role out of the narrative practice approaches and is being monitored through the narrative practice task and a finish group.
	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.	Ben Van Wagtendonk (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"> Roll out of our internal model to start from 1st April 2022. Life Story Work (LSW) policy, procedures, and quality assurance models to be drafted. Internal model to be agreed at SMT Funding for the model needs to be agreed and secured 	18 month funded project ends 31st of March 2022, and internal model will commence from the 1 st April. Life Story Work policy, procedures and quality assurance models have been drafted to support the internal rollout. For our life story work policy, we have secured funding for a further 12 months of the Blue Cabin/TLSWI programme. An implantation plan is due to be presented to SMT in September for our offer to 50-80 young people in the children in our care teams. This includes our own in-house life story work training and access to a redesigned life story work platform

	Undertake themed audit on quality of the social work practice in collaborative planning	Paige Thomason (Principal Social Worker)	Ben Van Wagtendonk Suzanne Storey Clare Morris Vicky McKay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop audit schedule / tools that support themed audits. 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. 	<p>Quality Audit Framework and Audit schedule has been completed and Q1 audits have been completed during June alongside direct observations and family feedback.</p> <p>Q1 report and findings will be completed to evidence learning which will be shared with the workforce development and will include practice shorts and podcasts.</p>
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Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Other Operational Lead	Operational Detailed Action	Progress update / evidence of impact
REC 2 - Secure access to services for those children in care who live out of the borough	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.	Ben Van Wagtendonk (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"> Ensure that when a child or young person moves out of borough that the right referrals are made to transfer their care/interventions 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 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. 	This will take place through the high needs panel, however there is further work and a meeting in September 22 to look at specific issues around education for our young people placed out of borough.
	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.	Jill Little / Claire Morris (Practice leader – Fostering, Placements and Residential Resources)	Andi Parker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 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. Review foster carer payments and payment for skills to ensure we are competitive within the marketplace 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) Looked After Children Sufficiency strategy to be updated jointly with commissioning Team. 	<p>Registration of a solo occupancy home to progress to meet current demand. This should be registered before the end of 2022 – staffing currently being appointed.</p> <p>A 3 bedded children’s Home for Children with additional needs (Church Road) has been purchased, further planning permission is being requested for some additional alterations to original plans, tendering process is on-going. Work will be 20 -25 week programme once tender is agreed and it is envisaged that we will be able to apply for registration in Spring 2023.</p> <p>New marketing strategy went live in May 2022, which has seen generic and targeted campaigns alongside a review of the social media challenges for improving marketing and the functionality / use of the website. First Awards event since Covid took place in May 2022. Regional UCAS campaign is being led by Gateshead and Newcastle, regional funding has been identified for this work. September</p>

					<p>fun day and Christmas experience is being finalised as part of our retention strategy. For Mockingbird Stakeholder analysis has been completed with a 1st implementation working group planned March 2022. A Liaison worker to be appointed.</p> <p>Peer review of the payment for skills is not a viable option. New approach to the payment for skills is being developed to ensure a cost-effective in-house solution is developed.</p> <p>Monthly steering groups have taken place, hub home carer has been approved, satellite families are being identified for roll out/implementation in October 2022. Launch is currently being planned. Stakeholder briefings are ongoing and will run until the launch.</p> <p>The Sufficiency Strategy has been reviewed and will be presented in September 2022. This will include Staying Close and the potential to develop further develop the service through external funding opportunities which align to our needs.</p>
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Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Operational Lead	Operational Detailed Action	Progress update / evidence of impact
REC 3 – Improve the quality and impact of supervision and contingency planning for children in need (and ensure consistency for all children)	Use of supervisions and management oversight	Ben Van Wagtendonk (Practice Leader Looked After and Permanence, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities) and Suzanne Storey (Practice Leader Assessment and Intervention, IRT and Complex CIN)	Team Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Agreement to implement the proposals to be agreed by SMT 	<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> <p>Work took place with Mosaic to agree with Team managers all of the tasks from Team and Service Managers that would constitute a management oversight</p>
	Use of Unit Meetings – recording and structure	Paige Thomason (Principal Social Worker)	Kate Aspray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the use of Unit meetings which are already taking place within the ASYE academy. Training short to be developed and delivered to all ASYE mentors and CSW's. Timetable for unit meetings will be drawn up with a list of attendees for each service area. Audit of unit meeting records on children's files to take place to understand the impact of their use. 	<p>Questions for staff around unit meetings to be included in the staff survey and the ASYE academy evaluation.</p>

	Practice around visits when children are not seen	Victoria McKay - (Practice Leader – Safeguarding and Care Planning)	Team Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers to review data at regular intervals, including Practice performance clinics, to ensure that visits have taken place and children seen Audits of files will ensure recording of visits completed and visits timely to meet child's needs Visits discussed in supervision. 	<p>Performance data has been developed and in place to support this and is being circulated 3 times per week.</p> <p>Supervision will note visit and quality of visit.</p> <p>The performance data is discussed in supervisions between Senior Managers and Team Managers.</p>
	Practice around Child in Need (CIN) assessment – timeliness of updated assessments	Suzanne Storey (Practice Leader Assessment and Intervention, IRT and Complex CIN)	A & I Team Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers to give clear timescales to social workers for assessments to be completed, based on an evaluation of need. Management decision to be recorded on Mosaic for all assessments that are longer than 25 days with clear rationale for extension. 	<p>Data will show that assessments are being completed in a timelier way.</p> <p>Audits will look at quality of assessments and if they are meeting the needs of the family.</p>
	Practice around Child in Need (CiN) long term work, senior leadership oversight – Early Permanence Panels	Andrea Houlahan (Deputy Strategic Director)	Rachel Hough / Danny McCormick / Jon Gaines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The families receiving support via a Child in Need plan will be reviewed within Early Permanence Panel. 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. 	<p>The change in process is intended to ensure Families receive intervention responsive to their needs within a timely way.</p> <p>CIN data is now included in the monthly EEP meetings. Further work is underway to ensure that data is accurate and to agree an approach for case reviews/updates in panel.</p>
	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	Paige Thomason (Principal Social Worker)	Ben Wagtendonk Suzanne Storey Clare Morris Victoria McKay Catherine Hardman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Develop supervision policy, practice guidance and form which supports peer development. 	<p>Principal Social Worker / Work Force Development have commissioned Action Learning Sets with Dave Basker to strengthen practice improvement in reflective supervision. The sessions have commenced in July and will continue through to October 22.</p> <p>Further evaluation and Quality Assurance will be planned once sessions have been completed.</p>

Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Other lead officer (if any)	Operational Detailed Action	Progress update / evidence of impact
REC 4 – Ensure routine inclusion of children and their families' views in audits	Audit programme – moderations, inclusion of parents, carers, young people, training for staff who complete auditing	Paige Thomason (Principal Social Worker)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Review current audits, practice week to ensure that they align with the work plan from the framework. 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. 	<p>Work plan has been completed with Performance Team for the next 12 month to ensure a plan of audit activity. Any learning will be triangulated with Senior Management Team / Workforce Development once learning is identified from Q1. There is now a focus on direct family feedback and experience which will be included in quarterly reporting and learning will be shared with the workforce to ensure we are learning from experience.</p> <p>Any learning will be triangulated with Senior Management Team & Workforce Development once learning is identified from Q1.</p>

Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Other lead officer (if any)	Operational Detailed Action	Progress update / evidence of impact
AFD 1 - Development of contextual safeguarding arrangements	Redesign the contextual safeguarding role/remit	Ben Van Wagtendonk (Practice Leader Looked After and Permanence, Care Leavers, Children with Disabilities) Linda Whitehead (Service Manager – Specialist Support Services, Family Group Conference Service, Domestic Abuse Team)	Suzanne Storey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) worker post has now been incorporated into the contextual safeguarding team and is part of the offer that is being worked on for the front door. The post is a full time social worker and will be providing advice and guidance around the contextual safeguarding risks Dedicated Return Home Support Worker (RHSW) in place to engage with and undertake return home interviews with all young people reported missing. Development of specialist Young People’s DA Worker (YPVA) to support young people experiencing abuse in their own relationships. RHSW & YPVA to develop close working relationships with Contextual Safeguarding Team Mapping of CSE – disruption planning, evidence on children’s files 	<p>RHSW in place from September 21. Implementation planned for other actions from April 2022.</p> <p>YPVA role in development and implementation planned from September 2022.</p> <p>RHSW role embedded. This has resulted in an improvement in RHI engagement rates (62% June 2022) and high-quality interventions. E.g., RHS Worker has development good relationships with those young people who go missing regularly. YP have requested the support of the RHS Worker at CAMHS and other wellbeing related appointments.</p> <p>Intelligence is shared with police and Gateshead Safeguarding Partnership.</p> <p>Missing and RHI work is consolidated into wider corporate responsibilities and networks such as Strategy meetings, MSET, Multi Agency exploitation Hub and Gateshead Joint Strategic Exploitation Group.</p>
	Redesign the CCIN/Edge of Care/Contextual Safeguarding team	Suzanne Storey (Practice Leader Assessment and Intervention, IRT and Complex CIN)	Deb Lorraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers to become exploitation champions and offer consultations across the service. 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. 	<p>Feedback from families will demonstrate that they have been supported in a time of crisis and change has occurred.</p>

Recommendation (REC) / Area for Development (AFD)	Improvement Theme	Service Lead	Other lead officer (if any)	Operational Detailed Action	Progress update / evidence of impact
AFD 2 – Further development of domestic abuse provision	Develop the offer for referrals to DAT for children living with domestic abuse	Linda Whitehead (Service Manager – Specialist Support Services, Family Group Conference Service, Domestic Abuse Team)	Bev Coombes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated children’s Domestic Abuse (DA) Worker to provide specialist support to children affected by DA in their home and/or family environment. • Development of specialist Young People’s DA Worker (YPVA) to support young people experiencing abuse in their own relationships. • YPVA role to offer training and support to foster carers and Children’s Home Staff. • YPVA role to provide training via practice shorts for wider workforce. 	<p>Expansion of the dedicated children’s DA resource dependant on DA Grant.</p> <p>Planning underway. Backfill Domestic Abuse Workers commenced 12-month contracts on 8th August 2022, currently undergoing induction. Case transfer planned for 22nd – 29th August 22. Additional capacity will consist of 1 additional Children’s DA worker and 1 Young People’s DA Worker.</p>